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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 25, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a very important document for the House, and for you.

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and in accordance with the requirements set out in the current policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement between the Government of Canada on the one hand and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark together with the Government of Greenland on the other hand on the maritime and land boundaries in the area between Greenland and Canada”, done at Ottawa on June 14, 2022. If I may, I would like to point out that this essentially marks the official end to the whisky war between Canada and Denmark.

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[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and consistent with the current policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Amendments to the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972”, adopted at London on October 7, 2022.

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[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th

report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, entitled “Reducing the Impact of Commercial Shipping on Shoreline Erosion in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Corridor”.

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

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by Canadians who are calling on the government to invoke the notwithstanding clause to override the Supreme Court of Canada's Bissonnette decision, which struck down a law passed by the previous Harper Conservative government that gave judges the discretion to apply consecutive parole ineligibility periods to mass murderers. As a result of the Liberal government's inaction, the sentences of some of the worst killers in Canada have been significantly reduced. The petitioners are calling for action.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too rise on behalf of Canadians with a petition regarding the same case my hon. colleague mentioned, the Bissonnette decision of the Supreme Court.

Canadians believe this is an unjust decision. It puts the interests of some of Canada's worst criminals ahead of the rights of their victims. Reoccurring parole hearings can traumatize the families of victims of mass murderers over and over again.

The government has tools at its disposal to respond, including invoking the notwithstanding clause. Therefore, the undersigned in this particular petition urge the Minister of Justice to invoke the notwithstanding clause to override this decision.

• (1005)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, similarly, I rise to present a petition like the one my colleagues spoke about. It involves invoking the notwithstanding clause to override the Bissonnette decision. This petition was signed by Canadians who are interested in this.

Routine Proceedings

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to table this petition on behalf of Denman Islanders from my riding. They are calling on the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard to persevere in her restorative aims and use all tools in the sustainable fisheries framework to postpone licensing any further shellfish aquaculture facilities located in or near herring spawning and rearing habitat until an ecosystem-based assessment is completed, especially in Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel. They ask that the industry establish a record of effectively managing its own gear and equipment, pay for the cleanup costs of the tons of plastic debris it produces annually and develop, with first nations, a co-management plan for Baynes Sound and Lambert Channel.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to table a petition on behalf of the graduate students of Canada, who are calling upon the Government of Canada to increase the number and monetary amounts of tri-council scholarships to better support graduate students. The value and number of scholarships offered by the tri-council has not changed in two decades. Alongside this, the cost of living in Canada is at historic highs, and graduate students and precarious researchers, who are our brain trust, are living at or below the poverty line.

[*Translation*]

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of some of my constituents, including Ms. Brouillette and Ms. Nguyen, two active citizens who are involved in Development and Peace. They came to deliver this petition to me in person.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to adopt legislation on due diligence for human and environmental rights that would require companies to prevent any negative impact on human and environmental rights throughout their global operations and supply chains, that would set out significant consequences for companies that fail to exercise adequate due diligence and report on it, and that would establish a statutory right for persons harmed to seek justice in Canadian courts.

[*English*]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to present a number of petitions to the House today.

The first petition is on an issue that is important in my riding. It is the issue of foreign oil being imported into Canada. The petitioners note that Alberta in particular and Canada in general have the potential to produce more of the world's most environmentally friendly oil using high labour standards that are higher than those in other countries, yet we have a continuing situation in which we are importing oil and gas products from other countries. The petitioners therefore propose that Canada work to eliminate imports of foreign oil and gas into Canada, create more jobs and build a better economy for workers who are part of Canada's energy sector.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is in support of Bill C-257, which is a private member's bill that I have put before the House. It responds to the problem of political discrimination, which is about people being discriminated against on the basis of their political views. The petitioners note that Canadians have a right to be protected against discrimination on the basis of their views and that it is fundamental to Canadian democracy when people are free to express their political views without fear of discrimination. Therefore, they ask the House to support Bill C-257 and defend the right of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

• (1010)

The next petition I am presenting deals with the ongoing arbitrary and illegal detention of Huseyin Celil. Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen who has been detained in China, sadly, for substantially more time than Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor were detained. They were released after an unjust detention of 1,000 days. Mr. Celil, at the time of the writing of this petition, had already been in detention for more than 5,000 days. He is a Canadian citizen, an activist for Uyghur human rights and a father of four sons, the youngest of whom has sadly never met his father because Mr. Celil's wife was pregnant at the time of his detention.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to take the following actions to seek to address the situation: demand that the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services in accordance with international law; formally state that the release of Huseyin Celil from Chinese detainment and his return to Canada are a priority of the Canadian government of equal concern as the unjust detentions of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor; appoint a special envoy to work on securing Mr. Celil's release; and seek the assistance of the Biden administration and other allies around the world in obtaining Mr. Celil's release, as was done in the case of the arbitrary detention of the two Michaels.

HONG KONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling deals with the situation in Hong Kong and the concerns about free and fair trials, judicial independence and a lack of rule of law in Hong Kong.

Those who have been involved in the democracy movement in China have been subject to politicized prosecution aimed at suppressing their legitimate democracy activity. Canada's immigration and refugee law seeks to render inadmissible Canadians who have been involved in criminal activity abroad. The petitioners note the need for exceptional treatment of those who are otherwise law-abiding and freedom-loving citizens but have been subject to arbitrary criminalization of their democracy activity.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to recognize the politicization of the judiciary in Hong Kong and its impacts on the legitimacy and validity of criminal convictions; to affirm its commitment to render all national security law charges and convictions irrelevant and invalid in relation to inadmissibility rules in Canadian immigration; to create a mechanism by which Hong Kong people with pro-democracy movement-related convictions may provide an explanation for such convictions and on the basis of which government officials could grant exemptions to Hong Kong people who would otherwise be deemed inadmissible on the basis of criminality; and to work with other like-minded democracies to waive criminal inadmissibility of Hong Kong people convicted for political purposes who do not otherwise have criminal records.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next I am tabling a petition that raises significant concerns about proposals to legalize euthanasia for children, that is, to allow the killing of children by our medical system. The petitioners highlight in particular the comments of Louis Roy of the Collège des médecins du Québec, who recommended euthanasia for babies, that children and infants be killed.

The petitioners find the proposal for legalizing infanticide in Canada from a representative of that college to be deeply disturbing. They call on the government and the House to block any attempts to legalize the killing of children in Canada.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next I am tabling a petition from citizens concerned about the government's proposals to politicize charitable status determination in Canada. They note a proposal in the Liberal Party election platform to deny charitable status to organizations with convictions that are different from those of the Liberal Party as it relates to the issue of abortion.

The petitioners note that the effect of this would be to deny charitable status to hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not share the government's views on those issues. The government has previously used a values test to discriminate against worthy applicants to the Canada summer jobs program. This would be a kind of recapitulation of that proposal.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of political positions or religious values, and to affirm the right of all Canadians to freedom of expression.

MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I am tabling is in some respects similar to the last one. It deals with discriminatory proposals made by the Minister of National Defence advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination. Its final report, released in early 2022, effectively called for the exclusion from military chaplaincy of clergy that are part of religious traditions that have a different view on certain issues from that of the Government of Canada.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners note that discrimination on the basis of religion is wrong and a violation of the charter. They therefore call on the government and the House to reject the recommendations on chaplaincy in the Canadian Armed Forces final report of the Minister of National Defence advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination, and to affirm the right of all Canadians, including Canadian Armed Forces chaplains, to freedom of religion.

* * *

● (1015)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1304, 1305, 1308, 1310, 1313 and 1315.

[Text]

Question No. 1304—**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:**

With regard to the government's Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program: (a) what are the processing times of applications, overall and broken down by sector; (b) as of March 7, 2023, how many applications were still awaiting a decision; (c) of the applications in (b), how many were received by the government more than (i) 30 days, (ii) 60 days, (iii) 90 days, (iv) six months, (v) one year, ago; (d) for each application that has been pending for more than 90 days, what are the details, including the (i) name of the applicant, (ii) date the application was received, (iii) reason for the delay, (iv) date by when a decision will be made; (e) what are the details of all funding delivered to date under the program, including, for each recipient, the (i) name, (ii) amount, (iii) location, (iv) project description or the purpose of funding; and (f) what is the total amount of funding provided to date?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the average processing timeline for applications received through a call for proposal is 22 weeks. However, this can vary quite significantly based on the volume of applications received and the complexity of the program. Applications received through the sectoral workforce solutions program are processed at the same time and are not broken down by sector.

With regard to part (b), as of March 7, 2023, all applications that were received through the sectoral workforce solutions program's 2022 open call for proposals are still pending a decision.

With regard to part (c), all applications were received one year ago.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (d), given that the process for the sectoral workforce solutions program's 2022 open call for proposals is still ongoing and no funding decisions have been made, the department cannot disclose information on the applications that were received. On February 6, 2023, the department sent an email to all applicants that applied under the 2022 open call for proposals to inform organizations of the delay and indicate that they will be informed as soon as funding decisions have been made.

With regard to part (e), Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC, shares information related to successful applicants in a funding process, which is like a call for proposals, on the proactive disclosure website, found at <https://search.open.canada.ca/grants/>. ESDC cannot share information on unsuccessful funding applicants with third parties, including members of Parliament.

With regard to part (f), to date, \$410 million has been invested in 21 projects through the sectoral workforce solutions program to help key sectors of the economy implement solutions that address their current and emerging workforce needs.

Question No. 1305—Ms. Michelle Ferreri:

With regard to the monitoring of social media accounts of opposition members of Parliament by officials at Health Canada: (a) how many bureaucrats are currently assigned, as part of their job, to monitor these social media accounts; (b) which member's accounts do they monitor; and (c) what are the details of how they were assigned to monitor such accounts, including who issued the directive or assignment to monitor the accounts and on what date?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the communications and public affairs branch, or CPAB, does monitor social media for health-related issues and topics, the monitoring of specific social media accounts of opposition members of Parliament by officials is not part of the mandate of CPAB. As a result, CPAB concluded that producing a comprehensive response to this question would not be possible.

Question No. 1308—Mr. Brian Masse:

With regard to border crossings (land, bridge and tunnel) between Canada and the United States and the operations and facilities of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA): (a) what is the cost of overall operations of the CBSA at each border crossing location; (b) what are the operating and maintenance costs for buildings and facilities used by the CBSA at each border crossing; (c) how is the cost to (i) operate CBSA services, (ii) maintain buildings that are used by the CBSA, at each border crossing location paid for and by whom; (d) are there any agreements or other mechanisms where (i) border crossings provide financial support or services free of charge to CBSA or other government entities, (ii) CBSA or other government entities provide financial support or services free of charge to the border crossing, including buildings and facilities, and, if so, what are the details of each instance; and (e) for the new Gordie Howe Bridge crossing, how are the services and buildings and facilities maintenance for the CBSA going to be paid for and by what mechanism, since it is the only public-private partnership border crossing owned by the federal government?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, is unable to respond to this question, as the agency's financial systems do not track costs by individual border crossing.

With regard to part (b), the CBSA does not pay for the maintenance or operating costs for the ports of entry that are deemed leg- islated facilities provided by the owner of those facility under section 6 of the Customs Act. At these ports of entry, the CBSA is only

responsible for providing border service officers and the CBSA's operating equipment. The agency's financial systems do not track costs by individual border crossing.

With regard to parts (c)(i) and (ii), the agency's financial systems do not track costs by individual border crossing.

With regard to part (d)(i), the CBSA does not pay for the maintenance or operating costs for the ports of entry that are deemed leg- islated facilities, which are provided free of charge by the owner of those facility under the requirements set out in section 6 of the Customs Act and in the Health of Animals Act, Plant Protection Act, Quarantine Act and the immigration and refugee protection regula- tions. With regard to part (d)(ii), there is an arrangement between The Federal Bridge Corporation Limited and the CBSA for the pro- vision of facilities at the Cornwall port of entry.

With regard to part (e), under section 6 of the Customs Act, the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority, or WBDA, is the responsible en- tity, which is required to provide the buildings and facilities for the CBSA. Questions on the facility and funding should be directed to the WDBA.

Question No. 1310—Mr. Richard Martel:

With regard to what will happen following the coming into force of Bill C-208, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (transfer of small business or family farm or fishing corporation), from the 43rd Parliament: (a) when will the government set a coming into force date for the new act; (b) as of what date will transactions be af- fected by this act; (c) what directives is the government issuing for accountants and other individuals affected by the new act regarding the (i) time when this act must start being applied, (ii) way in which to interpret this act; and (d) how will the act be applied to transactions that begin before the coming into force date, but are not concluded until after the coming into force date?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minis- ter of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-208 has been in force since June 29, 2021. The Canada Revenue Agency published guid- ance on this matter on April 20, 2022.

Budget 2023 announced proposals to strengthen the intergenera- tional business transfer framework. Information about the timing and details of the proposed measures is publicly available in the budget's supplementary information on tax measures in the 2023 budget plan, under the section "Strengthening the Intergenerational Business Transfer Framework". These proposed measures would apply to transactions that occur after December 31, 2023. Transac- tions that occur after Bill C-208 came into effect and before 2024 would continue to be subject to the rules introduced by Bill C-208.

Question No. 1313—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to the Prime Minister's comments on February 23, 2023, that "there are so many inaccuracies in those leaks" in reference to recent media stories about election interference: (a) what specific information reported in the stories is inaccura- te; and (b) what proof, if any, does the Prime Minister have that the information cited in (a) is inaccurate?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, or ETHI, and the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, or PROC, are currently studying the issue of foreign election interference. It would be appropriate to note the testimony from the national security and intelligence adviser, or NSIA, during her appearance on March 1, 2023, at PROC and at the Standing Committee on National Defence, or NDDN, on December 8, 2022, during which the NSIA said, “We have not seen money going to 11 candidates”.

As previously announced, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, will complete a review to assess the state of foreign interference in federal electoral processes.

The National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA, will review how Canada’s national security agencies handled the threat of foreign interference during the 43rd and 44th federal general elections.

Additionally, an independent special rapporteur has been mandated to identify any outstanding issues requiring attention, recommend any additional mechanisms or transparent processes and identify innovative approaches and improvements in the way public agencies work together to combat foreign interference in our electoral processes.

Question No. 1315—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to foreign diplomats interfering in Canadian elections, since January 1, 2016: how many foreign diplomats have been expelled or had their credentials revoked as a result of interference or suspected interference in Canadian elections, broken down by year and by the country represented by the diplomat?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada expects all foreign representatives to exercise their functions in keeping with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, or VCDR, and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, or VCCR, including respecting applicable Canadian laws and regulations and avoiding interference in internal affairs. The context for a decision to declare a foreign representative persona non grata, under either article 9 of the VCDR or article 23 of the VCCR, varies from case to case, and each decision would be based on specific circumstances. The Vienna conventions provide that the receiving state, which is Canada, does not have to explain its decision to the sending state. In order to protect this prerogative, data with respect to the concerns giving rise to persona non grata declarations cannot be disclosed.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government’s responses to Questions Nos. 1302, 1303, 1306, 1307, 1309, 1311, 1312 and 1314 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1302—Mr. Blake Richards:

With regard to vacancy rates in government owned office buildings in the National Capital Region with over 100,000 square feet of office space, broken down by building: what is the (i) name, (ii) location, (iii) total square footage, (iv) total square footage of usable office space, (v) current number of employees, (vi) square footage of occupied office space, (vii) square footage of vacant or unoccupied office space?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1303—Mr. Eric Melillo:

With regard to the processing of requests made under the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act: (a) what is the policy or standard practice, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity, with respect to consultations concerning personal or third-party information of former members of Parliament; (b) during the course of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s processing of an access to information request related to their file on the Trudeau Report (A-2021-02029), why were consultations about the information of the former member for Thornhill, the Hon. Peter Kent, referred to the current member for Markham—Thornhill, the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development; and (c) on what date was the Privacy Commissioner of Canada informed about the incident in (b)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1306—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to gloves in the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS) which are manufactured by Sinopharm International Corporation and its subsidiaries, since November 2019: (a) how many units of these gloves did the NESS, or its parent organization and procuring body, acquire, broken down by month; (b) how many units of these gloves did the NESS contain each month; and (c) how many units of these gloves were shipped to each provincial and territorial government, broken down by month, quarter and year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1307—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to the National Housing Council, since its creation: (a) what was the council’s annual budget and expenditures, broken down by year; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by item and type of expenditure; (c) what were the locations of each council meeting, broken down by the meeting date; (d) for each year, what were the council’s total expenditures on (i) travel, (ii) hospitality; and (e) how is the council composed, including (i) how the members and the chairs of the council are chosen, (ii) the number of members, (iii) the financial compensation rates, including annual amounts and per diem rates, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1309—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to the processing of immigration applications at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, for all streams, broken down by stream and by country of origin: (a) what are the current application processing service standards; (b) what are the actual current application processing times; (c) what percentage of applications are meeting the processing service standards; (d) where standards are not being met, what efforts are being undertaken by the department to improve processing times; (e) what are the acceptance and refusal rates; (f) what accounts for discrepancies in acceptance rates and processing times across geographic regions; and (g) how many applications are currently in the backlog and how long have these applications been in the system?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders***Question No. 1311—Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to the report that Employment and Social Development Canada provided to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) on November 5, 2021, concerning allegations of forced labour within the supply chains for the production of personal protective equipment: (a) what specific allegations were contained in the report; (b) what is the summary of the report; (c) what is the website link where the report is available; and (d) what actions did the CBSA take in response to the report, broken down by the date the actions were taken?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1312—Mr. Rob Morrison:

With regard to the government's plan to increase the tax on alcohol as of April 1, 2023: has Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada or Pacific Economic Development Canada conducted any analysis on the negative impacts this increase will have on British Columbia wineries, and, if so, what are the details, including the findings?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1314—Mr. Tony Baldinelli:

With regard to the government's plan to increase the tax on alcohol as of April 1, 2023: has Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada or the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario conducted any analysis on the negative impacts this increase will have on Niagara wineries, and, if so, what are the details, including the findings?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

CRISIS IN SUDAN

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received notice of a request for an emergency debate. I invite the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to make a brief intervention.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are deeply concerned about the situation in Sudan. For 30 years, Sudan was led by a genocidal dictator, Omar al-Bashir. In late 2018 and early 2019, the Sudanese people came together in heroic resistance against that regime and succeeded in forcing al-Bashir out of office. At the time, as we continue to do, we saluted the courage of the Sudanese people. Just like in Iran, the people of Sudan came together and took to the streets to demand the recognition of their God-given human rights.

Since the removal of al-Bashir from office, the people of Sudan have struggled to realize the transition to civilian rule. This transition has been repeatedly interrupted and delayed and has been punctuated by horrific violence. Canada must stand with the Sudanese people in their pursuit of the recognition of their fundamental human rights. We call on the Government of Canada to be actively engaged with the situation in Sudan, both in response to the current crisis and in the push for a complete transition to civilian democratic rule as soon as possible.

Today, we are seeking an emergency debate in response to the immediate crisis on the ground. The Sudanese Armed Forces, or the

SAF, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, are fighting over territory. This is effectively a civil war within the military, as far as we can tell from this distance. Canadian diplomatic personnel have been withdrawn. We need to ensure the safety of all of our staff, both diplomatic and locally engaged. Sudan is a country of over 46 million people, which, like Ukraine and Iran, is on the fault line between democracy and authoritarianism. Its people continue to struggle for freedom and human rights.

Conservatives call on all members of the House and the government to remain closely engaged with these events and to stand with the people of Sudan in this ongoing struggle. We think an emergency debate is an appropriate format for discussing these issues.

I note, in closing, that I understand there is an agreement regarding debate happening this evening on the budget, so I propose that this emergency debate be scheduled for tomorrow evening.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his intervention. I am prepared to grant an emergency debate concerning the crisis in Sudan. This debate will be held later today at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment until midnight.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023, NO. 1

The House resumed from April 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, Budget Implementation Act, 2023, No. 1, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a privilege to rise in the House on behalf of my constituents in Vaudreuil—Soulanges to speak to budget 2023, “A Made-in-Canada Plan”, tabled by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

This budget reflects the global challenges we are facing as Canadians. It is a prudent, responsible and considered budget.

We must invest in the future of this incredible country that we are fortunate to call home and in the well-being of individuals, workers and families. We must invest in the green transition and in the cleaner and more prosperous economy of the future.

For the members of my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges and for individuals and families across Canada, this budget is the next step towards a better future in which more Canadians will be able to find meaningful employment and live in an environment with better protection that will be enjoyed by future generations.

Government Orders

• (1020)

[English]

It comes at a time when the strength, resilience and perseverance of Canadians are once again on full display, because even with the immense challenges we have experienced over recent years, business owners and entrepreneurs have created over 865,000 more jobs for Canadians. Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio remains the best of all G7 member countries, and the Bank of Canada has projected that Canada's inflation rate should drop below 3% by the end of the year. Even while the economy has grown, Canada's annual report on emissions shows an 8.4% reduction in emissions since 2005. This is proof that, by working together, we as Canadians can meet any challenge we face, and through smart policies implemented over the last seven years, the Government of Canada can be there to support Canadians along the way.

In my remarks today, I would like to speak to three main components of this budget that would continue to respond to the needs of Canadians and build a better, stronger Canada: first, the strengthening of Canada's national health care system and the expansion of the national dental care; second, a grocery rebate for Canadians when they need it most; and finally, the unprecedented investment toward building a greener economy.

First, budget 2023 would address one of the biggest challenges we face as a nation and one that has been highlighted by the pandemic: the need to strengthen and renew our universal public health care system. That is why budget 2023 would commit Canada to delivering \$198.3 billion to reduce backlogs, expand access to family health services and ensure that provinces and territories can provide quality health care to Canadians while also ensuring greater transparency and accountability.

Budget 2023 would also provide the funding necessary to deliver on our promise to expand national dental care, an investment that would ensure that up to nine million Canadians who need it most will receive the dental care they need. In 2021, I had the honour of meeting several incredible volunteer dental hygienists in the city of Pincourt, in my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, where they were holding one of their mobile clinics offering free preventative oral care. They highlighted the necessity of greater access to dental care for Canadians and stressed that, by bolstering preventative oral care, Canada could reduce avoidable health care costs at our hospitals. This sentiment was one shared by members of my seniors committee, who spoke to their experiences and those of their loved ones who have had limited access to dental care due to budget constraints. It is also what I have heard time and again from struggling parents in my community who have no dental coverage through work, and whose children have had to wait years between visits to the dentist, if they have ever gone at all.

This budget would ensure that, by the end of 2023, dental care would be available for seniors, youth under the age of 18 and Canadians with disabilities with household incomes below \$90,000. This budget says, loud and clear, that when a child smiles in my community or any community represented by any member of the House, it is no longer acceptable to be able to gauge the income of parents based on the smile of their child.

[Translation]

The new grocery rebate is another key component of the budget that will make food bills more affordable. Over the past year, food prices have skyrocketed around the world, and Canada is no exception.

As a result, families have no other choice but to spend more on groceries every week. To help them, and to help 11 million families across Canada, we will be giving eligible couples with two children up to \$467 more, single Canadians with no children up to \$234 more, and seniors up to \$225 more, on average. This is a \$2.5-billion investment in Canadians' well-being that will be appreciated by seniors, parents and workers in my community, Vaudreuil—Soulanges, who need it the most.

The third component I would like to address is the ongoing commitment in the budget to build a green and prosperous Canadian economy for the future. In my community, we will support not only a prosperous economy, but also a healthy environment. In Vaudreuil—Soulanges, we are blessed with magnificent landscapes and the daily benefits of our environmental wealth. A great many collective memories in our community are forged in the nature that surrounds us, as we enjoy snowshoeing on the trails in Saint-Lazare, kayaking in Vaudreuil-Dorion Bay, hiking on Mont Rigaud, cycling on the Soulanges Canal, or even picnicking at Pointe-du-Moulin in Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot.

I am extremely proud of the work we have done to enhance our environmental protection measures and of our government's ongoing efforts to fight climate change. The 2023 budget delivers on our promise to Canadians to build a greener Canada and makes great strides in the fight against climate change.

We are tackling climate change with a three-pronged approach: a prosperous energy sector, clean electricity and a clean economy. Overall, we allocated \$88 billion in new investments between now and 2035. This means more money for greener electricity and associated infrastructure in order to create an affordable, sustainable and reliable Canada-wide electrical grid, increase battery manufacturing, reduce taxes for the manufacturing of zero-emission technologies, and provide more support for workers in the clean economy sector.

The results of these investments are already being felt. Recent reports show that Canada has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 8.4% over 2005.

• (1025)

[English]

Finally, I would like to speak to a specific component of this budget to help Canadians reduce waste and save money.

Government Orders

More electronic devices in our society means more chargers of all shapes and sizes piling up in our homes and our offices, burdening all Canadians with additional costs and contributing to thousands of tonnes of electronic waste every year. This January, I launched a campaign within my Liberal caucus to have Canada commit to joining the European Union in mandating USB-C universal charging by 2024. After productive discussions with the Minister of Finance and her team, securing the support of the Prime Minister and Liberal caucus members, I was truly happy to see that budget 2023 would commit Canada to working with partners and stakeholders to explore implementing a standard charging port in Canada for small electronic devices and laptops as well.

Adding to the success already realized through the government's ban on select single-use plastics, the implementation of universal chargers in Canada would be a practical way to not only reduce waste but also keep more money in the pockets of Canadians. I look forward to helping this move forward in the months and years ahead.

[*Translation*]

For these reasons and many more, and on behalf of the community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, I fully support passing the 2023 budget in the House. I will be voting in favour of this budget, and I hope that my colleagues from all parties will also voice their support.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am happy to learn who this budget was meant for. Now I understand that it was meant for the citizens of Vaudreuil—Soulanges. I am happy to have heard my colleague's speech.

I invite the citizens of Vaudreuil—Soulanges to read the budget carefully and consider what the government means when it speaks of the environment, because the Liberals are still in favour of carbon capture and storage as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. With regard to dental care, I also invite my colleague's constituents to note that there is already a dental program in Quebec.

The question I would like to ask my colleague from Vaudreuil—Soulanges concerns the Liberals' commitment to make federal services more efficient. In 2022, money was set aside for this in the budget. This year, the Liberals committed to improving federal services and making them more efficient.

I would like to know how that is going so far.

• (1030)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce to the House and to my constituents in Vaudreuil—Soulanges that I will be giving them the opportunity to ask a few questions. I will be holding a town hall with my constituents in the coming weeks here in Ottawa, virtually and in my community.

I look forward to answering their questions in person and explaining how the 2023 budget will help them and their families in the years ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite talked quite a bit about affordability and its importance in

his speech, but the budget really does the opposite of addressing affordability. It adds billions of dollars of debt, which is going to drive up inflation. It adds new taxes, especially the carbon tax, which is going to make the costs of gas, groceries and home heating more expensive.

My question for the member opposite is simply this: If he is so concerned about affordability, why does the budget make life more unaffordable for Canadians?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, one thing I will say is that we differ on the definition of affordability. On this side of the House, we like to provide more support for Canadians when they need it the most. On that side of the House, they like to vote against all the measures we are putting in place, including the Canada child benefit and child care.

In the budget, we put money toward helping Canadians pay for grocery bills, which the Conservatives are voting against. We have money for dental care, which will put hundreds of dollars, if not thousands of dollars, back in the pockets of seniors, youth under the age of 18 and those with disabilities. The Conservatives are voting against it.

We have a different understanding of what affordability is, and it is a shame that the other party will be voting against all these measures.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the New Democrats have spent a lot of time working with energy workers and those who are trying to see a move toward a clean-tech economy. We have heard a lot of promises in the budget, but I cannot go back to workers in Windsor or Fort Mac without a legislative framework and tell them to trust the government. A legislative framework is needed.

They are talking about a sustainable job secretariat. Where is it? When they talk about a sustainable jobs partnership council, is this going to be legislated? I cannot go back to workers and say, "Hey, trust 'em. It's going to happen somehow. It's somewhere in the budget."

Will the government commit to putting those key elements into legislation with rights for workers to guarantee that we move toward a clean-tech economy with well-paying union jobs?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I know this is an issue that is extremely important to my colleague. It is one that is important to me. I spent 10 years in the environmental field prior to entering politics. For me, the proof is in the pudding.

Government Orders

We have been fighting for record investments in transitioning towards a green economy. This budget alone commits \$88 billion to make that happen. It means more charging stations across the country. It means continuing to fund the subsidies, the incentives to buy electric vehicles. It means investments of \$13 billion in bringing the factories that are going to produce the next-generation batteries for electric vehicles to Canada.

This is what we have been waiting for as environmentalists, as people who have been fighting for this for decades. It is finally here. It is paying off, and we are going to continue to invest in a transition towards a greener economy.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, respectfully, I would put forward that what we have been waiting for as environmentalists is to stop subsidizing fossil fuels. I respect what this member has done before being elected and while elected to work toward that. However, there are still four new subsidies in the midst of a climate crisis, totalling over \$3.3 billion in this budget.

What is he going to do to put pressure to put an end to that?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his commitment and dedication to the environment even prior to entering politics.

I would say that this budget continues along our promise to reduce our subsidies to the fossil fuel sector by 2025. It is a commitment that we made. It is one that I will be pushing for continuously behind the scenes, with many members of our caucus, to ensure that we meet this promise. I too want to be able to look my constituents in the eye and say that we kept that promise.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague and friend from Calgary Midnapore.

It is always an honour to rise in this place. Today, I speak in response to another Liberal budget failure. Budget 2023 and the budget implementation bill do not work for the people who do the work. More will be spent, but Canadians will actually get less. During a time when Canadians are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet, the finance minister and the Prime Minister just made things a lot worse. I will explain how that came about.

Conservatives had these three clear demands for the budget: lowering taxes on workers, including scrapping the carbon tax; ending the inflationary deficits and wasteful spending that is creating the cost of living crisis, plus driving up inflation; and building more affordable homes for Canadians. In other words, Canadians believe that Canada should work for the people who have done the work.

However, the budget meets none of our demands. Instead, what the finance minister and the Prime Minister presented were more Liberal tax hikes, more deficits and more inflationary spending. The budget includes billions of dollars of new inflationary debt and taxes.

I surveyed individuals, businesses and municipalities in my riding to better understand how the cost of living crisis has been impacting them financially. Seventy per cent of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner residents who participated in the survey do not be-

lieve that Canada's economic situation will improve in 2023. In fact, 70% of respondents expect that their personal financial situation will be the same as or worse than it was in 2022. Overall, they have no faith in the Liberal government's ability to offer hope for their financial stability or future prosperity.

Maybe this is why: In budget 2023, tax revenue has increased a whopping 92% from 2015 and now sits at \$261 billion more than the last time Conservatives put forward a budget. It is no wonder taxes are so high. Spending is up to \$456 billion from \$280 billion in 2015. That is a 63% increase in just seven years. Low-income and working-class people will suffer the most because of the Liberal deficits and inflation. In fact, this budget will add about \$4,200 per family in new government spending, with taxpayers left holding the bag.

While we are on the topic of bags Canadians cannot afford to be holding, we can talk about grocery bags. The wasteful spending of the Liberals has caused the cost of food and groceries to skyrocket. Their so-called grocery rebate is actually a GST rebate. It is really just lipstick on a pig. It will provide a meagre \$234 for a single adult and \$467 for a family. This does little to cover the rising cost of food that the Liberals' own inflationary deficits and wasteful spending have helped to create.

What is worse is that the Liberals think that they are helping, but as we all know, "Canada's Food Price Report 2023" predicts that a family of four will actually spend nearly \$1,100 more on food this year alone. Anyone who has been to a grocery store lately will know that this is not even the worst of it. The small one-time Liberal payoff is lost in the inflation and ever-increasing carbon tax.

Speaking of taxes, the Liberals raised payroll taxes on workers and small businesses in January of this year. A worker making about \$66,000 a year will be forced to pay an extra \$255 to the mandatory Canada pension plan and an extra \$50 for employment insurance tax. That is a \$305 increase per worker, meaning that, in a family with two working parents, the parents will be required to spend over \$600 in new taxes right off the top of their paycheques. There is also a cost per business. With so many new taxes and existing tax increases, 86% of the people in my riding believe this will make life much more difficult.

● (1035)

That leads me to the carbon tax. We know that the carbon tax, as has been shown, does nothing to protect the environment. Rather, it simply drains the pocketbooks of Canadians, who are just trying to heat their homes, get to work and drive their kids to events.

Government Orders

Of people polled in my riding, 78% supported the removal of the carbon tax. Of businesses that responded to my survey, 100% indicated that the carbon tax was having a negative impact on their business.

What did the Liberals do? They increased the carbon tax on April 1, making it even more expensive for Canadians who are already struggling with the rising cost of living. The Liberals and their NDP coalition are completely out of touch.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has indicated that the carbon tax will cost the average family as much as \$847 more than the rebates they will receive in 2023. Canadians cannot afford that.

Speaking of things we cannot afford, the Prime Minister has spent more and added more national debt than all prime ministers in Canada's history combined. Even worse, he has no plan to balance the budget and control his inflationary deficits, which are driving up the costs of the food we buy, the goods we buy and the interest we pay. This is at a time when 50% of the municipalities in my riding are looking to the government to focus on reducing inflation.

Canada's federal debt for the 2023-24 fiscal year is projected to reach \$1.22 trillion. That is nearly \$81,000 per household. Moreover, in Canada's budget projections, there is neither a path to balance nor a plan to pay back the debt. This alone is a cause of the inflation and cost of living crisis that my constituents and all Canadians are facing.

The members opposite need to hear that 75% of the people in my constituency who responded to our survey said that the biggest issue they are facing is the cost of living. The second-largest issue is health care, and that was at 9%. That is the impact this cost of living issue is having on my riding.

There we have it. There is \$43 billion in new debt, and nothing in the budget for working Canadians except new taxes.

It will not be the Prime Minister paying back the debt. He has no plans to do that any time in the foreseeable future. The Canadian taxpayers will be left holding the bag again.

Canadians need a government that will make life more affordable for them, and the Conservatives are the only ones willing or even able to do that. After the election, when the Conservatives win a majority, we will lower taxes on workers. We will scrap the carbon tax and end the inflationary deficits and wasteful spending that are driving up inflation. We will build more affordable homes for Canadians. We will fix the damage the Liberals and the costly NDP coalition have caused and get back to common-sense solutions that work for Canadians who do the work.

• (1040)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this budget builds on the actions taken over the years to support vulnerable Canadians. It also builds on such actions as investing \$1.2 billion into artificial intelligence, quantum computing, other advanced technologies and the critical minerals strategy, which was strengthened by the critical minerals infrastructure fund last year. In this budget, we have invested \$1.2 billion into space technologies.

What is the hon. member's reaction or opinion on the investments the current budget is making into the technologies of tomorrow

so that we can secure a place at the forefront of the advanced technologies in the world?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, of course, any government needs to be continuing to plan for our future, build infrastructure and plan for where technology is taking us. However, I look back to what my constituents have told me in a recent survey we finished in March, in anticipation of what the budget could be.

We asked what the government should focus on to support long-term economic growth and job creation. Here is what they told me: The number one thing my constituents said, at 21%, is that we need the natural resources and energy sector. Number two was agriculture, number three was small business, number four was manufacturing and number five was new technologies. There was then a three-way tie among tourism and hospitality, the service sector, and green technology and renewables. My constituents have made it very clear what they expect from the government.

• (1045)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague pointed out that taxpayers will be paying about \$50 more into the EI system.

Personally, I do not mind paying more to help others when it fulfills a need. However, I see two problems when people are paying more but the system does not work and has yet to be improved, despite the promises made. Even now, only 40% of people who lose their jobs qualify for EI.

Could my colleague talk about this sort of dichotomy that exists when contributions increase but services do not?

[English]

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I agree that there is frustration in the workplace with increased taxes, but, like my friend, most Canadians do not mind paying for protection for if they lose their job. However, the fight we have as Conservatives, and what my constituents are really against, is that it is coming at a time when they are struggling. Businesses are closing in my riding. Business owners are saying they do not know whether they are going to make it through 2023. All these added costs for the workplace, employers and employees are, at this time, inappropriate.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was really struck by my hon. colleague talking about taxpayers being left to hold the bag. Let us talk about the bag that taxpayers have to hold for the leader of the Conservative Party's digs.

Government Orders

It is a 19-room house at 9,500 square feet. He has a private chef and servants. Who is paying for that? It is not him. It is the taxpayers. There are two water meters at his house. One bill was \$4,107 in April, and then there was a bill for \$7,556 in June. What is this guy doing with all that water? There has been \$1.4 million in repairs over 10 years, but then it costs \$170,000 a year just to keep it clean for him. Let us not even talk about if someone gets invited to his summer parties.

Canadians cannot afford this guy, and he has the gall to tell senior citizens that they should not be able to get free dental care. I am not buying that.

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I did not hear a question. It seems that the NDP coalition supports the government. I am sure Tommy Douglas and Jack Layton are turning in their graves.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the wonderful citizens of Calgary Midnapore.

On March 28 of this year, the Deputy Prime Minister said, "I have never been more optimistic about the future of our country than I am today." She said, "Budget 2023 will deliver new, targeted inflation relief for the Canadians who need it most; stronger public health care, including dental care for millions of Canadians; and significant investments to build Canada's clean economy. At a challenging time in a challenging world, there is no better place to be than Canada.

The budget is supposed to be about finance and numbers, yet something does not add up. If there is no better time to be in Canada than now, then why can Canadians not afford to eat? Justin Trudeau's inflationary spending has caused the—

• (1050)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member knows that we cannot use the names of current members of the House. This is not a new rule.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister's inflationary spending has caused the cost of food and groceries to skyrocket. One in five Canadians are skipping meals. People are now going to food banks and asking for help to end their lives, not because they are sick, but because they cannot afford to eat.

This government's rebate will give \$234 for a single adult to cover the rising cost of food, which its inflationary deficits helped to cause. Canada's Food Price Report 2023 predicts that a family of four will spend up to \$1,065 more on food this year, which is \$598 more than the \$467 rebate they will receive. At a \$305 increase, the Prime Minister's grocery rebate just gives money back to Canadians that the government had clawed away from them with its tax increases. It will not solve the cost of living crisis for many struggling Canadians who are already over the edge.

Finally, the Liberal government is still raising taxes on restaurants and breweries already struggling to survive by increasing the excise tax on alcohol by 2% of the expected 6.3%. This temporary cap in the increase of the excise tax on alcohol is only for one year, but I am sure we will see that it will continue.

If this is such a great time to be in Canada, then why is there a disincentive to work? Why is there a disincentive to start a small business? Why is that so? It is because, just this year, the Prime Minister raised payroll taxes on workers and small businesses, and now a worker making above \$60,600 will be forced to pay an extra \$255 through the mandatory Canada pension plan, according to the CTF. This worker will also have to pay an extra \$50 through employment insurance tax, which is a \$305 increase. The grocery rebate, once again, gives back to Canadians what has already been clawed away. In addition to being a difficult time for Canadians, it is also a difficult time for workers to be incentivized and for Canadians to want to start a business.

I come from a small business family. I recall my dad saying to me in our store, "Don't give that bag if you don't have to because it cost 10¢." That is how concerned we were about money at the time, and there was tension around the dinner table. This government's legislation is not helping that, and certainly not this budget.

If this is a great time, and there is no better place to be than Canada, why are Canadians stressed about getting to work or getting their kids to school? Why are people who just want to be warm called polluters? That is what is happening. The Prime Minister's carbon tax will increase to 14¢ per litre, which it did on April 1, making it more expensive for Canadians to heat their homes and get to work. As well, by 2030, the Prime Minister's two carbon taxes could add up to 50¢ per litre to the price of gasoline.

If there is no better place to be than Canada, then why do Canadians have to give so much back to the government to get so little back? The Parliamentary Budget Officer himself showed that the carbon tax will cost the average family between \$402 and \$847 in 2023, even after the rebates. How can the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance possibly say that there is no better plan to be than Canada?

If there is no better place to be than Canada, then why can Canadians not afford a home? The dream of home ownership has died for young and new Canadians under the Prime Minister. Nine out of 10 people who do not own home say that they never will. The down payment needed to buy a house has now doubled, and the minimum down payment on an average housing has gone from \$22,000 to \$45,000 across Canada.

Government Orders

Average mortgage and rent payments have nearly doubled since our recent Prime Minister took office. Then, the average monthly payment on a new house was \$1,400, and today it has gone up to over \$3,100. In 2015, the average rent in Canada for a one-bedroom apartment was \$973, and today it is \$1,760. The average rent in Canada for a two-bedroom apartment was \$1,172, and today it is \$2,153.

• (1055)

When the Prime Minister took office, people needed only 39% of an average paycheque to make monthly payments on the average house. That number has risen to 62%. By every objective measure, things are more expensive and Canadians are taking home less, but “there is no better place to be than Canada.”

In the weeks leading up to the release of budget 2023, the Liberal government signalled an intent to rein in its spending. In fact, the finance minister made this promise to Canadians. She said, “that is one of our primary goals in this year’s budget: not to pour fuel on the fire of inflation. So...we will exercise fiscal restraint.” The government has done anything but exercise fiscal restraint.

When I was young, I was told that a budget worked like this: We bring home this much money. We spend this much money. We have this much money left. We knew, and we know, budgets do not balance themselves. The Prime Minister, the finance minister and government have yet to learn that. In this budget we see that the Prime Minister has added more debt than all other prime ministers combined, and he has no plan to balance the budget and control his inflationary deficits, which are driving up the cost of the goods we buy and the interest we pay.

Canada's federal debt for the 2023-24 fiscal year is projected to be \$1.22 trillion. That is nearly \$81,000 per household in Canada. There is no path to balance the budget in the current government's projections. The deficit for 2022-23 is up to \$43 billion, and in 2023-24, the deficit is projected to be \$40.1 billion. The fall economic statement projected a \$4.5-billion surplus in 2027-28, and budget 2023 now projects a \$14-billion deficit in 2027-28, which is as far as the projections go.

I started this speech by saying that on March 28, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said, “there is no better place to be than Canada”, but why can Canadians not afford to eat? Why is work disincentivized? Why is gas so expensive? Why must we pay such high taxes? Why can no one afford a home?

The government simply cannot manage the books. This does not add up.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's prosperity has been built on natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals, metals, forestry products, and the hard work of several generations of Canadians, including current day seniors.

Another natural resource that is opening up for our future economic growth is the entire food chain of critical minerals, from mining and processing and conversion, to their use in the manufacture of batteries in electric vehicles and everything that is coming up.

I would like to ask the member about her comment on the tax credit that has been given in this budget to attract investments into clean electricity, clean hydrogen and clean manufacturing.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, while we always need to look forward to the future, I think it is very important that we also stay focused on the present and what Canadians and the world need. We have had other nations ask us for our oil and gas, and we have turned them away. It is always very important to think about the future, but I also think we need to focus on what we have and need now.

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, even though I do not entirely agree with my colleague's analysis, there is something I will agree with. I agree that workers are struggling at work and I also agree that in other regions of Canada and Quebec there are workers in situations where they lose their job and the EI program does not cover them or just leaves them behind. EI is being referred to as a payroll tax.

Does she not think that, as part of government spending, it would have been important to increase the minimum wage, enhance the employment insurance program and come up with good anti-scab legislation, which does not exist in Canada and denies workers' rights? Is that part of the programs your party is in favour of?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): My party is not in favour of anything.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank the Bloc Québécois for its Bill C-290, which is currently before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

Of course we agree that workers' rights are important. I think that we can also agree that the government and the Prime Minister are to blame for the current strike.

Based on the questions I got, it is clear that we agree on a lot of things concerning workers' rights and the government's responsibility.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know, with housing, that we are not going to be able to deal with the housing crisis unless we start curtailing inflationary investor activity. The Conservatives are doing a lot of talk about giving money to developers, but we know that developers are not known for social enterprise or for helping out folks; in fact, they are for lining their pockets. Therefore, I wonder why the Conservatives are focusing on municipal permitting when there are so many private sector investors who are responsible for the current housing crisis.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, we have expressed continually, both in our platform and in our policy, that we are for supply at all levels of the spectrum and with all players of society. Certainly, while these non-governmental entities are important, we also need to work with developers as well.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

I am very happy to rise today to talk about Bill C-47, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, and other measures.

With our made-in Canada plan, the 2023 budget will put money in the pockets of Canadians, helping them meet the challenges of today and tomorrow while building a safer, more sustainable and affordable Canada for Canadians across the country.

The key measures of the budget implementation act include providing for automatic advance payments of the Canada workers benefit; doubling the tradespeople's tools deduction; enhancing registered education savings plans; banning animal testing in the cosmetics industry; strengthening Canada's supply chains and trade corridors; and, among other things, continuing our efforts to support Ukraine by taking action against Russia.

Once again, our government has introduced a responsible and inclusive budget. It is a budget that is responsive to the needs of all Canadians. It is a budget that takes into account the climate emergency and the need to take action today to guarantee the future of our children and grandchildren.

I am pleased to see that the budget will improve the lives of Canadians across the country. In particular, there is the new grocery rebate, which will put up to an extra \$467 in the pockets of eligible families of four so that they can continue to eat properly. This new rebate will help 11 million Canadians who need it the most.

This measure is in addition to the relief we quickly put in place last year, including doubling the GST credit, which is highly appreciated; introducing a new quarterly benefit for Canadian workers of up to \$2,400 for low-income families and families earning minimum wage; providing a \$500 top-up to the Canada housing benefit for low-income renters; reducing child care costs across the country; providing the Canada child benefit, which amounts up to \$7,000 this year; and introducing a climate action incentive to be paid into the bank accounts of eligible Canadians. These are examples of real measures aimed at supporting Canadian families.

What can I say about dental care costs? Thanks to our new program, we will have a direct impact on the health of Canadians of all ages. Although some here in the House still underestimate the importance of good dental health, we are aware of the positive impact it has on people's lives. Good teeth help build self-esteem. A nice smile is always the best calling card.

Oral medicine tells us that some dental and periodontal diseases can have broader consequences such as cardiovascular and lung problems, digestive disorders, and pregnancy- and diabetes-related complications, among others. This program shows that we can do a

Government Orders

lot for Canadians when we decide to work together toward a common goal.

Back home in Châteauguay—Lacolle, more than 330 children under the age of 12 have already benefited from the expansion of the program in Quebec. We also want to work with the Quebec government to improve access to dental care for other vulnerable populations.

The 2023 budget proposes other important measures to help Canadians financially. In particular, it cracks down on junk fees, including unexpected, hidden and additional fees, to continue to ensure that businesses are transparent with prices and to make life more affordable for Canadians. The budget also proposes automatic tax filing for low-income Canadians so that more people can have access to all the benefits and support to which they are entitled.

• (1105)

Let us talk about two measures in Bill C-47 that are extremely relevant for citizens in my riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle. The first is the doubling of the tradespeople's tools deduction. This increase in the maximum deduction for tradespeople's tools from \$500 to \$1,000 is very important as a support to tradespeople. We need to encourage our contractors and subcontractors so that they can build and renovate houses and commercial buildings. This deduction offsets the increase in the cost of tools and represents our recognition of the importance of tradespeople's work.

The second measure is the automatic advance payment of the Canada workers benefit. We propose automatic advance payments of the Canada workers benefit for workers who were entitled to the payment the previous year, starting in July 2023 for the 2023 tax year. It is very important to help workers with their current cash flow before next year's tax season. Workers will receive a minimum entitlement for the year through advance payments based on the income reported in their tax return for the previous year, and any additional entitlement for the year will be paid when they file their tax return for the current year. This measure will provide, in three advance payments, up to \$714 in total for a single worker and up to \$1,231 in total for a family.

The 2023 budget invests in the future of Canadians, but it is also aimed at ensuring the future of the planet. Our made-in-Canada plan will make it possible to develop a clean economy, fight climate change and create quality jobs and careers for today and for future generations.

Government Orders

If I had the time, I could talk about the new tax credits for clean investments that will support Canadian companies that manufacture clean technologies, such as electric vehicles, or that process the critical minerals key to the manufacture of solar panels.

However, I will conclude by mentioning another very important measure in the budget implementation bill for Canadians, who are very concerned about animal welfare. I am talking about the measure prohibiting animal testing for cosmetics. This measure will amend the Food and Drugs Act to prohibit the testing of cosmetics on animals in Canada. It will also prohibit the sale of cosmetics relying on data derived from animal testing to establish the safety of the product, subject to certain exceptions. Lastly, it will prohibit deceptive or misleading labelling concerning animal testing for cosmetics.

Budget 2023 is a prudent and realistic budget. Bill C-47 will help ensure that we continue to make progress on things that matter to Canadians, namely, building a clean, healthy economy that can bring prosperity, middle-class jobs and greater vibrancy to communities across the country. By focusing on a green, healthy and clean economy, the budget responds to the concerns of many Canadians, especially those in Châteauguay—Lacolle.

• (1110)

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, whose riding neighbours my own. We share the services of Anna-Laberge hospital, which is currently under expansion. This hospital is often cited in the news for its occupancy rates that are making life very difficult for both patients and staff. Most of the professionals who work there are really overloaded and need help.

The question I have for my colleague is very simple. Does she believe that what the provinces are being given for health and social services will really lighten the workload of professionals at Anna-Laberge hospital and reduce occupancy rates? Does she really think that the amount given by her government will improve the situation at Anna-Laberge hospital?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, with more than \$46 billion in health transfers, the provinces will be getting new money. I truly believe in the separate jurisdictions of the various levels of government. The province will be taking steps. The expansion of Anna-Laberge hospital is an example of how the Quebec health ministry takes the concerns of Quebeckers into account.

We will continue to work with all the provinces, but more directly with Quebec, to ensure that the public has all the care it needs and to meet the needs of the workers who supported it in difficult times.

• (1115)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard from veterans about the gold-digger clause, which was implemented after World War I to prevent women from marrying veterans for their pensions and benefits. The Liberals promised to fix this. For eight years they have been in government. I know my colleague heard about this from veterans in her riding.

Blair Meadows, a veteran from Qualicum Beach in my riding, cited, “If I marry after the age of 60 and pass away before my spouse, she won’t receive any of my benefits.” This 100-year-old law needs to be abolished. It is an archaic regulation that really needs to be fixed.

Does the member not agree that this is discriminatory against veterans, people who put their lives on the line, and leaves spouses in poverty? This is unacceptable. Does my colleague agree that this needs to be fixed by her government?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the question has to do with pension and pension regulation. I did dabble in this in my previous life. I agree that there are many pension agreements. As the hon. member no doubt knows, these pension agreements were made over time and they reflected the mores and norms at the time they were developed. Is it time to look at them again and modernize them? There are many pension agreements. I could go into more detail about the incompatibility of many pension agreements, but I will not go there. Definitely, it is valid concern and one that needs to be looked at.

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, someone was stabbed yesterday in my riding. Although it is too early to confirm whether mental illness was a factor, I wonder if my colleague could talk about how our integrated approach to improving mental health care, particularly with an investment totalling nearly \$200 billion, will help people who need mental health support.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, it is actually my colleague who is really the expert in this area, but I can confirm that my constituents certainly appreciate the investments that the federal government is making in mental health supports. Canadians really appreciate the additional resources.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always find it such an incredible honour to rise on behalf of my constituents in London—Fanshawe and to be the voice for them in the House. I want to thank them for that opportunity, as always.

Government Orders

I also want to thank my constituency staff. They have been working so hard, helping thousands of people in London. We are in the middle of another successful tax clinic, which ensures that people have the free help they need to file their taxes. We are contacting folks to ensure they know about the additional money we secured for them in the housing benefit and the GST rebate.

We are helping people reunite with their families or to immigrate to our country, so they can contribute to the social and economic wealth that we have here. We are helping people to get their passports, or figure out their EI claims or their pensions, and so much more. I really want to thank them for all the work they do.

My constituents are doing what they can to navigate through the housing crisis, the labour shortage, inflation, the health care crisis and climate change. It is getting so much harder for people.

Now we have to throw on top of that the fact that the government has failed to negotiate a fair contract with public servants for two years. I am so worried about how my office will continue to help people, help my constituents, because the government has failed to ensure that those workers get a fair collective agreement.

I want to take a minute so the House can hear some of the voices of those folks in London who are on strike right now.

One said, “We really don't want to strike, but we have to because we're fighting for all workers' rights. Right now, with the cost of living and inflation, we're really falling behind.”

This is not a cushy job. Our average employee makes \$35,000 to \$65,000 a year. Many union members are single income earners. They have second jobs. One of their federal colleagues works in pizza delivery.

Mandy talked about the fact that so many of her colleagues had to use the food bank. They cannot afford to feed their families. They cannot afford child care. They cannot afford a roof over the head. Inflation is taking its toll. The strike is a last resort for them. She said, “None of us want to be on strike. We're here because we need to. We tried to raise our concerns, and they're not being heard.”

Chris, who has worked in the federal public service since 1985, said, “We don't get any respect. I just want to go home and cry at night because I've worked so long and so hard, given my whole life to working as a servant to the government. And when we want a raise, and they won't even talk about it.”

I am so proud of the work that my office does for constituents of London—Fanshawe. I am often frustrated by the things we cannot do. For all the successes we do get, we could not do it without those PSAC workers.

When I ran in 2019 and 2021, I promised my constituents, on their doorsteps, that I would fight for fairness and real solutions. Like those on strike with the PSAC, people in my riding just want fairness. They want a government that makes decisions with their best interests at heart and a government that does what it can, instead of having this incredible opportunity that it wastes. It makes decisions that keep itself in power or it helps those who already have so much power and wealth. It gives that power to them, not to everyone else.

My idea of a successful government is one that takes power that has been given to it in good faith by all people and redistributes it fairly to all people, that creates long-term solutions, that builds programs and that expands on supports.

When my caucus colleagues and I were elected, we were determined to deliver just that for people. Not being the government party is challenging, especially when I know that so much more could be accomplished. When we entered into the agreement with the current governing party to not cause an election in exchange for progress on a number of key policy areas, we did so because we needed to build something.

We have not gotten everything we need, and I reference this in terms of the budget. It is not an NDP budget. However, this budget includes initiatives that we think are really important, things that would not be there if New Democrats were not there.

First and foremost, of course, is dental care. This is a really important initiative that will allow millions of Canadians, who up until now have not been able to get their teeth fixed, that opportunity. We worked hard to ensure that by the end of this year, all children under the age of 18, all seniors and all people living with disabilities would finally get access to dental care. That has real consequences. It affects their ability to get and keep a job. It affects their sense of self-confidence in socializing with others. It affects the way that other people look at them. It prevents them from enduring constant pain and other long-term health problems.

A few weeks ago I was at the Wright Clinic in my riding of London—Fanshawe. The Wright Clinic is run by Dr. Ken Wright and a number of incredible people. They provide dental services at a low cost, or at no cost, because they know what that means to people in our community.

● (1120)

I met a woman who spoke to me about the fact that for over 10 years she had been screaming into her pillow because she could not deal with the pain. She could not study, she could not work and she could not focus. That pain took over her entire life. She found relief because of folks at the Wright Clinic, who do this incredible work. She found a new future.

A fellow who was also there talked about the fact that he could not keep a job because of the way he looked. He was able to get a brand new life because he had a brand new set of teeth. That is just incredible. Those are the things for which the New Democrats are fighting. The creation of this dental program has long-lasting benefits. That is the role of the government. It equalizes, it pulls people out of pain, it saves them money. Dental care is just one victory.

Government Orders

There are a lot of other victories that the NDP was able to get in this budget. I would love to talk about them, but I am sure you will cut me off, Madam Speaker.

I want to move on to discuss the biggest thing I see that is missing from this budget. Of course, that is housing. We all know that the housing market is out of control. In fact, housing has been made a commodity when it should be a human right.

In 2015, a house that sold for \$150,000 in my neighbourhood in Pond Mills now sells for \$400,000 today. In my neighbourhood, rents have soared by more than 25% over the past year. In March, rent for a one-bedroom unit was over \$1,700, while rent for a two-bedroom unit was the average price of about \$2,100. That is an increase of 27.3% or 24.3% from the year previous, respectively.

Sadly, we see very little in this budget around housing and solving that crisis. To be perfectly honest, I think that past governments, consecutive Liberal and Conservative, do not really want to address it. They do not see it as a problem they need to solve because they see the housing market as just that, a market. Except housing is actually a human right and requires government to invest in it. The trouble is that government has not invested in it directly. No government has directly built housing for over 30 years.

We now have the revamped national housing strategy introduced by the Liberal government, but that has a lot of problems, with a haphazard approach to the way we deal with affordable housing. It has placed a lot of hardships on the not-for-profit organizations that actually want to do that work.

In November 2022, the Office of the Auditor General released a report exposing all the major issues with the national housing strategy. Programs have not created the targeted number of units that are required and many of those are not what is deemed to be affordable. That is unacceptable.

This crisis needs a solution. We need to preserve affordable homes and we need to build them faster. The NDP has a plan for that, of course, and the government can take that great idea as it has taken so many.

The first steps we have to take are to preserve affordable housing and prevent renovation. We need to create an affordable housing acquisition fund to allow not-for-profit housing providers to purchase affordable housing when they come on the market and to keep it permanently affordable and out of the hands of for-profit housing profiteers. We have to put a moratorium in place on the acquisition of affordable homes by housing profiteers, so not-for-profit housing providers do not have to compete with them.

Jack Layton was an inspiration for so many, and for me as well. I think of him as a parliamentarian. He always said that we needed to not just be an opposition party; we had to be a party of proposition. We need those good ideas that we know work for people and put them in the hands of people. We have to ensure that those solutions go forward. Dental care and our housing plan are just two solid examples.

People are scared. London—Fanshawe folks talk to me all the time. They do not know how they are going to survive. Before the pandemic people were just getting by. They just had their heads

above water; they were treading water. Now it feels like they are sinking further and further below that surface. People are lined up at food banks in record lineups. We have a generation that has given up on the dream of owning a home. People see the consequences of that.

There is a lot to be angry about, but at this time when there is so much division in our politics and everyday conversations, we need to find a way to work together. That is what we are trying to do here with the government. The New Democrats are working together and we are working to find that leadership and really good solutions for folks.

• (1125)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned her constituents in London and their concerns about health care. I agree. Health care is in crisis. All that Canadians should need for health care is their health card, not a credit card.

The budget will invest \$198.3 billion in funding for the provinces and territories, including \$46 billion more in additional funding. We want the provinces to use this funding to help access to family doctors, to reduce the backlogs, to support health care workers and to improve the mental health system.

I would like to know from the hon. member what she thinks about this additional new funding the federal government is providing to provinces and how best it can be used.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, additional money is good. It is fine. It is a step. However, the money he talked about, the majority of it, was actually already calculated. The \$46 billion extra has to be shared over 10 years over all the provinces and territories, so that is actually a drop in the bucket of what is required.

One of the things the New Democrats brought forward in an opposition day motion was to eliminate loopholes on privatization of health care, and that is one of the huge issues that is taking money away from people who need it within our health care sector. The government voted no.

Those are the major problems I see and the major problems we need to fix. We need action, not words.

Government Orders

• (1130)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke about housing attainability and affordability. Other than the actual affordability of groceries, homes and all that, young people are despondent right now. They are not angry or upset. They feel like they have been lied to or let down by the government as it relates to their lives being better vis-à-vis housing affordability and attainability.

I am wondering what the hon. member would say to those young people, who are doing everything right. They have university educations and are getting good jobs. They cannot afford down payments or mortgage payments. Even if they had been able to, now with interest rates increasing, that affordability crisis has become even greater. I wonder what she would say to young people about what is going on right now.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I hear it too. Young folks in London—Fanshawe do not know where to turn, and there is a hopelessness around that. It is unfortunate. It used to be the federal government and provincial governments hand in hand would directly build housing, and since 1995 we are short about 15,000 to 20,000 affordable units built every year by governments. That consistent decision by federal and provincial governments not to build housing has created this crisis. We need to be able to directly and quickly build co-ops and not-for-profit housing centres, and have rent geared to income so we have that balance. We need to focus a lot less on developers and people who are making a ton of money off rental income for their benefit and are not being appropriately taxed. We need to put that back into the housing stock.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I, too, believe that social equity must be factored into a budget. What bothers me a little is that they are introducing programs that fall under Quebec's jurisdiction. That was also the case in the last budget.

Dental health is very important. It is part of a holistic approach to health. Consequently, in Quebec, children have preventative care because that is where it has the most impact.

Now, the government has decided to invest \$13 billion in a program that the federal government is incapable of managing. It is not investing in federal social programs, such as those for seniors and the unemployed.

What does my colleague think of the issue of weakening social programs that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must give the hon. member for London—Fanshawe about 20 seconds to answer the question.

The hon. member has the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, it is important we recognize a lot of the good things that have been done across provinces, but it is not just children who need support with dental care. Everybody needs that support. Certainly, seniors in her riding I am sure need that support as well.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The interpretation does not seem to be working. Could the hon. member repeat her reply?

She now has 15 seconds left.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, it is incredible some provinces are doing some of that work to support children with dental care, but I know a lot of seniors, and I am sure in her riding as well, need that support, as well as people living with disabilities. In fact, everybody needs it.

One of the key things the federal government needs to do is put forward those social programs to equalize and make—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must resume debate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my dear colleague, the member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

What is a budget implementation act? What are we doing right now? The government tabled a budget. In a budget, a government lays out the measures that it intends to take. To implement the measures set out in the budget, legislation must be tabled to execute what is stated in the budget.

I feel I ought to remind all those watching that the budget, which is very lengthy, held many disappointments for the Bloc Québécois. I would like to point them out because I care deeply about seniors, and there is nothing in the budget about them. Every time I organize events in my riding, seniors remind me that they feel like they have been forgotten by this government.

As well, there have been symposia, conferences and studies on the housing crisis. It is well documented that we are in the middle of a housing crisis, yet there are no specific measures in the budget to address that crisis.

Clearly, we are also a long way from the EI reform that the Liberal government has been promising since 2015. There is nothing in the budget on that.

There is also a major disappointment in terms of the environment. This budget still talks about carbon capture and storage, when we have known for many years that this technology is not good, that it is not ready and that it does not get the job done. In a way, the government is using this to ease its conscience with regard to the environment, but in reality, these are just backdoor subsidies for oil companies. Pretty much everyone knows it. By saying that it will fund research into carbon capture and storage, the government is trying to pull the wool over the public's eyes and ease its own conscience.

Government Orders

The funny thing is that, in 2008, when I was the Bloc Québécois critic for natural resources, I participated in a study on carbon capture and storage that reached the same conclusions as are being reached today. The same committee is still conducting studies, still documenting the issue of carbon capture and storage, and still reaching the same conclusions, namely that it is not really the best technology for reducing greenhouse gases. However, it allows the government to assuage its conscience, and in particular, it allows oil companies to feel like they are doing something for the environment.

However, I would like to talk about certain promises and principles that were in the budget but not in the budget implementation act.

I want to talk about the promise that the government made in the budget about anti-scab legislation. I believe that promise to pass anti-scab legislation is even part of the agreement between the Liberal Party and the NDP. I am talking about this because I know that my father René is watching right now. He is sort of the reason I am talking about anti-scab legislation, which is so important but which is absent from the budget implementation act. My father was a tradesman for much of his life. He was a union activist who unionized his workplace and always said that it was important to stand up for labourers' working conditions.

Today, there is nothing in the budget implementation act about anti-scab legislation, even though it would have been easy to include it. The budget implementation act is 430 pages long and amends 57 acts, in addition to the Income Tax Act. This lengthy bill also grants royal titles to Charles III. It is a really dense bill, but there is no mention anywhere of the possibility of us passing anti-scab legislation together. It would be very easy to do that, because the Bloc Québécois and the NDP agree. I would imagine the Liberals also agree, since it was mentioned in their budget. I do not understand why the government did not take advantage of its omnibus bill to include a bill that would certainly be supported by three parties in the House.

● (1135)

Quebec has had anti-scab legislation since 1977. I think this is long overdue. We are behind the times in not having that legislation at the federal level, because it is so important for governing the work of our union members.

I raised this issue because my father is watching. He must be proud to hear me defending an issue that he himself defended when he was a union member in his company. He was a sheet metal worker, so he was right on the shop floor. He realized that there were problems with working conditions, so he rallied the workers. He created a union and negotiated for all the workers. It is for his sake that I raised this issue today, and it is also for his sake that I am raising the issue of EI.

The minister's mandate letter mentions EI reform. For years, and even recently, the minister has been telling us that she was holding consultations. However, the consultations have ended. She said she was consulting, but the consultations are over. She will not stop consulting, but everything is documented. There is a consensus that the Employment Insurance Act must be reformed. This is an old act

that is not modern, that is not suited to the labour market for either employers or employees.

It is hard to understand why the minister does not see it as a priority. In a way, I both understand and do not understand why. I think she may have good intentions, but it is cabinet, the executive, that does not want to move ahead for the simple reason that the government is using the surplus in the EI fund to pay for the surplus EI claims that it received during the pandemic. Basically, the fund is spending \$24 billion to pay for what happened during the pandemic. I will note that people had to leave their jobs not because they wanted to, but because their workplace shut down. They were forced to apply for EI. It is only natural that claims would go up.

The EI fund took out \$24 billion to cover all those costs. Now things are a bit better, and it has seven years to balance out. That is the minister's magic excuse, namely that until the account is balanced again, sometime in the next seven years, she cannot move ahead on reform or propose anything else that would improve the Employment Insurance Act. That is bad.

All the spending incurred during the pandemic was covered by the government, but now employer and employee contributions are being used to pay for all the jobs lost during the pandemic. It was not by choice. I think the government could have covered part of the cost and left the money for workers and employers alone, so that everything that is needed to reform the Employment Insurance Act could be done.

It is frankly laughable how every new minister's mandate letter or list of priorities states that this is a priority. It is not really a genuine priority. Every excuse or event gives the minister a reason to put off the reform.

I am very serious about this. The government must stop beating around the bush and reform EI once and for all so that Quebec and Canada can have modern legislation to govern the new reality of the labour market.

The Bloc Québécois will always be there to defend unemployed workers, employers and businesses that are struggling with replacement workers as we speak, such as the Port of Quebec and Océan remorquage in Sorel-Tracy.

It is very clear which side the Bloc Québécois is on. It is on the right side, the side of the people.

● (1140)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. She spoke a lot about workers. However, she did not mention official languages at all. Budget 2023 provides for more than \$1 billion for official languages, on top of the roughly \$2 billion already allocated under the action plan.

I have no doubt that, like me, my colleague thinks it is important to protect French in Quebec and Canada and to protect anglophone minorities in Quebec. I would therefore like her to share her thoughts on that.

Government Orders

• (1145)

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. However, I really wish she had asked me the same question that she asked the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle about the \$200 million for mental health care. She can come back to that later.

I would have liked to answer her that I really wonder what that \$200 million will do for people who are suicidal or in distress. The fact is that all of the mental health resources in Quebec are funded by Quebec, and direct assistance is administered by professionals in Quebec. Since she did not ask me that question, I will not get into detail about it.

With regard to official languages, I would say that we are very pleased that the francophone communities outside Quebec will now have more means of defending their language, because they really are in the minority. As for Quebec, my answer would be so long that the Speaker would have to cut me off. I will just say that the bill is clearly a compromise and that the Bloc Québécois finds it to be unsatisfactory.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal member did not ask the question about mental health, but I will, so that my colleague can answer it.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague very much. As everyone knows, I am a social worker, a member of my professional association and a manager of a Quebec CISSS. I use the term “CISSS” because I know Quebecers will understand what I mean. One thing I can say for certain about mental health is that no professional who delivers mental health services directly to residents in my riding, or in the riding of the member for Sherbrooke, receives any federal funds.

Federal funds pay for help lines and websites. I am not saying that this is wrong. However, when someone is in distress or experiencing a crisis and thinking of committing suicide, they call their local community service centre's crisis line. I am looking forward to seeing what percentage of this \$200 million will find its way to the Suroit area's local community service centre.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I looked at the budget and was really disappointed to see, once again, a lack of investment in ending the current crisis of gender-based violence. We know that rates of violence have increased since the pandemic, yet the amount that has been allocated in this federal budget is beyond disappointing. It is like women in this place are always a second thought, like we are the last thought in any budget. I am wondering if my hon. colleague can provide her thoughts on that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, first, I want to remind my colleague that her party supported the budget. It needs to be said. Second, I fully agree that, when it comes to intimate partner violence or gender-based violence, more money is essential.

In Quebec, we have a comprehensive network of shelters for abused women or men facing challenging circumstances. There are even support groups for abusive men. In Quebec, there is a network

of community organizations throughout Quebec that provide assistance in that area. Yes, it is true that more funding is needed. However, it is not really the federal government's job to fund the resources dedicated to this problem, since it falls squarely under provincial jurisdiction.

Now, I think that the secret here is that, if Ottawa and the NDP had listened to what the provinces were asking for, which was a greater increase in health transfers, the provinces would have had the option to invest more or less money in certain social or health issues as needed.

The dental care program is being imposed on the provinces through a centralizing objective. I am not saying that teeth are not important, but I think that we are facing other problems that are just as important and they were equally deserving of more funding.

• (1150)

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-47.

First, I would like to salute my constituents in Thérèse-De Blainville. I have not done that in a while. I salute them because when I am not here in the House, it is always a pleasure to meet up with them back home to talk about the challenges they face and see all the work they are doing every day for the community. It is wonderful.

Among other things, these days, I make a point of visiting seniors in their homes to talk about their concerns in the current economic context. This relates to the budget, of course. Seniors are as worried as everyone else about inflation.

They are also worried about being able to afford housing, which is very important. Seniors may have gained a nest egg by selling their home, but now that they are living in a residence, they are exhausting the little bit of money they have left. Some of them are worried, while others are even thinking of moving and are anxious about finding affordable housing.

Seniors are also concerned about their health. They asked me what is going on with the Canada health transfers. All that is to say that their concerns are real.

I would remind the House that the Bloc Québécois voted against the budget. We explained to seniors why we voted against it. Bill C-47 is a translation of the budget. As my colleague was saying, this omnibus bill is more than 400 pages long and fixes 59 pieces of legislation. It is so complex, it makes my head spin. The government promised it would no longer introduce huge bills like this one that make us lose focus.

Government Orders

What is more, Bill C-47 paves the way to recognizing King Charles III, which is rather mind-boggling. What a circus. I did not need to tell everyone I meet about this, because it is significant. This is what the government is focusing on when there are bigger fish to fry.

The Bloc Québécois has always said that it is here to stand up for and promote the interests of Quebeckers. We will vote in favour of what is good for them, and we will vote against what is not good for them. If that happens to be good for all Canadians, then that is good as well.

My approach to analyzing the budget is based on the definition of social safety net. A government that has a vision, that claims to be democratic, progressive and supportive of workers, should have made sure to correct certain inequities in its budget.

What is the social safety net? I am not going to give an introductory course on the subject. I am sure that people know that the social safety net is a set of social programs and public services that offer support to citizens. Two of those social programs fall exclusively under the federal government's jurisdiction. They are old age security for seniors and the employment insurance system for workers.

There is nothing in this budget about old age security. It simply maintains the discrimination that was created in the previous budget by increasing old age security only for those over the age of 75. What is the difference between a 73-year-old senior and a 75-year-old senior? There is no justification for it.

Rather than investing in jurisdictions that are in no way its responsibility, the federal government should spend money to strengthen its social programs.

• (1155)

With regard to seniors, Canada ranks near the bottom of all OECD countries in terms of income protection for seniors. This social safety net needs to be strengthened, and yet no mercy is being shown.

This is all to say nothing of the broken promises regarding the EI system. We have lost count of them. There is no excuse for the government's failure to state its intention in the budget to reform employment insurance once and for all. It needs to be modernized in line with the current labour market. It needs to be brought up to date and out of the last century. An employment insurance system acts as an economic stabilizer. It needs to guarantee workers who lose their jobs a minimum income that allows them to weather the storm.

The government claimed many times during the pandemic that it would take too long to reform employment insurance, saying that the EI system had too many flaws, that it was full of holes. There are a number of players involved. The government promised, virtually hand on heart, to reform EI. We are not asking for this just for the fun of it. We are asking for it because it is necessary. What does the government not understand about that?

I have said it before and I will say it again. Will the government have the courage to reform the employment insurance program,

given that it knows exactly what needs to be done, or will it shamefully abandon all of the workers who pay into the EI fund?

Only 40% of workers manage to qualify for EI because the eligibility criteria are discriminatory, particularly against women and young people, most of whom hold non-standard jobs.

The EI system does not cover self-employed workers. We saw that during the pandemic in the arts, entertainment and cultural sectors, which depends heavily on those workers. The government promised to correct those shortcomings. The Prime Minister even promised to do so last summer. What is stopping the government from taking action? Is it going to use the economic situation as an excuse?

On the one hand, the government is saying that all is well, that the unemployment rate is at a record low, that there is a labour shortage and that it will not reform the system. On the other hand, the government is saying that there is a risk of a recession and that now is not the time to reform the program. That does not make any sense. The government is twisting and dodging to avoid the issue. The time to reform the EI program is now, when we are not in a period of crisis.

I think the minister has free rein to do that. She needs to have that free rein. Members of her caucus are affected; they are dealing with the fallout from flaws in the system as well. She has all the solutions in hand. We invite her, we urge her, to introduce a bill that proposes new criteria to guarantee that workers, people in the regions and workers in seasonal industries can access this social safety net. That is what needs to happen. It would have been nice to hear the government stand up and strongly advocate for what we believe to be most fundamental, and that is ensuring equity and fairness.

In closing, public services are fundamental to ensuring equity in a strong state. Robust, high-quality public services rely on decent working conditions for employees. On that note, I would like to emphasize that we support and stand with the federal employees who are currently fighting for decent working conditions in the public service.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in her speech, my colleague stated that she would be voting for what is good for Quebeckers.

Does she consider providing a grocery rebate for 11 million Canadians, increasing the Canada workers benefit, doubling the tradespeople's tool deduction, and capping the inflation adjustment for excise duties on alcohol at 2% to be good for Quebeckers?

• (1200)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, we hear these kinds of comments in the 10-minute speeches by my colleagues opposite.

Government Orders

I am not saying that these are not good things. However, the government is not addressing the basic issues, the fundamental issues, the most dire issues. The government is basically not there for workers. I can say, for example, that the appeal board is a good measure. The Liberals finally saw sense, made this change and included it in this omnibus bill. However, all the other issues—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, does my colleague have anything to say about Bill C-215 on employment insurance? The government refused to recommend this bill for royal assent even though it would have provided welcome assistance to workers struggling with serious health problems. It refused to increase the number of weeks of EI sickness benefits from 26 to 52. Is this important to the member?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, this issue is extremely important.

This was another wasted opportunity. However, it may still be possible. It took 50 years to address this problem and raise the number of weeks from 15 to 26. As every study shows, this is not enough. People who are gravely ill are being left without enough protection to recover in dignity.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member very often raises the issue of EI, and I want to thank her for that.

My colleague from Winnipeg Centre, earlier today, raised the point that the supposed feminist government is not really looking after the issues of women. We know that, when EI was first formulated, the participation rate of women in the workforce was less than half of what it is today. The EI system was not built for women.

Can the member share some comments on why it is so important to get this modernized for women after seven years?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, several measures in our policies discriminate against women. Employment insurance is a prime example. When the employment insurance program was initially designed, it reflected the fact that workers work full time and that male-dominated jobs were the most important. That may have been appropriate at the time.

Now women are being discriminated against in two ways. The eligibility rules work against them because the rules are designed for those who work 40 hours a week. If a person works only 20 hours, they are necessarily discriminated against.

Then there are pregnant workers, women who carry a child and then lose their job. The rules currently discriminate against them because they will not be entitled to employment insurance if, when they return, they no longer have employment. They are no longer entitled to their benefits. They won in court and the ruling was appealed. I hope that decision will be upheld. The EI program needs to be reformed. It is essential and a matter of fairness.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I disagree with the member. We can think of the Canada workers benefit, the supports from the government for the trades and unions, the \$10-a-day child care and the credit for tools. In many ways, the government has been there for the workers of Canada.

Can the member give a tangible example of any other government that has done more than this government has for the workers of Canada?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, my colleague truly believes what he is saying. I would not be able to sleep at night if my beliefs held that we cannot support workers.

I would remind the House that there is a universal program in Quebec, the program for early childhood education services, that has been around for more than 25 years. The Liberals have decided to feel good about themselves by introducing a similar program across Canada when that does not fall under their jurisdiction. They spent \$30 billion when the people for whom the government—

• (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough Centre.

Canada's recovery from the recession caused by COVID-19 has been remarkable. In fact, we have the strongest economic growth among G7 countries over the past year. There are about 830,000 more Canadians in the workforce now than there were before the pandemic. The unemployment rate is near its record low. The labour force participation rate for Canadian women in their prime working years is at a record high of 85.7%, supported by our Canada-wide system of affordable early learning and child care. Inflation has fallen for eight months in a row, and the Bank of Canada predicts it will fall to just 2.6% by the end of the year.

With these strong economic fundamentals, the 2023 budget comes at an important time for our country and for the world. It is also a time when we must take bold steps to ensure our country's prosperity and set an example for the rest of the world. Canada is the best place to be in these challenging times, in a complex world.

Government Orders

In the near term, we must contend with a slowing global economy, elevated interest rates around the world and inflation that is still too high. Over the past year, the government has introduced a series of new targeted measures to help those who need it most pay their bills.

In the months and years to come, Canada must seize the remarkable opportunities arising from two fundamental shifts in the global economy. The first is the race to build the clean economies of the 21st century. The second is our allies' accelerating efforts to friend-shore their economies by building their critical supply chains through democracies like our own.

[*English*]

In budget 2023, the federal government would provide new, targeted inflation relief to Canadians who need it most. Specifically, the budget proposes to introduce a one-time grocery rebate. The rebate would be delivered through a one-time payment from the Canada Revenue Agency, as soon as possible following the passing of the legislation. For 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and families, the grocery rebate would provide eligible couples with two children with up to an extra \$467, single Canadians without children up to an extra \$234 and seniors an extra \$225, on average. This would be delivered through the goods and services tax credit mechanism.

Today, fewer women have to choose between their family and their career. In February, the labour force participation rate for women in their prime working years reached a record 85.7%. As of April 2, six provinces and territories are providing regulated child care for an average of just \$10 a day or less, significantly ahead of schedule. All other provinces and territories remain on track to achieve \$10-a-day child care by 2026.

The Government of Canada has entered into an asymmetrical agreement with the Province of Quebec. This will allow for further improvements to its early learning and child care system, where parents with a subsidized reduced contribution space already pay a single fee of less than \$10 a day. Under its asymmetrical agreement, Quebec has committed to creating 30,000 new child care spaces by March 2026.

Budget 2023 announced that financial institutions would be able to start offering a tax-free first home savings account to Canadians as of April 1, and the money saved could be deducted from their income tax come tax time. This would give prospective first-time homebuyers the ability to save \$40,000 on a tax-free basis, with a maximum allowance of \$8,000 saved per year.

• (1210)

To ensure that Canada's national housing strategy programs can continue to deliver new, affordable homes for Canadians, especially for the most vulnerable, the federal government is taking action. Budget 2023 announced the government's intention to support the reallocation of funding from the national housing coinvestment fund's repair stream to its new construction stream as needed, to boost the construction of new, affordable homes for Canadians who need them the most.

During the pandemic, the federal government provided unprecedented funding for provincial and territorial health systems, person-

al protective equipment, vaccines, treatments and testing, as well as for public health measures for everything from schools to public transit. In other words, Canada was able to weather the worst of the pandemic thanks to the support provided by the federal government, which amounted to eight dollars out of every \$10 spent to fight COVID-19. This significantly contributed to the budgetary surpluses that many provinces and territories are enjoying today.

Budget 2023 lays out the federal government's plan to provide an additional \$195.8 billion over 10 years in health transfers to provinces and territories, including \$46.2 billion in new funding through new Canada health transfer measure, tailored bilateral agreements to meet the needs of each province and territory, personal support worker wage support and a territorial health investment fund. This funding would be used to improve and enhance the health care Canadians receive; it is not to be used by provinces and territories in place of their planned health care spending. With historic federal health investments and a range of new measures to ensure that Canadians receive the care they need, budget 2023 would help deliver the improvements to health care that Canadians expect and deserve.

Nobody should have to choose between taking care of their teeth and being able to pay the bills at the end of the month. In budget 2023, the federal government would be moving forward with a transformative investment to provide dental care to Canadians who need it. In addition, budget 2023 proposes to provide \$13 billion over five years, starting in 2023-24, and \$4.4 billion ongoing to Health Canada to implement the Canadian dental care plan. The plan would provide dental coverage for uninsured Canadians with an annual family income of less than \$90,000, with no copays for those whose family income is under \$70,000. The plan would begin providing coverage by the end of 2023 and would be administered by Health Canada with support from a third party benefits administrator.

[*Translation*]

Budget 2023 is a direct response to essential short- and long-term objectives, such as reducing inflation through targeted inflation relief measures; strengthening our public health system, including dental care; developing Canada's clean economy through significant investments that will create more middle class jobs; and maintaining the lowest deficit and lowest net-debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

Government Orders

We are proud to present budget 2023, a plan to build a stronger, more sustainable and more secure Canadian economy for everyone, including indigenous peoples. With new measures and important investments, budget 2023 will help everyone share in the opportunities and prosperity that Canada provides. Budget 2023 reaffirms our government's commitment towards indigenous peoples as we continue to build on the progress we have made together since 2015 on walking the path of truth and reconciliation with indigenous peoples, building strong, diverse communities, and protecting the environment and fighting climate change.

We will continue building a country where everyone can reach their potential. We have the remarkable fortune to live in the greatest country in the world, a country filled with people who can do big things.

• (1215)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, whom I recently worked with on issues of violence against women.

I would like to come back to that, because I know that she is very interested in feminism. How is it possible that a government that claims to be feminist is not providing better support to women who are victims of domestic violence by increasing health transfers to shore up our social services system, particularly in Quebec? How is it possible that a government that claims to be feminist is not keeping its promise to reform EI? We know that the people having the most issues with EI right now are women who, for a variety of reasons, have difficulty qualifying for the program.

My colleague also talked about the issue of mothers, pregnant women.

I would like to hear my colleague talk about these two critical issues, namely increased health transfers and EI reform. That is feminism.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague for her question. I would also like to thank her again for supporting the bill that she mentioned in her question. Her help is really a generous gift, and I agree with her.

That is why, as I mentioned in my speech, fewer women have to choose between their families and their careers. Paying \$10 a day for child care is something that will truly help women continue their careers and stay in the workforce.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, within the budget, the government has committed \$80-plus billion in tax credits toward investing in a newer, greener economy. In the budget, it is very clear that it is there. It is not a secret, but with the announcement of Volkswagen creating a new plant near St. Thomas, Ontario, there is a tremendous amount of secrecy, in terms of what that \$13-billion investment would actually be going toward.

I am wondering, if it is no secret what the tax credits are in the budget, which are coming from hard-earned taxpayers' money, why there is this level of secrecy in terms of this contract with Volkswagen. Should Canadians not know what that deal is all about, consid-

ering the fact that the government would be spending that money on that investment?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Mr. Speaker, I am a little puzzled by my colleague's question. I am just wondering if he is against the investment. That is what it sounds like, but I would like to say that Canada has one of the cleanest electricity grids all across the world. We are very proud of our record on this, and it is very important to continue with green technology to make sure that our environment and our economy can both work at the same time to improve the lives of all Canadians and contribute to the world as well.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a previous life I was a carpenter, I was a chimney sweep and I was a roofer. I ran a small business from my home, and we used to feed our kids french fries to help us get the mail-outs done in time at the end of the month. I had to go to the dentist and try to cut deals so the kids could get their teeth fixed.

I looked at the leader of the Conservative Party's LinkedIn, and I was astounded. He has never actually had a job; what he has had is 19 years of free dental care, and he has the gall to tell senior citizens and working-class families that they are not entitled to free dental care.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague why she thinks the leader of the Conservative Party thinks he is so much better than people who have actually worked their whole lives.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Mr. Speaker, it is incredible that there are people who would still want to be against dental care in this manner. Dental care helps all Canadians. It helps those who are most in need. As we know, dental issues can cause other health issues as well. It is very important that we allow those who have the least to be able to maintain health security for themselves when they are just trying to live their lives. As my colleague said, he lived on a tight budget growing up. These are the people we want to help. This is why we are here.

• (1220)

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always welcome the opportunity to rise in this place on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Centre. Today, I rise to speak to a very important piece of legislation, the budget implementation act, which I believe contains a host of measures that speak to the concerns they share with me every day. When I am attending events, knocking on doors, or meeting with constituents, they often talk to me about the cost of living. This is an overarching issue that manifests itself in many ways.

A long-standing issue of concern is access to safe, adequate and affordable housing. Rental housing, when it can even be found, is even more unaffordable and often old and inadequate for the families that want to call our community home. The dream of home ownership, once considered a birthright for hard-working Canadians, is becoming for many a seemingly impossible dream.

Government Orders

It is part of the larger issue of affordability in many aspects of everyday life. While the data shows that Canada has fared better than most other G7 countries when it comes to inflation, that is little comfort to my constituents, who go to the grocery store and find so much of their paycheque just going to put food on the table. This has them looking warily to the future. Will they ever be able to get ahead of the daily grind? Will they be able to find the money to save for their future or to put away for their children's education?

It is because of concerns like these that the government is laser-focused, including in budget 2023, on affordability. With our made-in-Canada plan, budget 2023 would ensure that Canadians have more money in their pockets and are able to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, while building a Canada that is more secure, sustainable and affordable for people from coast to coast to coast.

Let us start with everyday expenses. While our opponents across the way want to lower taxes for the wealthiest 1% and hope the money will somehow trickle down to the middle class and those working hard to join it, decades of failed Conservative economic policy show that this does not work. Instead, our government is focused on delivering targeted inflation relief directly to the most vulnerable Canadians to help support them with the cost of living.

That is why, in budget 2023, our government is providing new, targeted inflation relief to the Canadians hardest hit by rising food prices. Budget 2023 introduces a one-time grocery rebate, providing \$2.5 billion in targeted inflation relief for 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and families. The grocery rebate will provide eligible couples with two children with up to an extra \$467, single Canadians without children with up to an extra \$234, and seniors with an extra \$225 on average. An individual or a family would have to be entitled to the GST credit in January 2023 and have filed a 2021 tax return in order to receive the grocery rebate. This additional support would be delivered by the Canada Revenue Agency as soon as possible following the passage of the legislation, using the GST credit system.

Shortly after the budget was released, I visited Atiya's Fresh Farm, a grocery store in my riding, with the Minister of Transport to talk about the grocery rebate. I spoke with several mothers, who told me how the extra help from the grocery rebate would allow them to make better choices when doing the family's grocery shopping. For families in my riding, this will mean being able to buy healthier options and more fruits and vegetables, instead of cheaper, less nutritious, processed food. That is especially important for children, to ensure they have the energy they need to grow and be active, as well as succeed in their schooling.

Speaking of schooling, with budget 2023 we are also making it easier for families to save for and invest in their children's future. We are proposing to improve registered education savings plans by increasing limits on certain RESP withdrawals from \$5,000 to \$8,000 for full-time students, and from \$2,500 to \$4,000 for part-time students. We are proposing to allow divorced or separated parents to open a joint RESP for their children, which would make it easier and more affordable for parents to save for their children's education.

• (1225)

We are increasing Canada student grants by 40%, providing up to \$4,200 for full-time students. We are raising the interest-free Canada student loan limit from \$210 to \$300 per week of study. We are also waiving the requirement for mature students, aged 22 years or older, to undergo credit screening in order to qualify for federal student grants and loans for the first time, which would allow up to 1,000 additional students to benefit from federal aid in the coming year. This follows other support for students announced by our government, including permanently eliminating interest on Canada student loans and ensuring that borrowers do not need to make payments on their loans until they earn at least \$40,000 per year. We are committed to working with students in the years ahead to develop a long-term approach to student financial assistance in time for budget 2024.

Also, on affordability, I have already seen in my community how the Canadian dental care plan is making a difference for lower-income families. It is allowing families that have been putting off dental care for their children to be able to get their children in to see a dentist and make their oral care a priority. Dental care is health care, and an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. By expanding the program this year to include seniors and other lower-income Canadians, we are both helping make life more affordable and ensuring healthy outcomes for more Canadians.

I would also like to talk about housing, which, as I have said, is a real issue for my constituents. While the Conservatives did nothing on housing for a decade and still like to pretend the rental market does not exist, our government takes a holistic approach to housing that includes both homeowners and renters. Everyone should have a safe and affordable place to call home. However, for too many Canadians, including young people and new Canadians, the dream of owning a home is increasingly out of reach, and paying rent has become more expensive across the country.

Centred by the national housing strategy, over the past year the federal government has taken significant steps towards making housing more affordable for Canadians. We are building on that in budget 2023 by announcing that financial institutions will be able to start offering the tax-free first home savings account to Canadians as of April 1, 2023; publishing a guideline to protect Canadians with mortgages who are facing exceptional circumstances; and committing an additional \$4 billion to CMHC to implement a co-developed urban, rural, and northern indigenous housing strategy.

Government Orders

This builds on other measures we have taken, such as a two-year ban on non-residents or non-Canadians purchasing residential property; a 1% annual underused housing tax on the value of residential property owned by non-residents or non-Canadians that is vacant or underused; a new tax-free first home savings account to allow Canadians to save up to \$40,000, tax-free, to help buy their first home; an accelerator fund to remove barriers and incentivize housing supply growth, with the goal of creating at least 100,000 net new homes across Canada, and much more.

As I have said before, no one level of government holds the key to solving the housing crisis in Canada. It will take cities, provinces and the federal government all working together. There is still much more to do, but I am glad that, after a Conservative decade of darkness, Canada again has a government that is a willing partner in housing.

While our government is focused on programs that make life more affordable for Canadians, such as dental care and child care, the opposition on the other side is opposing us every step of the way. The Leader of the Opposition even called our child care plan, which is saving families hundreds of dollars every month, a “slush fund”. It is clear who is looking out for Canadian families.

Let us pass this budget and keep the focus on affordability for everyday Canadians.

• (1230)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would actually like to talk about the topic of a slush fund.

The housing accelerator fund, which will be put out by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, has billions of dollars set aside for, well, we just do not know. We do not know exactly what it will go towards. I am concerned for municipalities, because I have heard from a local chief administrative officer who had no idea what the project does. How is this going to tangibly build homes that people can live in?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, housing is a really important issue for my constituents.

We believe in a long-term approach to housing. We have a national housing strategy, which is based on a 10-year plan for building more affordable housing for Canadians. In the budget, we are building on that.

We will make sure that housing becomes more affordable for all Canadians. It should be a right for all Canadians to have a safe place to live and to call home.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about housing.

I think the logic is very simple. It is about supply and demand. The problem in my riding—and I think it may be a problem in my colleague's riding too, as it is throughout Quebec and Canada—is that there is not enough housing supply. There are several reasons behind this, including the proliferation of Airbnb, people living alone and so on. All this means that there is far less housing available. The priority should have been housing construction.

I welcome the measure included in the budget for a \$4-billion increase over seven years for urban, rural and northern housing for indigenous people. However, there is nothing for housing construction for the rest of Canada. In my view, the biggest impact of the labour shortage is that people cannot find housing in our communities. That is a problem.

Why has the government not taken concrete action on housing construction?

[*English*]

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, housing is an issue that one government cannot resolve. As the federal government, we are working with provinces and municipalities to make sure that we build more affordable housing.

In budget 2023, we have taken some measures to make sure we build more affordable housing, including announcing that financial institutions would be able to start offering tax-free first home savings accounts to Canadians as of April 1. We are publishing a guideline to protect Canadians with mortgages who are facing exceptional circumstances. We are committing an additional \$4 billion to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to implement a co-developed urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy. We have announced a housing accelerator fund to make sure that municipalities could work to build more affordable, better housing for Canadians.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although I thank the member for the comments on housing, the Liberal government is tinkering around the edges in a crisis.

I am happy to see that there are structural investments in this budget around dental care, which will be long-standing and eternal for Canadians. However, what the government really missed was housing. Where is the investment in affordable housing in this budget?

We knew operating agreements that were made 40 years ago were going to expire. Ten years ago, we should have had our eye on it. Municipalities had their eye on the fact that operating agreements were expiring this year, last year, next year and the next three or four years. Where is the investment in affordable housing in this budget?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her concern in making sure that Canadians have access to affordable housing.

Government Orders

Housing is not something that we could resolve in one or two years. Since we came to power in 2015, we have worked on building a national housing strategy, which is a 10-year plan to make sure that we build more affordable housing. In this budget, we have taken certain measures to make sure that Canadians get access. We have announced a housing accelerator fund, which is a great investment and which would help in building more affordable housing, working with more municipalities and making sure that they cut the red tape to have quicker processes for building more affordable housing.

• (1235)

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I share a border. Our ridings are next to each other. I am always aware of the great work that she is doing with young people in her community, with her youth council and with the local schools.

In the budget and past initiatives, we have seen \$10-a-day child care and dental relief. We have seen relief on interest rates, as well as many programs, such as the child benefit, which help young people in our community.

Could the member tell us what the response has been from young people in her community?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, since we came to power in 2015, certain measures that we have taken are really helping to make a difference. They include the Canada child benefit, \$10-a-day child care and programs to make sure that we provide more support to students. When I talk to people in my youth council, they tell me how these additional student grants are helping them to make sure they can concentrate more on their studies. Many students find it difficult to find a job after graduating. However, they have some room in that they do not have to pay their student loans until they start earning \$40,000. That is really helping our young kids to grow and be more successful in life.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, who is actually my neighbour. His riding is right beside mine.

In talking about the budget, we should look at some numbers. The first number I want to talk about is \$176 billion. Government spending is up \$176 billion since 2015. That is a 63% increase in government spending in eight years. We might ask ourselves what all this spending has done for Canadians. It is a very reasonable question. That is a massive increase.

If I increased my home budget by 63%, I am going to guess my spouse and children might look around and ask, “Since the budget is way up, what is better? Have things gotten better here?”

Let us look at what all this spending has done for Canadians. Right now, there is a \$176-billion growth in government spending per year, and one in five Canadians is now skipping meals because life is so expensive and unaffordable. I was not an A student when I went to university, but I am smart enough to understand that this is a problem.

Let us look at this other number: 1.5 million Canadians are now using the food bank. Let us go back. There is \$176 billion more in government spending, and the result is that 1.5 million Canadians

are using the food bank. We can take that part out of the equation. Affordability is actually being able to buy groceries and live. We know that the affordability question is awful after all this government spending. Every Canadian we talk to would say that life is unaffordable. However, we can put that aside for just one second.

Let us talk about something else that is important for Canadians. We can talk about rent. Rent has almost doubled since 2015. There is \$176 billion more being spent, and one needs to pay twice as much for rent. We can imagine what that does to a family's ability to make ends meet. Families are now paying twice as much in rent. Have their paycheques gone up? Have they doubled? No, they absolutely have not, but the rent has.

It is the same thing if one wants to buy a house. Since houses are now so expensive and have gone up so much under the government, one now needs to put twice as much down as a down payment. People are thinking that their rent is terrible and unaffordable; maybe they should get out of the rental market and buy a house. What happens then? Now they need to have twice as much money as a down payment to buy that house.

Again, after eight years of the Liberal government, \$176 billion more is being spent per year. When we look at affordability, or the ability to make ends meet, Canadians are skipping meals and going to the food bank. On that metric, it is an F.

Let us look at what else is going on, such as with housing. Housing is extremely important. Rents have doubled. If someone wants to buy a house, they find that down payments have doubled. A recent survey showed that nine in 10 Canadians who do not own a house think they never will. We can let that sink in for a second. That is how bad it is. This is after eight years of a Liberal government and increasing government spending by \$176 billion.

To go back to my own house, if my budget had gone up by 63% and my spouse and children looked around and everything was more expensive, they might be asking me what is going on. They might ask what all this spending was for.

• (1240)

That is the incredible thing about it. Right now, we are in the middle of a massive public service strike. The Liberals massively increased the size of the government over the past eight years, as well as spending on the government, and still somehow managed to have 100,000 public servants go on strike. We are now on day nine. This is stunning incompetence.

Everything is more expensive. People cannot buy a house, and they can barely pay their rent. Government workers have walked off the job. That is the Liberals' record. It is astounding. When we look at all this, it has been financed with deficit spending, which adds to the debt. The debt is now \$1.2 trillion. Interest payments on the debt have also almost doubled to \$44 billion a year, soon to be \$50 billion a year.

Many Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, find it hard to get medical appointments or specialist appointments. We can imagine for a second what \$50 billion per year would do for health care. It would help to remove the lineups that Canadians are stuck in. When so many Canadians do not have access to a family doctor, it would help to hire more family doctors. Again, this is Liberal Canada after eight years.

The Liberals may not believe me; I find that often happens in this place. They seem to say they were spending all this money and ask why the Conservatives are talking about the problem. I will tell members why. It is because I get emails from people like Kim.

Kim sent me an email that says, "I am stretched so thin. I either pay bills or buy food because I can't afford both." Again, we should let that sink in. There is \$176 billion more spent per year by the government, and Kim is choosing whether to eat or pay bills. It is a disgrace what the government has done to this country and what it is putting Canadians through. Canadians deserve so much better than what the government has done. Kim goes on to say, "Food costs are ridiculous. Gas and heating keep going up. Is life better under this government? Not by a long shot."

Can we guess what the government's answer to the affordability crisis is? It is that the carbon tax is going up. The carbon tax makes everything more expensive because the farmer who pays the carbon tax on the fuel to run the farm passes that cost on to consumers. Then the truck that takes the product from the farm to be processed has a carbon tax. That is more expensive. The plant that does the processing has a carbon tax. That makes it more expensive. It then gets trucked to a grocery store, and there is a carbon tax. It makes it more expensive. The grocery store has a heating bill with a carbon tax. That makes it more expensive. If we wonder why Canadians cannot afford to eat, it is because the government just increases the carbon tax at every opportunity.

I visited a farm two weeks ago in my riding. Guess what its carbon tax bill was? It was \$17,000. The Liberals say the carbon tax is revenue-neutral, but it is not. The PBO has made clear that the carbon tax is making the lives of Canadians less and less affordable all the time.

I want to finish with an email from Daina. I got it just the other day. They said, "I want to express concerns for two full-time, very hard-working adults, one of which is a small business owner and in our home, so the home tax rebate doesn't assist us. We can't afford to bring a child into this world because of the costs."

This is from a young couple that somehow managed to buy a home. It says she bought it five years ago, so things were not as bad then. They are choosing not to have children because they are barely making ends meet. I know what the member is going to jump up and say, "What about \$10-a-day day care?" They know about it,

Government Orders

and they are still making this choice. For one thing, it is just not available for everybody. Not everybody gets it.

The government spends \$176 billion more per year, and everything is worse in this country. People are going to food banks. People are choosing between heating their homes and eating. People are choosing not to have children. That is the Liberals' legacy, and it is disgraceful.

● (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in so many ways I disagree with the member's statements. Let us take a look at what the Conservative Party has said.

Hundreds of millions going into billions of additional dollars being spent every year to support health care, \$198 billion over 10 years. Hundreds of millions of dollars going into billions of dollars every year to ensure that child care is more affordable. These are the types of needs that Canadians have and the expectations that Canadians have of the government to provide. The Conservative Party believes that the child care investment is nothing more than a slush fund. All the provinces' different political parties have signed on.

Is it still the Conservative Party's position that we should rip up the child care \$10-a-day plan? Is it the Conservative Party's plan to get rid of the tens of billions of dollars that we are putting into national health care? What is the Conservative plan? It does not have one.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, this is incredible. I just read two emails from the hundreds I have been getting about how tough life is even after all the spending. What does this member stand up to say? He asked if they know about the spending.

Of course they know about the spending. They know that all the spending has made their lives worse. That is what they know and this member stands here, effectively gaslighting Canadians, asking how dare they say things are so tough; look at all the money being spent.

They have spent the money in such a way that it has made Canadians' lives worse. We had a member just before who said the exact same thing. It was actually enlightening to hear that housing is unaffordable and all those kinds of things. However, their answer is to spend more money on things that are not going to make life better.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, members of the official opposition party have repeatedly mentioned the deficits being racked up by the government. They have also mentioned the Parliamentary Budget Officer's reports.

Government Orders

However, they are overlooking some information, including information from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. I would mention the tens of billions of dollars in funding announcements that remains unspent. In 2021-22, this added up to \$38 billion, and it was roughly the same amount last year. I would also mention the fiscal imbalance that is keeping funds in government coffers. This money comes from taxes paid by taxpayers. The situation has now reached a point where, in a matter of decades, the federal government will have settled all its debts stretching back to 1867, while the provinces and Quebec will be on the verge of technical bankruptcy, or will have lost much of their budgetary autonomy.

Is my colleague not outraged about this situation, this budgetary and financial hypocrisy, and the damage to the public and workers?

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to talk about deficits. What every prime minister up until this point accumulated to the national debt, the Prime Minister and the current government have doubled over the span of eight years. Think about that. All the history of previous prime ministers, a certain amount of debt, has been doubled. What has that done? It has significantly reduced the fiscal capacity of the government just on interest payments alone, I would suggest.

What could go into transfer payments to the provinces if the national debt was not causing \$50 billion a year just to service the debt? That is interest on the debt. Imagine what that could do to help the fiscal situation of the provinces. The growth of the government is contributing to that, \$176 billion a year more, and it is still not transferring enough to the provinces. It is a remarkable disaster.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce said the number one priority to help solve the labour market crisis is increasing spaces in child care. In fact they are saying to keep going because we are seeing more and more spaces open up because of the agreement with Canada and the provinces. As someone who ran a chamber of commerce, as someone who actually had children in child care as a single parent at one time, I know how important those child care spaces are.

Does my colleague not agree that this would be a very important measure to help solve the labour market crisis in this country? What does he have to say to the chambers of commerce in my community?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, child care is important. That is why we were the first government to actually send money directly to parents for children. That was back under former prime minister Harper.

While \$10-a-day child care sounds like a great idea, the problem is about how many spots and access people have to them; there are not very many. There are also lots of people who do not want to put their children into institutional child care. They want to take care of the children themselves or they want to put them into a family member's home or a neighbour's home.

To me this is so exclusionary. It is only open to a very small number of people. It is just not going to help enough.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our economy is stagnating, and that is not just in the last year or two, that has been going on for years. Let me explain. Average per capita gross domestic product is stagnating. In other words, average national income has not been growing. Per capita output has not increased in years. In fact, last year it was roughly the same as it was five years ago, in 2017. Flat per capita output, in the face of skyrocketing prices for assets like housing, in the face of skyrocketing prices for consumables like groceries, is the reason why households are struggling to pay the bills. It is the reason why Canadians are feeling the pinch. It is the reason why Canadian families are taking on ever-increasing amounts of household debt just to make ends meet.

Canada's flat per capita GDP is in marked contrast with what is going on in other advanced economies, which are rocketing ahead of us. Research by John Cochrane and Jon Hartley at Stanford shows that real GDP in Canada was just under \$44,000 U.S. per person in 2021. In the United States, it was \$61,000. That is shocking. American per capita GDP is now fully 40% higher than here in Canada.

However, even worse than the government's record over the last several years is the projection for the future. The OECD projects that Canada will only achieve 0.7% GDP growth this decade, putting us dead last among advanced economies. This projection is an indictment of the government's economic policies over the last eight years, and the government's own budget documents admit to this.

One chart in last year's budget, budget 2022, chart 28 on page 25, speaks a thousand words. It is titled "Average Potential Annual Growth in Real GDP per capita, Selected OECD Countries, 2020-2060". The chart says that Canada's projected real GDP growth per capita will be dead last among advanced economies. That chart is in the government's own budget documents.

The budget in front of us, budget 2023, does nothing to change this trajectory. The budget in front of us is the seventh budget. It should have been the eighth, but instead of the government presenting a budget in 2020, it proposed an unprecedented power grab by proposing to give the PMO the power to approve taxation and spending for an unprecedented year and a half. While the Liberals backed off from that power grab, they set a dubious record for the longest period in Canadian history without introducing a government budget, and their lack of budgetary planning is beginning to show.

The budget in front of us proposes billions in new spending in the form of consumption rather than investments for things like dental programs that are often covered by existing employer and provincial plans. Rather than meeting our international commitments to the rules-based international order by making much-needed investments in our defence and our military, the government has chosen to spread more consumption in the form of programs that will further fuel inflation.

The budget also proposes billions in new spending in the form of massive industrial subsidies. Failing to heed the lessons of the past, the massive industrial subsidies do not work. In fact, the finance minister said as much last month in Washington. She voiced concerns about large industrial subsidies and warned against “a new mutually sabotaging competition to provide ever richer corporate subsidies”. That was last month.

This month, the government has introduced massive new industrial subsidies in the billions of dollars for large corporations. None of these policies, gobs of new spending on consumption rather than investment and gobs of new spending for massive industrial subsidies, are working. Canadians' standard of living continues to decline, and many economists are now ringing the alarm bells.

• (1255)

I want to quote from a piece published by Jonathan Deslauriers, executive director at the Walter J. Somers Foundation, and Robert Gagné, a professor at the Université de Montréal. It states:

In 1981, Canadians enjoyed a \$3,000 higher per capita standard of living than the major Western economies.... Forty years later, Canada was \$5,000 below that same average. If the trajectory continues, the gap will be nearly \$18,000 by 2060.

This is an alarming analysis. In light of the recent \$13-billion subsidy announced for Volkswagen, I would like to quote another part of their analysis. The article states:

Canada now remains stuck in an interventionist logic dedicated to protecting the immediate interests of Canadian companies. Successive governments have failed to move on from protectionist reflexes and impose the necessary reforms: they should have adjusted the regulatory framework to stimulate the competitiveness of Canadian companies in the domestic market. Instead, Canadian companies continue to operate within an outdated institutional framework that does not value competitive forces.

Here is what the authors conclude if the federal government does not change course:

[G]rowth will remain inadequate and our standard of living will continue to quietly decline unless we put competition back at the heart of Canada's economic strategy.

None of this should surprise us. Massive industrial subsidies never worked in the past and they will not work now. They distort the price of capital, leading to a less efficient allocation of capital with the attendant declines in productivity and wage growth. Low productivity is the path to poverty. The only long-run determinant of prosperity is high productivity.

With respect to our aggregate GDP, our top-line numbers do not look too bad. However, our overall GDP growth is underwritten by Canada's massive population growth. We have one of the highest population growth rates in the world, including in the developing world. That massive population growth is masking low per-capita GDP growth. If the population goes up 3% but GDP only goes up 2%, people are getting poorer.

Government Orders

The master-of-the-universe types, the CEO types and the hedge-fund types are all fine with flat if not declining per-capita GDP growth, provided we have high population growth, because it means more customers for them by the millions, even if that average customer's disposable income is flat and if not declining, because the number of customers times the disposable revenue per customer equals total revenues. What the exact value of the number of customers is and what the exact value of the disposable income per customer is do not really matter if the multiplication of these two values is higher revenues because on the profit-and-loss statement higher revenues means higher profits, which means higher pay and bonuses for the master-of-the-universe types. Meanwhile, ordinary Canadians suffer to pay the bills as their per-capita income stagnates.

Let me finish by saying this: My parents immigrated to Canada. My father immigrated as a Chinese immigrant from Hong Kong in 1952. My mother immigrated as a Dutch immigrant from the Netherlands in the 1960s. They both left poorer countries and places to come to a much wealthier, more prosperous country. Decades later, the reverse is true. We are in big trouble. We are falling behind big time and we have a government that is utterly incapable of arresting this decline in our standard of living.

For all the reasons I have outlined, I cannot support the government's budget and I cannot support the current government.

• (1300)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know, we hear time and time again Conservatives stand up and indicate concerns about the deficit and the debt. Having gone through the pandemic, with respect to the massive investments in things such as Canada's health care system and child support and the amounts of money we are talking about, including the wage loss subsidy programs, CERB, the rent subsidy programs to support small business owners, literally keeping hundreds of thousands of jobs intact, supporting Canadians to be able to get through the pandemic and meeting the needs of health care going forward, do the Conservatives not believe those to be wise investments in Canadians or would they rather we had not done that?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, not once in my speech did I mention government debt or deficits. I focused on our declining standard of living.

Government Orders

In the five-year period from 2017 to 2021, economic output per capita was flat. We have not had any per capita growth, and that is why Canadians are struggling to pay the bills. The government has focused its economic agenda on consumption rather than investment. In the long run, only through investment, whether private sector investment or government investment in public infrastructure, are we going to get to higher levels of productivity, with the attendant increases in wages and prosperity for all Canadians, but the government has not been doing that.

In fact, it has been doing the opposite, which is why our per capita GDP is now much lower than that in the United States. Per capita GDP here is \$44,000 U.S., while it is \$61,000 U.S. south of the border. The American economy now has fully 40% higher output, per capita, than we have here in Canada, and that is affecting our ability to pay for social programs, such as health care and education.

That is what the government does not get and is incapable of addressing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about people's quality of life.

Agriculture is a sector where the workers' quality of life has been hit hard this past year. Our agricultural producers have been severely impacted by the cost of inputs and fuel. In Abitibi—Témiscamingue, costs could be \$40,000 higher this year than last just because of the cost of fuel. This has huge consequences.

Our farmers need cash flow. There is a rather interesting measure in the budget that would increase the interest-free limit under the advance payments program from \$250,000 to \$350,000. This helps farmers manage their debt a little better, but does not provide them with cash flow. If we want to maintain our agricultural production and food resilience in Canada, we need to make investments. Why are there none in the budget? What would the member have done?

• (1305)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I come from an agricultural riding that has many dairy and beef farms and farms that produce hay and other agricultural products. I really understand the importance of our agricultural sector and our farmers.

[*English*]

Agriculture is one of the few sectors in the Canadian economy that is a free trade sector and not heavily regulated by government, like the banking and telecommunications sectors are. What does the government do? It saddles our farmers with ever-increasing regulation and taxes, making it even more difficult for them to sell corn, wheat, soy beans, beef or pork on global markets.

The government cannot get anything right. We could be an agricultural powerhouse, but we are not. In fact, the second-largest agricultural exporter in the world is the Netherlands. It is far ahead of Canada. We have the second largest landmass in the world, and we are not taking advantage of it because the government has a completely misguided industrial strategy.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know there are 3.2 million Canadians who are underhoused.

Now, the government set out an ambitious agenda of inviting 500,000 new immigrants a year for the next three years, but it has no cohesive strategy on where they are going to live.

Desjardins has made it clear that we would have to increase all new housing starts by 50% in the next year, just to meet immigration. The provinces are saying they need money for non-market and social housing.

Does my colleague not agree that, after 30 years of Conservative and Liberal governments lacking investments in social housing, this is the time to invest in social and affordable housing?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, quite simply, the government is putting roadblocks in the way of constructing purpose-built apartment buildings in this country. It is almost impossible to build a purpose-built apartment building, which is why all the focus is on building owner-occupied dwellings. It is because the government has subsidies for owner-occupied dwellings through CMHC's mortgage insurance, OSFI's regulatory structure and Finance Canada's rules, while on the other hand it is putting up roadblocks to building apartment buildings.

That is the fundamental problem that the government is not even talking about, and it is something it should be focused on.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the House today. I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Granville.

It is always a great honour for me to stand in the House to speak on behalf of the great people of Don Valley East, representing communities such as Wynford, Flemingdon Park, Don Mills, Fenside and Victoria Village. It is really a true honour to represent these communities within a larger community. Without question, I would argue that my neighbourhood is probably the most diverse and vibrant community in all of Canada. However, I know some may argue that point in the House. We are all proud to be a part of our communities, and I cannot say enough how proud I am to be here today to speak to this important bill.

There is no question that Canadians are going through a very challenging time. Things were tough before the pandemic, but they were amplified during COVID. I grew up in my community, and there were always challenges in my neighbourhood, but it has become more difficult for people. We can see this clearly in my community and communities across this great country. With the increase in mental health challenges, and the lack of affordability, and even of social cohesion, people are having challenges.

Government Orders

However, it is our job in the House, as members of Parliament, to look for ways to bring people together, articulate the challenges we are facing as a society and bring forward solutions in the House to move forward. I think most people in the House would agree that that is our job as MPs. I have to believe that every single person in the House of Commons wants to look for ways to identify problems and bring forward solutions to alleviate some of these challenges.

We have seen these big challenges come forward, but we are making some progress. We have seen an increase in job creation in this country. Inflation has dropped from 8.1% in September of last year to below 4.5% today. There are 865,000 more jobs today than prepandemic, so we are making progress. Despite the rhetoric that comes from the Conservatives, we are leading economic growth in the G7. There is no question about that. Despite all of this success, we cannot ignore the challenges people are going through.

I believe we are all on the same page when we identify the issues and problems people are going through, but the Conservatives and the Liberals differ on one thing, which is the solutions we bring forward. The Conservatives will tell us that the best type of government is the smallest government we could ever find, one that minimizes and cuts, which we have seen before, to do as little as possible to assist people who need help. Under their leader, they have found the solution is to gather support by taking on the fear and anxiety out there to steer people into a discourse and a discussion not necessarily about how they can help Canadians, but how they can amplify the anger that is out there. It is the get-out-of-the-way approach of letting the market take control and everything will be fine.

I think that is a very simple, archaic and naive philosophy, which really ignores the belief that government itself can be used as a mechanism for the common good. I know that is true because I am living proof that good government programs can bring out the best in people. I see it throughout my community all the time. Government can be used as a force for good. It is the belief that we are stronger as a society when we work together, pool our resources and present solutions together.

On this side of the House, we believe that, if we work together and invest in the right programs and services, we can benefit society as a whole. I have seen this with my own eyes. We have seen this on a grand scale historically with investments in programs, such as our national health care programs and provincial education programs, and we have seen it more recently with the child care programs in Ontario and across the country.

However, we know without question that there is a stark difference between the Liberal approach and the Conservative approach. That is why I am a Liberal. When it comes to building good government, one that will invest in people, that is what drives me to continue to do the work I do.

● (1310)

The Conservatives and the Leader of the Opposition are doing something that we have not seen in recent decades in this country. It is usually reserved for a very right-wing international style of power pursuit, where they look for ways to tap into people's anger and actually amplify that anger.

It is kind of like when one sees two people arguing and there is a person on the sideline who is actually amplifying that frustration between the two people, looking for ways to divide those people. I think the Leader of the Opposition is in a position of power where he could use that role to not only critique government but also bring Canadians together. I would argue that the success of this country has been entirely built on the fact that we as Canadians have stuck together when times are difficult. The Leader of the Opposition stands on the sidelines, encouraging people to amplify their anger and frustration rather than offering them real solutions to the problems we face as Canadians.

Even when the solutions are offered to the Conservatives and to the Leader of the Opposition, such as those, for example, in this budget, or many of the initiatives that have been brought forward, they simply disregard those solutions. The Conservatives said that they would vote against the budget even before seeing the budget. To me, that says a lot. It means they are so embedded in ideology, so driven by the pursuit of power, that they are actually pushing all of these great ideas to one side to pursue something completely different.

Conservatives are not interested in exploring innovative new ideas, and I think that this is to the detriment of Canadians as a whole. I want to take the opportunity to tell Canadians what the Conservatives are voting against in this budget.

There is a grocery rebate. I have heard members opposite just disregard it as being a small amount that will not really make a difference. Well, it is a \$2.5-billion investment to help Canadians who are struggling to pay grocery bills.

There is the Canadian dental care plan. We are going to expand it so that it helps families who earn under \$90,000. This is an important program for people in my community and many communities across the country. There is also \$500 million over the next 10 years for a strategic innovation fund and \$14,400 of accessible money to students for post-secondary.

This is not part of a new plan. This is a long-term plan that we have had on this side of the House for many years now, to look for ways to continue to invest in people. They are our greatest resource in this country, and we will continue to bring forward ideas that ensure that people in this country have the best options going forward.

I have little hope in the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative Party when it comes to providing those solutions. Just imagine a party that does not believe in climate change, that will tell one to take one's life savings and invest them into cryptocurrency.

Government Orders

Do not get me wrong, I believe in digital currency. I think there is a pathway for it, but to suggest that one should take one's life savings and invest them to avoid inflation is irresponsible. It is irresponsible for anyone who wants to end up being prime minister of this country.

We know the approach that the Conservatives take. It is a very old-style approach of trickle-down economics in which, at the end of the day, the rich become richer and those who need the most help are pushed to the sidelines.

Many Canadians are frustrated. They feel this way, and we have to acknowledge that Canadians are feeling this way, but we have to take that energy and come together as Canadians to look for ways to bring us together, find solutions, and really build the country as a whole together.

I believe that there is hope in this country. There is an option that is opposite to what the Leader of the Opposition is offering, an approach that recognizes the problems we face, brings people together to better understand the issues, works with Canadians to find solutions and uses the strength of good government to leverage everything we can do collectively as Canadians to continue to put in place programs and services that strengthen our greatest asset, our greatest resource: our people, Canadians.

• (1315)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think we all bore witness to a bit of a comedy show here and a member who forgets that it is his leader who has divided this nation along many lines, including economic, race, faith, gender, etc. This is a leader of the Liberal Party, the Prime Minister, who has referred to people as racists and misogynists, and who has referred to not having to tolerate these kinds of people, yet the member speaks about division.

The one thing Conservatives are is reflective of the voices of Canadians in this place, and the Liberals can learn a lesson about reflecting the voices of their constituents as opposed to the government telling them everything.

I am wondering if the hon. member has any comments about his leader wearing racist blackface so many times that he actually forgets how many times it was. How come he did not condemn his leader for doing that?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, it is so interesting that when the only Black person on this side stands up to talk, the member brings up blackface. I think it is ridiculous. They are a joke on that side. They bring up issues in the House on economic policy, but a Black person stands up and he brings up this issue—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. When we have questions and comments, we wait for the question and answer to be heard.

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I find that we are getting into very dangerous territory when we see a white man in caucus attacking someone of colour over issues of race and then saying that this is about an issue of racism. That is way beyond the pale.

• (1320)

The Deputy Speaker: I believe this is descending into debate on the issue.

I will let the hon. member for Don Valley East defend himself.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in power, I was in the Ontario government, and I can remember that in their budget, they actually made cuts to refugees when it came to health care. It is a perfect example of the approach and style of the Conservatives when they get into power. It is about cuts. Imagine a Conservative government cutting refugee services in health care. It is unbelievable, but those are the kinds of services we get with the Conservatives in power.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party's role is to exaggerate the benefits of its budget to draw attention away from the things it is hiding and the major oversights. The role of the opposition parties is to cut through the Liberals' rhetoric.

It is all well and good for the Liberals to use “investing in people” as their slogan while completely forgetting about seniors, unemployed workers and unionized workers who are the victims of replacement workers. What a slap in the face from this party that taunts the opposition party about cryptocurrency while giving GST exemptions to those who mine cryptocurrency.

Will we get some consistency and respect for the Constitution in this budget at some point? That would be a welcome change.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I agree 100% that the role of any opposition member is to critique anything this government brings forward. That was exactly the point of my speech.

The Conservatives, the loyal opposition, are in a position of power where they can look for ways to critique and make suggestions for improvement to help Canadians. However, the number one piece, which is important when we are looking for ways to build this country, is to keep people on the same page, keep people together and stop dividing people and exploiting that divide in the pursuit of power.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party came to northern Ontario and said he was too busy to meet with any indigenous people, which I think sent a clear message. However, then he made all these jokes about electric vehicles. The leader of the Conservative Party has never had a real job, so maybe he does not understand this, but in northern Ontario, which is mining country, we are going to be seriously focused on EVs because of the economic opportunities. Then this morning, again I heard the Conservatives insinuating and attacking investment in a battery plant in St. Thomas.

Government Orders

As the Americans are tooling up for a complete overhaul of their economy, we have the Conservatives attacking and undermining EV technology and digital investment. I would ask my hon. colleague why he thinks the leader of the Conservative Party does not understand the basics of economics.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I got to spend some time with the member and, like me, he has had many different jobs. I have worked in restaurants where I had to clean the bathrooms. I have worked so many jobs in my life just to try to get ahead, and I think work experience is a really important thing.

As to the Leader of the Opposition, I think the member is quite right that this is the only job he has ever had. He is a professional politician. I think in order to be successful in the House, we need to take the life experience that people face every single day and bring it into forums like this so we can make the best decisions possible.

I would like to thank the member for the question and thank him for his commitment to Canada.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House to speak on behalf of my riding of Vancouver Granville.

I want to talk a bit about the measures in budget 2023 that would improve the lives of my constituents in Vancouver Granville and indeed individuals across Canada.

A lot of issues have been discussed over the course of the last little while. My friend and colleague just gave an important speech that reflected some of the challenges we have in terms of the need for good debate in this House. I want to start with things that hopefully we can all agree on.

First is the fight against money laundering. Money laundering has been a central issue in Vancouver and across B.C. These criminal acts threaten the integrity of the Canadian economy and put Canadians at risk. Just last year, the Government of British Columbia released the final report of the Cullen commission on money laundering. The Cullen commission highlighted major gaps in the current anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing regime, as well as areas for deepening federal and provincial collaboration. That is why I am so happy and so pleased to see that budget 2023 introduces a new focus on combatting money laundering and terrorist financing and closes these gaps.

The budget announces the government's intention to introduce legislative amendments to the Criminal Code to make it easier to investigate money laundering, strengthen enforcement capabilities and improve information sharing between government agencies. In particular, law enforcement would have the ability to freeze and seize virtual assets with suspected links to crime. Under these proposals, the CRA, law enforcement and FINTRAC would be able to share financial intelligence. We are introducing an offence for those who structure financial transactions to avoid FINTRAC reporting. We are also extending whistle-blower protections to employees who report financial information to FINTRAC.

These are just a few of the many ways we are working to end money laundering and ensure that no terrorists are hiding their money here in Canada. I hope everyone in this House can support those measures.

Budget 2023 also announced measures to protect Canadians from the risks of crypto-assets. We know that Canadians have invested in crypto. There is nothing wrong with that. I have invested in crypto. However, there is a big difference between investing in crypto and telling Canadians they should put their life savings in crypto to avoid inflation.

The crypto-asset market is extremely turbulent and is prone to high-profile failures such as those of FTX, BlockFi and Signature Bank. We are all aware that crypto-assets are not a credible way to opt out of inflation. We have heard this time and again, and it is important for Canadians to know that. If anything, unregulated and risky crypto-assets can threaten the financial well-being of Canadians.

Budget 2023 proposes new measures to protect Canadians, including ensuring that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, or OSFI, would consult federally regulated financial institutions on guidelines for publicly disclosing their exposure to crypto-assets. These types of measures would ensure financial security for Canadians.

Speaking of the economy, following the impressive rebound the Canadian economy has made coming out of the pandemic, Canadians need assurances that the economy will remain strong. Inflation is steadily coming down and interest rates are steady. To see how stable the economy is, let us look at the key indicators that most people are concerned about.

First, the federal debt-to-GDP ratio continues on a declining path from 2024-25 onward. Second, the deficit continues to project a decline in every year of the forecast. Third, our public debt charges, as a share of the economy, are projected to remain at historically low levels, and our credit ratings in this country remain strong.

However, we cannot stop there. Our government intends to invest in key areas that are strategically targeted to help everyday Canadians. These are investments that would not risk increasing inflation.

It is vital that economic policy focus on helping middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it. That is why a major focal point for the budget is affordability. During a time of heightened inflation around the world, the budget proposes new, targeted support to those who need it most.

Government Orders

When times are tough, we have to remember to take care of the people who are struggling the most. That is why in this budget, we will find a grocery rebate aimed at helping people afford essential goods. Over 11 million Canadians and families would benefit. Eligible couples with two children could receive up to an extra \$467, and seniors would receive up to an extra \$255. When people can worry a little less about providing basic necessities for their families, it gives them further room to thrive, including almost 30% of modest-income individuals and families in my province of B.C.

We are not stopping at grocery costs. Unexpected hidden and additional fees can quickly eat up a budget. They are frustrating and are a sneaky way to hit the pocketbooks of everyday Canadians. This is why budget 2023 takes action to crack down on what we call “junk fees”, whether it is Internet overage charges, roaming fees, extra charges on a concert ticket that one has saved up for or things like excess baggage fees. We are going to work with regulatory agencies, provinces and territories to reduce these junk fees for everyone. We are going to strengthen existing legislative tools and create new regulations to ensure that we curb the escalation of and remove junk fees wherever possible.

• (1325)

Another area my constituents in Vancouver Granville are deeply concerned about is the fight against climate change and moving emissions to net-zero. Canada is a major energy producer, and we have a unique opportunity to build a cutting-edge clean economy. With the help of our highly skilled workforce and partners in the private sector, we will be net-zero by 2050.

However, the federal government cannot do this alone. With the help of provincial, territorial, municipal and indigenous governments, we will help realize this goal. How we do that is going to be important.

We have announced an investment tax credit for clean technology manufacturing, and it will provide support to Canadian companies that are manufacturing or processing clean tech and their precursors. This is going to assist companies across sectors and will apply to those extracting, processing or recycling critical minerals that are essential for clean tech and those manufacturing zero-emission vehicles. The tax credit will also apply to the manufacturing of grid-scale electrical energy storage equipment. By investing in clean, safe technology, we can ensure a prosperous country for generations to come.

It is important to recognize that this budget is a study of contrast. On this side of the House, we have solutions. We have ideas that are going to help make life more affordable for everyday Canadians. We have a plan to build the economy of the future. We are taking care of the most vulnerable in our society, but we are seeing it as an investment into the future of this country rather than as a handout.

We know that tax cuts are not the solution. We know investing in Canadians is. On this side of the House, our commitment is to Canadians and to working with Canadians to ensure that they can support their families, that they have access to affordable child care, that they have access to affordable and high-quality dental care and that the most vulnerable in our communities do not need to worry about where their next meal is going to come from. Most im-

portantly, we will work to give Canadians a sense of hope for the future of this country. That hope comes from their ability to work and live in an environment that is clean, where we take care of our natural resources and, above all else, respect one another in the debates we have and in the way we build a better future.

• (1330)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member for Vancouver Granville knows, a commitment to net-zero by 2050 is not worth the paper it is printed on if we do not stop subsidizing the companies most responsible for the crisis we are in.

He mentioned affordability and mentioned supporting the most vulnerable Canadians across the country. As he knows, 40% of people living in poverty are living with disabilities. In this budget, once again the Canada disability benefit was not funded.

I would like to hear what he is going to do to put more pressure on the governing party to move much more quickly on moving forward the Canada disability benefit.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his advocacy.

It is important for us to recognize a few things. First of all, our government has made historic investments in ensuring inclusivity and building an inclusive economy that considers the challenges faced by those with disabilities. There is always more we can do, and it is important for us to find ways, as we move forward, to make additional investments where we can.

What this budget does is look at other means to support those with disabilities, whether it is the grocery credit or dental care. There are so many options and opportunities here for us to help alleviate the burden on all Canadians and particularly those with disabilities. I will commit to working with the member to see if there are more things we can do going forward, because I believe that to build a truly inclusive economy and build a truly inclusive country, we must take into consideration the most vulnerable in our society.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the way Canadians judge a budget is by looking at the previous year's budget to see whether the government has actually implemented the promises it made in that budget.

Government Orders

I went back and looked at the previous year's budget, and there was a commitment that the government was going to introduce a policy to ensure that "profits from flipping properties held for less than 12 months are taxed fully and fairly". I would love to hear the member's comments on how that implementation has gone. Has the government actually implemented any policies that would basically cut down on the flipping of properties and the financialization of housing in Canada? How is that process going?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, as the member across is well aware, every single member on this side of the House in our caucus is fully supportive of those measures. These are important measures to reduce the financialization of the housing market in this country. We are going to keep taking those up.

I note the Conservatives continue to oppose those measures, and I would love for the member opposite to be explain this to the House and all Canadians: While every single person on this side of the House is uniformly supportive of taking additional measures, why do his party and his leader continue to oppose them? They will increase affordability for Canadians and improve the ability of Canadians to get into good-quality housing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's slogan is "investing in people". The mammoth budget bill contains a clause recognizing King Charles III as Canada's head of state.

Given that 56% of Canadians and 70% of Quebecers are in favour of abolishing the monarchy, I am wondering how much it is costing or will cost to recognize that in the budget and what that has to do with the needs of Quebecers and Canadians.

• (1335)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, it is very complicated to get into a debate about our relationship with the monarchy. This is a very important subject for many Canadians, regardless of their point of view.

[*English*]

Debates about our institutions that have a long-standing history and practice in our Constitution are things that are worthy of discussion and consideration. We should always be willing to have those conversations.

What we have seen in the House is an effort to undermine our institutions. We have seen so many examples of that over the last little while. It is really important for us to engage in thoughtful debate and conversation about the institutions that make our country what it is and be able to call into question and challenge those institutions but in a way that is respectful and thoughtful with respect to the views of all Canadians.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be here to talk about the budget bill before us and the next steps that the government needs to take to make things a bit better for Canadians.

Just over two years ago, I remember sending out a mailer to my constituents of North Island—Powell River, asking them what they felt about dental care and if that would have an impact on their

lives. We were inundated with responses, letters, emails and phone calls, from people across the riding. They talked about what dental care would mean in their lives.

I remember one day going into my office quite early in the morning and a gentleman was waiting outside. He had a slip and had written an extra note on it. He talked about the fact that he worked a very good job his whole life. He had a pretty comprehensive pension but he was struggling to afford dental care. He had some significant teeth issues and that was such a huge gap in his life. Even though he made a fairly decent income, a fixed retirement income, not a totally crazy amount of money, he could not afford it. He said that he was there to talk about himself, but, more important, he was there to talk about the many people he knew who could not afford dental care at all.

I am very proud that the NDP pushed the government to make this a reality. In this budget implementation act, people under 18 years of age, seniors or people with disabilities will be able to get access to dental care, which will fundamentally change lives. I do not think we can ever underestimate how it feels for families not being able to afford basic dental care for their children and when their children experience bad dental health, what it feels like to know that this weight can be lifted from them. If they cannot make it work, what does that mean to them every day when their children are in pain? It means they are going to the hospital as a last resort, and this needs to change.

I also want to acknowledge that this budget is hard for me. I am the spokesperson on veterans affairs for the NDP. For years, I have been fighting for the government to fix the marriage-after-60 gold-digger clause.

I talk to seniors. Just last week, I talked to a beautiful woman in her eighties, who married a veteran after he turned 60. She looked after him for many years, loved him very much and when he passed away, she did not receive a cent of his pension, nothing, after many years of caring and loving another human being. It is appalling that so many people who serve our country are not allowed to pass on anything to their loved ones, the survivors of their deaths, because they were married after 60.

What is particularly frustrating for me is the fact that the veterans survivor fund was announced in 2019. There was a little research done that said, and I know this is crazy, we should be ensuring that caregivers, largely women, of military and RCMP veterans should get something. This clause was made in 1901; it is now 2023. That \$150 million over five years has not been moved to one survivor of a veteran, not one. Statistics Canada told us that about 4,400 or 4,500 spouses, somewhere in that range, were subject to the gold-digger clause. They have received nothing from this \$150-million announcement.

Government Orders

As much as I will stand here and fight for people across the country to get dental care and to see an increase in the GST rebate so that people who are struggling every day to make ends meet will get a little more, the hard part is that not everything that would be in an NDP budget is here.

One of the other things that I am proud of, but also have a challenge with, is the investment in a clean energy economy to create well-paying union jobs while addressing the climate crisis. The member for Timmins—James Bay was one of the people who worked very hard to make this a reality.

● (1340)

Workers across the country need to know that, as we move forward to address climate change, their having a good job on the side of that process is important to the NDP. We pushed really hard to ensure that employers who were moving forward were doing things that would help us address the climate change, and moving forward in a more positive green and sustainable way. If they are actually supporting their workers, if they are paying them well, they are going to get better tax credits. This encourages behaviour that we want to see in our country.

We also know that the oil and gas subsidies just continue on and on despite being the biggest emitters. They are not being held to account in a way that I would like to see. We are still working on that. I think of the member for Victoria who is continuously working on that issue, but the government is continuing to not take active steps. A sustainable future is important.

I represent a rural and remote riding. Our economies have been boom and bust because they are largely resource-based. These communities are doing a lot of innovative and great work to adjust to a new and changing world, but resources need to be put in place for those communities to find sustainability.

I was in Port Alice a few weeks ago, talking to the mayor about some of the challenges that his community was facing. He talked about connectivity and the opportunity that they were not getting. They need that bit of money to help connect them to the fibre that is being laid. We are working on that. These communities are working hard to create economies that are strong and they need supports that are going to help them do that in a sustainable way. I think everyone in my riding agrees that we do not want to continue to see the boom and bust. We want to see a steady boom that keeps everybody paid well and respected for the incredible work they do.

I am also pleased to see that there are some things in this budget to address the most wealthy in our country. We know that the top 1% is making an incredible amount of income and they do not have to pay their fair share. People in my riding have to pay their fair share. They work really hard and they pay their taxes because they believe in having a strong country. They also are frustrated that so many in the top 1% are not paying their fair share.

One of the things we see in this budget is the change to the alternate minimum rate, from 15% to 20.5%, and the removal of the tax exemption for dividends received on Canadian shares held by financial institutions as business income. This is important. It means that they are being held a bit more to account, not to the extent that

the NDP would do but it is definitely moving in a direction. This means more of the ultrarich are paying their fair share.

The resources that are needed to address the genocide of indigenous people to the missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse population is being a little more addressed. I am really pleased to see the red dress alert. This is something that can be done to allow a system that alerts our communities quickly to any indigenous women, girl or gender-diverse person going missing. We need that.

When I think of my riding, we have a couple of groups that fundraise. They bead and do different activities. They fundraise to help support those families that have lost indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. There are too many missing. We need to do better. This is a step in the right direction, but so much more could be done.

I am also pleased to see that there is more support for indigenous housing in urban, rural and northern indigenous communities. I wish there was more. I do not think there is enough. I know in my riding that urban communities are really looking for strong indigenous housing, and it has been neglected for far too long.

I will be supporting this budget. Politics is hard and I am willing to take that challenge, because making lives better for Canadians will always be my main focus.

● (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that when we take a look at the budget we have presented, there are many different forms of direct relief. We can talk about the grocery rebate and about how we would be expanding the dental program to cover seniors and others, but there are other aspects of the budget that are maybe not getting as much attention. For example, there is the enhancement for air travellers. After all, it is a budget implementation bill. We are taking a look at better ways in which we can provide more money up front for the Canada workers benefit.

I wonder if the member could provide some additional thoughts on those aspects of the budget implementation bill or whatever else she might want to talk about.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see there is some more movement on passenger rights and strengthening airlines' obligations to compensate passengers. We have definitely seen, during the last while, how frustrating it can be for Canadians as they are trying to travel.

However, one of the other areas of concern is that I did not see anything momentous around housing. I know that, in my riding, we see a lot of people without housing. The challenges of finding affordable housing just continue to grow, and although the province is investing substantially in our region, the need is so high that it would be really good to see the federal government step up as a meaningful partner. We look forward to that.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although I do not agree with the budget, I was very interested in the “gold-digger” clause on veterans. Of course, I have a lot of people who are involved in that and certainly support it.

I wonder if the member can just expand a bit on the “gold-digger” clause, which is a clause about the spouses of veterans who have died. Why is that hung up? Why have we not moved forward with that? What is the problem there?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I have put forward a private member's bill on this, and I just want to remind people that we do not have to wait for my bill to be in the order of precedence. Actually, the government, at any point, could take leadership and address this issue in a meaningful way. My bill is just one suggestion. The government has the power to do that.

The other thing I want to draw the member's attention to is that the veterans committee did do a study, at my request, on this very issue. We talked to veterans and their spouses, who talked about the reality of the “gold-digger” clause. I might add that women across this country are very offended by that name. I have heard from so many of them who say that they are absolutely not gold diggers. They did not marry veterans for their money; they married veterans because they cared about them.

I think there are a lot of acts we can do, but we definitely want to see the veterans survivors fund. That money needs to move and go to these people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about Bill C-47, the budget implementation bill.

In theory, it is a budget implementation bill. We would expect such a bill to contain budget measures. In reality, that is not exactly the case, because this bill that we are currently seized with is a 430-page bill that amends 59 acts. That is a lot. It is a big bill that the government has decided to cram with as much stuff as possible so that the House does not have time to debate and study it properly.

It is a shame, because there is a lot in this bill that we would have liked to debate. There are a lot of things we would have liked to study, but unfortunately, the bill is so big that it is difficult to do that job properly. It is also unfortunate that it is not simply about the budget. Rather, it is a bill that deals with a bunch of other matters.

If we at least had the opportunity to discuss the budget, and only the budget, that would have been fine. There is much to say about the federal budget. As some of my colleagues have already mentioned, the Bloc Québécois had very specific requests for the federal budget that unfortunately were not answered.

Government Orders

For starters, there was the issue of increasing health transfers, which is critically important. Everyone agrees that there is not enough money, not enough funding for the provinces' health care systems. For example, we would like the federal government to fund 35% of system costs. That is not the agreement that was reached with the provinces. The agreements with the Quebec government were disappointing. Even the Quebec government said that it signed the agreement with a knife to its throat. It is a shame, because it is reflected in the budget. A pleasant surprise would have been nice, but we did not get one.

We would have liked to see an increase in old age security starting at age 65. We are faced with a staggering increase in the cost of living. Everyone is struggling, everyone is having a harder go of it, but workers have an advantage over retirees. They can go to their boss and ask for a little more money because it costs more to feed their family and to get to work. Retirees do not have that power, and the government should have listened to them.

When I walk around my constituency, I get told the same thing every day. Seniors tell me that it is insulting to receive pension increases of \$1, \$1.10, or \$1.50 a month. What are they going to do with that? It makes absolutely no difference in their lives, and they feel like they are being laughed at. That is what the federal government is doing to our seniors, and it is really sad to see. The message it is sending is that they are not important.

The Bloc Québécois also expected to see the employment insurance reform that the Liberal government has been promising for years. There is no sign of it yet, but they tell us it is coming. This government has been in office for almost eight years, but the much-touted EI reform has still not happened. However, there were consultations. We saw lots of consultations but not a lot of results. Unemployed workers are getting impatient. Regional workers who are grappling with the spring gap are getting really impatient.

What it comes down to is that this government is not interested in anything the Bloc Québécois requests, because it has an agreement with the NDP to interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction. Consider the dental care plan, a matter that falls squarely within the authority of the National Assembly of Quebec, since health is exclusively a provincial domain. The federal government waded right in, with the NDP at its side.

That is how we ended up with a budget that does not make any sense and that does not meet the needs of Quebec, that does not meet people's needs. What is worse, as I said before, the Liberals are taking advantage of this opportunity to include a number of measures in the bill that have nothing to do with the budget.

Government Orders

Speaking of measures that have nothing to do with the budget, we got a big surprise when reading division 31 of part 4 of the bill, which is found on page 325. It states that we recognize Charles III as King of Canada by amending the royal titles. This is a budget implementation bill. Do we need to recognize Charles III as the new King of Canada for the budget to work? Is the King costing us too much money? Is that why the government decided to include that in the budget implementation bill? I do not really understand what that is doing in there.

• (1350)

The Liberals did not mention this at all in the budget speech. Not a word was said about Charles III. It seems as though the government was trying to pull the wool over our eyes. It made sure that there would be no debate about the monarchy. The Liberals know that there are members on the other side of the House who do not like the monarchy and who do not identify with it. Most of the population is opposed to the monarchy in Canada. The Liberals therefore hid that somewhere in the 430 pages of the budget so that no one would talk about it. Unfortunately for the Liberals, the Bloc Québécois is here to talk about it and to say that people do not agree with this and that it is not going to fly.

The ascension of King Charles III should not be formalized in this bill. It should be done in a separate bill so we can have a debate about it as a society. A provision on Canada's head of state has been buried somewhere in the 430 pages of the budget. One would almost think that the Liberals are ashamed to be monarchists or to be part of a monarchy. I can think of no other reason why they would bury this in the budget. It does not make sense. A provision about the head of state is buried at the bottom of the budget. Personally, I would like to be proud of my head of state. I would put it at the forefront and explain how important it is to me. Unfortunately, I am not proud that my country is a monarchy or that it is governed by the Liberal Party.

There are other things in this bill that I find quite relevant and that I would like to discuss. Once again, they are mentioned in the budget, but I do not really understand what they have to do with the budget. These are measures for passengers. It is sad, because it would have been really good to talk about these issues. During the pandemic, it was evident that there was a major problem with rules protecting passengers in this country. The government admitted it, even though it was in denial for so long. Its air passenger bill of rights was a complete failure. The government said that it was because of the pandemic, but, ultimately, the same problems occur season after season. It has nothing at all to do with the pandemic. It is because of the government's incompetence and failure to listen. When the government came out with the air passenger bill of rights, it did not listen and did not do the work properly.

The government is now trying to fix things. That is a good thing, but this deserved a completely separate bill, outside of the framework of the budget, so the matter could have been discussed properly. I hope that we will have the opportunity to discuss this in detail instead of talking about it for just a few minutes along with the other 430 pages.

A drastic change needs to be made for passenger rights. I understand that the government wants to address the issue, but this needs

to be taken seriously. We welcome the changes. Sadly, I do not have a lot of time to talk about this during my speech. I would have liked to talk about it for 10 or 20 minutes, even half an hour. We could have invited witnesses to committee to discuss this and see how we might do more to help passengers. This would have enabled the government to introduce a better bill to better protect passengers.

Unfortunately, all I can say is that I am glad the burden of proof has been reversed. The bill ensures that the airlines will have to cover some of the cost of dealing with complaints. The agency's decisions will be more transparent. Carriers will be forced to respond to people more quickly. These are all good things. The compensation categories are staying the same, but under the bill, passengers will be entitled to compensation for any flight delay or cancellation. These are good things, but why were they not introduced in a separate bill?

Why did the minister end up hastily organizing a press conference one morning to make this announcement? Since people might have missed a small item about air passenger rights in this huge 430-page bill, the minister made his announcement at a last-minute solo press conference. He would have liked people to talk about it, but his government did not have the time for it, so he hoped that this would do the trick.

That is sad, because the government does not do its job properly. Its work is shoddy and half-baked, and we will live with the consequences for many years. When addressing such an important matter, the government needs to take it seriously and do it right by introducing a real bill so we can have a real debate and find a lasting solution. Then we would not have the same problems we experienced with the passengers' bill of rights that was implemented by the government and by former minister Marc Garneau in 2019. There was a whole host of predictable problems that could not be corrected.

I hope that the government will listen to us and do the right thing as we move forward.

• (1355)

The Deputy Speaker: When we resume debate on this matter, the member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères will have five minutes for questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the Toronto District School Board is marking a 25-year milestone as the largest and one of the most diverse school boards in the country. Since 1998, the TDSB has worked alongside parents and communities to enable children, youth and lifelong learners to reach high levels of achievement and well-being. With approximately 235,000 students attending 583 schools across Toronto and over 100,000 adult learners, the TDSB is known for its commitment to excellence and equity. As a proud graduate of the TDSB and former trustee and chair of the board, I have witnessed first-hand the role that public education can play in giving every child a chance to succeed.

Congratulations to chair Rachel Chernos Lin and the board of trustees, director of education Colleen Russell-Rawlins, teachers, staff, students and parents on this momentous silver jubilee. I wish the TDSB continued success in preparing eager minds for a world of challenges and change.

* * *

HUTTERIAN EMERGENCY AQUATIC RESPONSE TEAM

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Provencher is blessed with 13 Hutterite colonies. In addition to their extensive charitable work, these communities are often on the cutting edge of entrepreneurship and innovation. I want to highlight one such group: HEART, led by Paul and Manuel Maendel from the Oak Bluff Hutterite Colony.

“HEART” stands for Hutterian Emergency Aquatic Response Team. They have invested and trained to become Canada's most elite divers and underwater operators for the purpose of recovering drowning victims. Their goal is simple: to help bring healing and closure to grieving families and give glory to God.

As the leaders of the team said in my office the other day, “When the fire department or RCMP call off a search, or say it is too dangerous, that is when you call us.” I asked them what happens when the weather gets in the way. They answered, “We pray and it usually changes.”

HEART has done recovery operations as far as the west coast of B.C. and as far north as Nunavut. They even operate under the ice and they do it all for free. These brave individuals turned a personal family tragedy into a life-changing ministry. They are a credit to their community, to their faith and to our country. I thank HEART.

* * *

NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in Canada. It is a moment to start critical conversations with our families and communities about the importance of organ donation. It is

Statements by Members

hard to capture how life-changing and life-saving organ donors can be. We know we need more Canadians to step up as donors and that means we must sometimes have difficult conversations with our loved ones about choosing to become a donor.

In my home province of Nova Scotia, I was proud to be part of the government that changed the opt-in donation system to an opt-out model of presumed consent, which was a North American first. That change was made to increase organ donation and spur diverse communities to reflect upon their relationship with the subject. Today, let us use our platform and encourage all Canadians to become donors.

[Translation]

Let us help save lives. Let us become organ donors today.

[English]

To everyone who has already donated, they are our everyday heroes.

* * *

[Translation]

JEAN DUCEPPE THEATRE COMPANY

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the Duceppe theatre company, and there are many reasons to celebrate.

This month, the Duceppe theatre company was awarded the Grand Prix of the Conseil des arts de Montréal, an award that has been given out by the City of Montreal since 1985 to recognize the contributions of local cultural organizations.

Here is another reason to celebrate. At almost the same time, the Carmelle and Rémi Marcoux Chair in Arts Management at HEC Montréal presented the executive director of Théâtre Duceppe with the Young Cultural Manager Award. Her name is Amélie Duceppe and she is the granddaughter of Jean Duceppe himself. She is living proof that Duceppes do not all need to be in the spotlight to do a good job. She is dedicating her talent and commitment to culture.

The name she bears comes with the heavy responsibility of bringing honour to one of the greatest theatre actors in the history of Quebec, and she is doing a wonderful job.

On behalf of all my Bloc Québécois colleagues and with a special thought for the member from Lac-Saint-Jean, I want to congratulate Amélie.

*Statements by Members**[English]***EGG FARMERS OF CANADA**

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the hard-working egg farmers in my riding and across Canada, I want to congratulate Egg Farmers of Canada on its 50th anniversary. Canadian egg producers continue to supply us with fresh, local, affordable and high-quality eggs, despite facing major challenges over the past three years from avian influenza to severe weather to supply chain disruptions.

To celebrate the half-century, Egg Farmers of Canada has announced its commitment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

• (1405)

[Translation]

To support egg producers is first and foremost to support the supply management system. This system helps them receive fair and stable income for their work so that they can in turn confidently reinvest in their farms.

Our government has delivered on its commitment to help poultry and egg producers mitigate the impact of our trade agreements on Canadian poultry and egg producers.

[English]

I thank all members for their long-standing support of our egg farmers in Canada and we wish them many more years of success.

* * *

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day, news reports and social media feeds are filled with stories of yet another violent attack on a first responder or health care worker. In our time of need, it is our frontline heroes, our police forces, our nurses, firefighters, paramedics and other health care workers who come to our aid.

Without hesitation, these incredible Canadians are there for us any time, any place. Sadly, they are facing an unprecedented level of violence aimed toward them. This kind of violence has a ripple effect. It contributes to fear, burnout, compassion fatigue, depression and PTSD.

A nurse or health care worker should not have to fear for their personal safety when reporting for duty. A paramedic or firefighter should not have to fear for their lives when answering a 911 call. Violence is not part of their job description.

Next week, the debate begins on my private member's bill, Bill C-321. This legislation is a first step in curbing the escalating violence against these important heroes. I humbly ask all my parliamentary colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

ANGUS HAMILTON

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour the life of Angus Hamilton. Mr. Hamilton's life was, in a word, remarkable.

Born on April 18, 1922, he bravely served during the Second World War. He signed up and reported for duty at just 19 years of age. He had a dream of becoming a pilot, but his eyesight got in the way. Nevertheless, he found another way to explore the sky by becoming a radar technician with the Royal Canadian Air Force, serving on night-fighter squadrons in Northern Ireland and India until the end of the war.

His passion and curiosity led him to study engineering physics and receiving his MASc in 1951. It was during that time that he married the love of his life, Margaret, and started his career that led him and his family to my beautiful riding of Fredericton, where he became the chair of the department of surveying engineering at UNB.

After his retirement, he pursued yet another adventure. He and Margaret brought a 35-acre apple orchard in Douglas. They learned to grow and sell apples, and settled into the community. Mr. Hamilton died at home on April 15, just three days shy of his 101st birthday.

I invite all members in this House to celebrate the life of Mr. Hamilton, his tenacity, thoughtfulness and resiliency. May he rest in peace.

* * *

GREAT LAKES WATERSHED CLEANUP

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the first astronauts on the moon realized when they looked back on earth and saw that pale, blue dot suspended in the darkness, our planet is precious. Last Saturday was Earth Day, a day when we are all reminded of the majestic beauty of nature, the fragile equilibrium of our complex ecosystems and the delicate balance of the web of life on earth.

This past Saturday, my family and I were fortunate to participate, along with over 40 volunteers, in the third annual Great Lakes Watershed Cleanup event, organized by Dan Coombes and members of our local Rotary Club. As we spread out and collected many bags of garbage from the Whitby waterfront at Heydenshore conservation area, we demonstrated our individual and collective responsibility to protect our environment.

On behalf of our community, I would like to thank the Whitby Rotary Club and its members for organizing this year's event, and the countless dedicated volunteers who came out to help make this year's event a success. It is with community-based initiatives like this one that we can raise awareness and inspire generations to care for the one and only place we have ever called home. After all, there is no planet B.

NATIONAL TOURISM WEEK

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is powered by tourism. That is the theme of this year's National Tourism Week. In my community of Niagara, some 2,800 tourism-related businesses employ 40,000 residents who rely on tourism for their paycheques.

In 2019, Niagara welcomed more than 13 million visitors, generating \$2.4 billion in receipts. We are Canada's largest tourism leisure destination. However, Canadian tourism has yet to fully recover. Big Liberal tax hikes, like the carbon tax and the escalator clause, are hindering our once competitive advantage.

More troubling is the fact that while the Prime Minister was vacationing at a \$9,000-a-night resort in Jamaica, six in 10 Canadians are now saying they are scaling back their vacation plans due to the higher costs being driven by the Liberal government. This needs to change.

A Conservative government would lower Liberal taxes and slash the costs harming our tourism industry and workers. It is time we create the conditions where our tourism businesses flourish so the world once again knows Canada is open for business.

* * *

● (1410)

2018 TRAGEDY IN WILLOWDALE

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, April 23, many of us in Willowdale gathered to acknowledge a sombre occasion. Five years prior, on a seemingly ordinary, sunny Monday, a rental van jumped the Yonge Street sidewalk, violently striking pedestrians. The act claimed the lives of 11 people and injured many more, forever transforming our community. What was first believed to be a tragic accident quickly revealed itself to be deliberate, a heinous crime beyond our ability to fathom. I still recall the confusion and the agonizing sorrow that pierced the heart of Willowdale when the facts emerged.

All of us in Willowdale can agree that we owe a great debt of gratitude to first responders. Their heroism on that day was a testament to the highest standards of professionalism. Emergency services aided the wounded with mercy and compassion, while the police apprehended the perpetrator so that justice would ultimately prevail.

To the victims and their families, allow me to say that Willowdale remains staunchly behind them. From each victim, a future was stolen. We continue to cherish their memories. From that shared grief, all of Willowdale banded together and leaned in to support one another. As we reflect on this sombre anniversary, we honour the lives lost and remember that, through our common humanity, our community remains resolute and strong.

* * *

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for centuries, at the Passover Seder, Jews around the world have said, "Next year in Jerusalem" to commemorate the aspirations of those held in slavery under the

Statements by Members

pharaoh in ancient Egypt. Theodor Herzl, the father of modern-day Zionism, said, "If you will it, it is no dream." In 1948, that dream became a reality and the Jewish people had a state in their ancestral homeland.

Today, we celebrate with them Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day. Canada is proud to have been one of the first countries to formally recognize Israel in 1948. Our two countries have shared 75 years as friends, allies and close partners. We will continue to oppose efforts to isolate Israel in international forums and we will continue to stand against any attacks on the values we share. We are united by shared bonds and values that will forever endure.

In honour of the statehood in the ancient homeland of the Jewish people, I say, "Next year in Jerusalem".

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE STRIKE

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is showing no respect for its workers, as it lets the dispute with the public service drag on. The Prime Minister has proven his lack of leadership once again by allowing more than 155,000 public servants to go on strike across the country. The result is that Canadians are being held hostage, for example for such things as obtaining a passport.

The minister is asking Canadians to simply not submit a passport application during the strike because the envelopes will not be opened. To this government, having the freedom to travel is simply not essential. The Prime Minister has no problem flying to the islands of his choice, but the people in my riding cannot even cross the land border for a day trip to the United States because they will not have a passport.

Prolonged negotiations with the public service causes Canada as a whole to suffer. A Conservative government would have never allowed this strike to get to this point. We would also take care of clearing the backlogs that this Prime Minister and his government have created over the past eight years. The time has come for a new prime minister.

* * *

● (1415)

RÉMI BROUSSEAU

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to roll out the red carpet for Rémi Brousseau and highlight the remarkable work he has done at the Théâtre Denise-Pelletier.

Statements by Members

Rémi was the managing director of this key cultural venue in Hochelaga. As he said himself, he would have liked to be an artist. Rémi's greatest work ran for 28 years. This man worked his cultural magic from the wings, remaining faithful to the theatre's objective of introducing teenagers to the sixth art, with the majority of performances aimed at school-age audiences. He oversaw the renovation of the theatre in 2008, preserving a historic building and an architectural gem in Montreal. I invite everyone to experience it. The province awarded him the medal of the National Assembly of Quebec, a well-deserved honour.

I thank Rémi for the work he has done for youth and culture. I wish him well in his retirement, knowing that he will be very busy, and I wish the new managing director, Stéphanie Laurin, much success.

* * *

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on April 24, 1915, the Turkish police conducted a raid and imprisoned 250 Armenian intellectuals in Constantinople. The next day, another 600 were rounded up. They were all executed. Thus began the first genocide of the 20th century, which resulted in the death of 1.5 million people.

In September 1915, the minister of the interior, Talaat Pasha, sent a telegram that said, "The government has decided to destroy all Armenians living in Turkey. Their existence must come to an end, however tragic the means may be; and no regard must be paid...to conscientious scruples."

Unfortunately, the Turkish regime denies the existence of that genocide to this day. Equally serious, Armenians are still being targeted, and attempts are being made to drive them out of their lands. Since December 12, 2022, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia has been blocked by Azerbaijan. This leaves 120,000 Armenians isolated, cut off from the world, with no food or medical supplies. A humanitarian crisis is looming, and, unfortunately, the international community is looking the other way.

Let us stand up for human rights everywhere and let us do it now.

* * *

THE MONARCHY

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Assembly abolished the oath to the King. The Quebec government announced yesterday that it would not send a delegation to the coronation of Charles III.

Why? It is because Quebec could not care less about the monarchy and because it is an outdated symbol of submission that Quebecers want no part of, and not just in Quebec, elsewhere too. An Angus Reid poll on the weekend revealed that a majority of Canadians do not want Charles III.

The majority thinks that the monarchy is outdated. The majority agrees with the Bloc Québécois's motion to break ties with the monarchy: no Charles III on our currency, no *God Save the King* and no oath to the King. It is simple; the majority, here, believe that this undemocratic symbol is no longer relevant.

If the Prime Minister goes to Westminster for the coronation of Charles III, I think it might be a good opportunity, between two Queen songs on the piano, to tell him that the monarchy here, in Quebec and Canada, is no longer relevant.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE STRIKE

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing public service strike is a direct result of the Prime Minister's extraordinary incompetence. The Prime Minister needs to do his job and come to a deal with the workers to bring this labour dispute to an end. He had two years to get the job done, but could not bring it home. Instead, he spent \$20 billion more on our bureaucracy, only to deliver poorer services to Canadians and a demoralized public service. Now, with the largest federal public service strike in history, Canadians do not have access to basic and necessary government services. Soon, he will turn to taxpayers to bail him out of his mess once again.

Only a Conservative government will cut back on high-priced consultants who are bloating the cost of government. Conservatives will deliver common-sense leadership that ensures that Canadian taxpayers get value for their money.

* * *

● (1420)

ARTEMIS II

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen and the crew of Artemis II join us in Ottawa. This is the historic first crewed mission to the moon in half a century.

On April 3, I joined the awesome Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry at NASA, where I witnessed the dedication and the brilliance of the Canadian Space Agency and astronauts like Jeremy Hansen, who are an inspiration to us all. From touring NASA's Johnson Space Center to taking in a zero-gravity experience at the Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory, my appreciation for astronauts has only grown deeper. I am so proud to be part of a government that has supported space exploration to advance the interests of humanity and to invest in research for medicine and food security.

Congratulations to Jeremy, Christina, Reid, Victor and all of the Artemis II crew for their accomplishments and their service to humanity.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***LABOUR**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of the bureaucracy under the Prime Minister is rocketing up by \$20 billion. That is \$1,300 for every family in Canada, and it bought the biggest federal strike in Canadian history. Now, 150,000 people are out on the streets; they are blocking streets, buildings and even ports.

It cost the Prime Minister \$20 billion to cause this strike; how much will it cost him to end it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we continue to believe in the power of working at the bargaining table. Public servants provide important services to Canadians, and we value their work. That is why we are working tirelessly to reach a deal that is fair to public servants and reasonable to taxpayers. That is, and has always been, our goal. We expect both sides to bargain in good faith and reach an agreement, because all Canadians are depending on it.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing he did was increase the cost of the bureaucracy by \$20 billion a year, which is \$1,300 for every family in Canada. It is a 50% increase that will buy what? He bought the biggest federal strike in history with 150,000 people out on the streets blocking access to buildings and even ports. It cost \$20 billion because this Prime Minister caused the strike.

How much will it cost to end it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we firmly believe that an agreement will be struck with PSAC. Public servants provide important services to Canadians and the government values their work. That is why we are working tirelessly to reach a deal that is fair to public servants and reasonable for taxpayers. That is, and has always been, our goal. We expect both sides to negotiate in good faith and reach an agreement. Canadians are counting on it.

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*[English]***ETHICS**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister asked Canadians to believe that he did not know that the guys who paid for his vacation were donors to the Trudeau Foundation. He asked Canadians to believe that he did not know that Beijing had given \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation to influence him, even though the donation was processed and signed off on by his own brother. However, nothing tops this: He now expects Canadians to believe that he did not know that the Trudeau Foundation was holding meetings in his office.

Does he even know what goes on in his office?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have repeated many times in and out of this House, I have

had no engagement, direct or indirect, with the Trudeau Foundation for about 10 years now.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he has had no engagement except for Trudeau Foundation donors paying for his vacations. He has had no engagement except that the only two people he will allow to investigate foreign interference are from the Trudeau Foundation. He has had no engagement except for intelligence reports showing that Beijing gave \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation to influence him, and this donation was facilitated and signed off on by his own brother. Now, he has had no engagement except that he hosts them for meetings in his own office.

Was there no other office space available anywhere in Ottawa?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while Conservatives continue to focus on me and attacks on my family, we are going to continue focusing on delivering for Canadians. We are delivering on affordability through dental benefits that the Conservatives voted against and investing in health care in ways the Conservatives stood against. We are moving forward on affordability by being there to support Canadians from coast to coast; our targeted measures, including the grocery rebate, are helping 11 million Canadians. We are also moving forward on creating great jobs for the middle class by investing in a clean, green economy with positive impacts right across the country. This is what we are focused on.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that nobody focuses more on the Prime Minister than he focuses on himself.

Meanwhile, he expects us to believe that that this foundation, named after his family, has donors who paid for his vacations, \$80,000 in free vacation benefits; that it takes donations from Beijing, facilitated by his brother, that intelligence officers say were designed to influence him; and now, that he hosts the same foundation with his top officials in his own office.

How dumb does he think Canadians are to believe that?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting the lengths to which the Conservatives will go to not talk about the budget we just delivered for Canadians. Canadians are actually struggling through difficult times right now. The budget focuses on three large things, which are investing in affordability to support Canadians as we build a stronger economy for the future; investing in health care, with historic deals signed with the provinces; and investing in dental care, which the Conservatives continue to stand against.

Oral Questions

We are going to continue building a stronger economy for the future. We know that fighting climate change and investing in a greener economy go hand in hand for the middle class.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I propose a cultural moment. Remember Calimero? It was a little chick who dragged his shell everywhere he went. He was never told anything. He knew nothing. Everything happened unbeknownst to him.

The Prime Minister reminds me a little of Calimero, who said that it is an “injustice”, it is always truly “too unjust”.

Now that the Prime Minister knows, because he reads the papers, that there were five deputy ministers in his office together with the foundation that bears his father's name, can he, Calimero, tell us what was said in his office?

The Speaker: Before I recognize the Prime Minister, I would like to remind members not to make fun of each other, which is unparliamentary. We do not call each other names. This is a reminder to members on both sides of the House for the upcoming questions and answers.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Bloc Québécois continues to attack the Trudeau name in every way possible, because they have been attacking my father and now me for a very long time, I will continue to do the job that Quebeckers and Canadians elected me to do, which is to meet expectations on the cost of living, to create a stronger and greener economy at the same time and to continue that work.

As the member opposite knows, I have had no direct or indirect involvement with the Trudeau Foundation for 10 years.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, among the people I identified, I am not sure who should be most concerned.

I am not taking issue with the Prime Minister's father because the Prime Minister's father did not receive five deputy ministers and the Trudeau Foundation in his office and then claimed he did not know what was going on.

Now that the Prime Minister knows that this occurred, should he not, at the very least, tell us what happened in that office at that meeting, since he hardly called five deputy ministers into his own office for no reason? This concerns us.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said and as I will keep saying, for 10 years I have had no direct or indirect interaction with the foundation that bears by father's name.

On this side of the House, we are focusing on the cost of living, creating a greener economy, allocating money to help get results with respect to health care and dental care services. Those are our priorities.

While the opposition parties are focusing on me, we will continue to focus on Canadians and Quebeckers.

LABOUR

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, public servants have been waiting over two years for a fair contract. After two years, there is nothing.

They are making a simple demand. They want a salary that is in line with inflation. That is what we want for all workers. However, it is clear that the minister is not doing the work required.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to get involved for once to break the impasse?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all recognize how hard public servants have worked over the past few years and what a great job they did in providing the services Canadians needed during the pandemic.

That is why we are with them at the bargaining table to find the best way to move forward, to recognize the excellent work that they continue to do and to ensure that we come to a fair agreement that is reasonable for taxpayers.

That is what is happening at the bargaining table, where the negotiators and the unions will stay to do their job.

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to talk a good game when it comes to workers, but when it comes down to it, he does not actually follow through. In fact, he often says one thing and does the opposite.

These are public sector workers. These are his workers, and the Prime Minister has a responsibility to make sure that they have a fair contract. These workers are asking for something very basic. They are fighting a war against inflation, and they want to win. They want to have salaries that keep up with inflation, which is something that all workers deserve.

Will the Prime Minister finally take workers seriously, do his job and get these workers a fair contract?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am now a little worried about the leader of the NDP. He may not understand that the important job we are doing right now is sitting at the bargaining table, where deals get made, and working on those negotiations.

I am sure he does not want to disrespect the important process that happens at the bargaining table; that is exactly what we are busy supporting. Yes, these negotiations are sometimes difficult, but they are always important. They are always a fundamental right of workers across this country. That is why we are participating fully and making progress. We are going to get the right deal for the public servants and the right deal for Canadians.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past few days, we have witnessed the largest public service strike in over 40 years.

Canadians are suffering because of the Liberal government's incompetence. More than 1,100 students are locked out of school on the Six Nations of the Grand River because of this strike. Education is an essential service. It is unacceptable that children cannot go to school because of this strike. The Liberal government is to blame.

What is the Prime Minister going to do to ensure that indigenous children can go back to school?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I published an open letter so that we could update Canadians and public servants on where we are at in terms of the bargaining table.

We have been working tirelessly to get from 570 demands to a few that we need to get done. We are doing so because we are at the bargaining table. We will continue to work tirelessly until we get a deal.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are not working hard enough. The tax deadline is just a few days away.

Because 35,000 CRA employees are on strike, Canadians are left without the support that they need to file their taxes. It is the lowest-income Canadians who will suffer the most from this strike. Millions of Canadians are suffering because of the Liberal government's incompetence and its failure to prevent this strike.

When will the Prime Minister reverse course, and how much is it going to cost taxpayers to fix the mess that he has created?

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that any potential work disruption can be stressful for Canadians who depend on important government services.

The Canada Revenue Agency will not extend the deadline for filing tax returns. A potential work disruption will not prevent Canadians from filing their tax returns electronically or by mail before the May 1 deadline.

We encourage all Canadians to file their taxes electronically. To reassure my colleagues, I can tell them that this is the best tax season we have had since 2015.

[*English*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are in desperate need of their tax refunds.

After eight years of the Liberal government, Canadians are receiving poorer services despite a 50% increase in the bureaucracy. Outside these doors, we have the largest public service strike in the history of Canada.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for the countless Canadians who are counting on their tax refunds and end this strike?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I published an open letter yesterday to

Oral Questions

update public servants and Canadians. We are now a few items away from getting to a deal.

We know many services are being affected right now, and we respect workers who are on strike. We know that this is hurting Canadians. That is why I am working tirelessly with my negotiating team to get to a deal.

We are going to get to a deal as soon as we can.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an open letter does not cut it. We need a negotiated agreement to end this strike. The Prime Minister had two years to come to a negotiated agreement, and he failed. As a result, we have seniors who are mailing in their tax returns and do not know when they are going to get their refunds. We have Canadians who are calling the CRA, but no one is picking up the phone to answer the most basic of questions.

Will the Prime Minister show some compassion for Canadians, who deserve basic services, and end this strike?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, we respect the right to collective bargaining and we respect the right to strike.

We also respect Canadians, and that is why, unlike the Conservatives, we brought in the Canada child benefit, which has helped lift 450,000 children out of poverty. Unlike the Conservatives, we increased the guaranteed income supplement, which has helped lift thousands of seniors out of poverty.

We are going to get a good deal at the negotiating table, because that is where they happen. We respect Canadians, we respect public servants and we are going to make sure we get a good deal for both the public service and Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the public service strike is another example of Liberal incompetence.

The Minister of National Revenue is affected very directly by the federal public service strike. The revenue minister does not seem overly concerned about tax season, which ends on May 1.

Can the minister assure us that Canadian taxpayers will receive their tax refunds quickly?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can say that I have nothing to learn from the Conservatives when it comes to tax season.

Oral Questions

This is the best tax season we have had since 2015. Fully 95% of tax returns are being filed electronically, and people receive their refunds just a few days later.

We are doing excellent work. I want to thank all CRA employees for all the work they did during the pandemic and since the beginning of tax season.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer seems like a promise worthy of Pinocchio. The minister should check if her nose is growing.

Canadians are right to worry about the services being delivered by this government. Many departments are falling behind, and wait times are endless. We are fed up with Liberal incompetence. When will the government take responsibility and send Canadians their tax refunds?

• (1440)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me reassure my colleague that I have no problem with my nose. My nose is just fine.

That said, restoring and maintaining a respectful relationship with the public service is an ongoing commitment for our government. We recognize the important role that employees play in delivering—

The Speaker: Order.

I apologize for interrupting the minister, but I can barely hear her answer, so I will ask everyone to breathe. Then, we will listen to the minister's answer. I would like to hear everything she says and I am going to ask her to start her intervention from the beginning.

The Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I would like to reassure my colleague: My nose is just fine.

Restoring and maintaining a respectful relationship with the public service of Canada is an ongoing commitment for our government. We recognize the important role that employees play in the delivery of services to taxpayers.

We will respect the collective bargaining process and we will not be commenting on negotiations which are in progress.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to paraphrase what Isabelle Hachey said in *La Presse* this morning, the Trudeau Foundation is a catalogue of friends of the Liberal Party of Canada.

This catalogue is not subject to the legislation governing political party financing. What a great way for a foreign power to contribute to this catalogue of friends of the Liberal Party, when the Liberal Party is in power. That is exactly what China did.

Why does this government refuse to recognize that the only reason the Chinese authorities would donate to the Trudeau Foundation is to curry favour with the Prime Minister?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I served as executive director at the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. That is a foundation.

For any type of foundation, the rules in Canada are incredibly strict so as to ensure that all foundations are independent and free from any influence. That is the case here.

The foundation that the member opposite attacked is a foundation that provides scholarships to students. It is an independent foundation.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not about to be lectured on independence.

The connection between the Liberals and the Trudeau Foundation is so obvious that even its alumni are now embarrassed to be associated with it.

It is obvious, given that we know that the foundation was invited to a meeting at the Prime Minister's building. It is obvious, given that we know that the PMO asks about the donations the foundation receives.

It was through this foundation that the Prime Minister found his rapporteur on Chinese interference. Everyone knows that it will be impossible to get to the bottom of this interference when someone from the foundation that itself benefited from said interference is in charge of the investigation. Everyone knows that but the Liberals.

What do they not understand?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe they will understand what Chantal Hébert said. She said that she has been in the building three times for round tables organized by the Clerk of the Privy Council with deputy ministers. In all those years, she has never met the current Prime Minister.

She said that it was entirely possible that the Prime Minister did not even know about this meeting with deputy ministers, because it was none of his business; it was not his political staff.

I wonder if the Bloc thinks Chantal Hébert is part of the conspiracy too.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to *La Presse*, 30 people have fled the Trudeau Foundation over the past two weeks. The newspaper quotes one such individual who said, "I feel like someone pulled a fast one on me, because, ultimately, it is not true that it is non-partisan".

The Trudeau Foundation is a nest of Liberals, and that is exactly why China has been trying to get closer to them since the election of this Liberal government. It is clear, then, that anyone from the Trudeau Foundation is disqualified from investigating Chinese interference.

When will there be a public and independent commission of inquiry?

Oral Questions

• (1445)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the strictest and strongest rules to protect the independence of charities of any kind.

It is unacceptable to attack an independent foundation which has no ties with the Prime Minister. This foundation is responsible for student grants to ensure that future generations have the funds they need to become the future leaders of our country.

It is not acceptable to attack an independent charity like that.

* * *

LABOUR

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, Canadians stood in line for days to get their passports. Now the minister is asking them not to apply for a new passport and especially not to apply for a passport renewal.

Never in modern history has the government of a G7 nation asked such a thing of its citizens. It is sad and embarrassing. The Prime Minister has hiked the cost of the public service by 50%, but he is failing at managing services to the public.

When will the Prime Minister realize that it is crisis management time and he must resolve it now?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Conservatives fail to understand the importance of being honest with Canadians. This is what I am doing now, being honest with Canadians about the passport situation during the general strike.

It is equally unfortunate that the Conservatives are unable to grasp our duty to respect the right to strike. We have to respect public service workers, just as we have to respect Canadians.

That is why we are at the bargaining table to negotiate this agreement with the public service. We are going to reach an agreement that is good for public servants and good for the public.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even though public service spending has increased by 53%, we find ourselves in the grip of the biggest federal public service strike in history because of the Prime Minister's epic incompetence. Canadians are being denied the services they pay for and deserve. The solution, according a Liberal cabinet minister yesterday, was that they not apply for passports anymore. Can members believe that?

When will the government get the job done and restore services for all Canadians?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, I am not going to spin the situation for Canadians; I am going to be straight and honest with them. The law dictates what is an essential service, and passports are not considered essential under the law. I am not going to make things up; I am going to be straight with Canadians. When it comes to essential services like CPP, OAS, GIS, employment insurance, social insurance numbers, and filing

taxes, these are all services that continue to be provided because they are considered to be essential.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be straight with Canadians. It takes a special level of incompetence to have increased spending of \$21 billion on bureaucracy and an additional \$22 billion on outside consultants and still end up with the largest federal public service strike in history.

Despite all of those billions of dollars being spent, Canadians still have no proposals, no plan and no passports. How much will the residents of northern B.C. have to pay to bring an end to the strike caused by the Prime Minister?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we are going to get into the record that members on either side of this House have when it comes to workers' rights, maybe we could talk about it.

I look at certain members in this House who were in government at one point of time. They now profess to be a party that represents workers. They just do not like the part where they may gather together, the collective part, the part where they actually get to bargain for free and fair wages.

For this side of the House I will say that we believe in the collective bargaining process. We will be there until the end. We will reach a fair and reasonable deal for taxpayers as well.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, trust in the Liberal government continues to erode. We are now a week into the largest general strike in history impacting the lives of all Canadians. Canadians are concerned about getting their tax returns on time. Afghans who helped Canada are still hiding in terror because the IRCC is incapable of processing their paperwork. Transport Canada is not conducting marine exams for students and now the minister who has presided over the largest backlog of passports in history has the audacity to tell Canadians that their passports are not essential and to not even bother to apply.

Why after two years of negotiating has the Liberal government failed to solve this dispute? When will Canadians get their passports?

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell members what our government is doing for Canadians. A few weeks ago in this House, we tabled a budget that for some reason the Conservatives do not want to talk about. Do members know why they do not want to talk about it? Because we balance fiscal responsibility with compassionate and necessary investments in Canadians. We are providing dental care for Canadians so that no one would be able to tell the size of someone's paycheque by their smile.

We are providing a grocery rebate to the Canadians who need it the most and we are investing in the jobs of the future and a green industrial policy.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, immigration backlog and processing delays continue to have a detrimental impact for people who want to reunite with loved ones and for those who need to get to safety.

As the crisis in Sudan worsens, Canadians with loved ones in Sudan are worried sick about their safety. The Liberals must get a fair deal for the PSAC workers to restore all immigration services. The longer the government drags its feet, the longer loved ones trapped in Sudan will have to wait.

Will the Prime Minister step in to prevent the processing backlog from getting even worse at IRCC?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure this House because my colleague mentioned the fact that people stuck in Sudan are not able to get out of Sudan. Canadians right now are being contacted 24-7 because consular services are emergency services. We are there to help them. We have had 550 of them who raised their hands saying they need help; 100 have gotten out of Sudan.

We are on this and we will make sure that every Canadian is coming back and is safe.

* * *

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are going to cut \$150 million in funding to women's shelters by September. Six hundred women's shelters will be impacted across the country. Gender-based violence is on the rise. This is unacceptable.

Women and gender-diverse folks always seem to be an afterthought for the government. This funding is desperately needed to help those fleeing violence.

Will the Prime Minister commit to renewing this life-saving funding or was his claim to be a feminist government just a farce?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, far from an afterthought, when the pandemic hit, a \$3-million emergency funding top-up was what we provided to make sure that shelters could keep the lights on and keep the doors open. This work continues with the national action plan, more than half a billion dollars in the last budget to work with

provinces and territories to make sure that the most vulnerable women and girls are safe.

I said that we would have women's backs and I stand by my words.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our supply chains and trade corridors have experienced challenges due to the pandemic, the impact of climate change and external events such as Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Canada's economy and population continue to grow, and Canadians deserve to get the goods they need on time. Could the minister inform the House on how we can increase capacity at our ports and strengthen our supply chains for Canadians?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Richmond Centre for his advocacy. Last week, the Minister of Natural Resources and I announced that it is in our national interest to increase the capacity of the Port of Vancouver by 50% by approving the Roberts Bank terminal 2 project.

The port will have to abide by 370 conditions, and we will continue our work with indigenous peoples, environmental stakeholders and unions to ensure the expansion and resilience of our supply chains. We have always said that our environmental plan is an economic plan. We are getting the job done.

* * *

● (1455)

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Beijing Communists laundered money into the Trudeau Foundation to gain influence with the Prime Minister. Foundation members who received Beijing's foreign-influence cash were then hand-picked by the Prime Minister to investigate the foreign interference their foundation facilitated.

The PM, unbelievably, claims he has no ties to the Trudeau Foundation, yet his office hosted a meeting between foundation leadership and top government bureaucrats. When will the Liberal-NDP alliance end the cover-up and call for an independent investigation into foreign influence that is without the taint of the Trudeau Foundation?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the member would be aware that it was not in the Prime Minister's office, but in the building, and that many things happen in his building and in everybody's buildings. I do not know if the member is aware of everything that happens in his office building. These were meetings with public servants, which had nothing to do with the Prime Minister.

The thing that I find disturbing is that they keep attacking a foundation when we have rules in this country, which are the strongest in the world, to protect the independence of our charities. The job of the foundation, which is the charity the Conservatives are attacking, is to give scholarships to students so they can be our future leaders. The Conservatives do not care whom or what they attack. Their partisan games continue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here we go again. It is just a building.

To acquaint the government House leader, because maybe he has never been there, the building is called the Prime Minister's office. It is a four-storey building. Everybody who works in that building is either exempt staff of the Prime Minister or a member of the Prime Minister's own department.

It is not like an apartment building where they just rent one space in it and do not know what else goes on. This is the Prime Minister's own office. The Trudeau Foundation met with five deputy ministers in the Prime Minister's own office. The Prime Minister is a member of the Trudeau Foundation, and he is trying to cover this up. Why will he not tell the truth?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been made clear, first of all, that the Prime Minister is not an active member at all of the Trudeau Foundation. He has been independent from that for more than 10 years.

I do not know how much time the member spends on subreddits and 4chan, but instead he should spend some time looking at facts. The facts are that we have some of the strictest rules for charities anywhere in the world. With respect to attacking charities on baseless information and misrepresenting them, the member knows full well that the building that the Prime Minister is in has, yes, the PMO. It also has PCO and, just as they do in the member's building, lots of things happen in different buildings.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one believes the Prime Minister's claims that he built a wall between himself and the Trudeau Foundation. He is the only one who can see that wall, and the Beijing regime sees a wide open window. Canada's spy agency has made it clear that the Communist regime sees the Trudeau Foundation as a gateway to influencing the Prime Minister. His own brother, Alexandre, arranged and received a \$200,000 cheque from the Beijing regime on behalf of the foundation.

Is it not time to let a family member speak out about the use of the Trudeau Foundation to influence the Prime Minister?

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject in totality the idea that the government would ever allow itself to be influenced by a foreign power. The idea that this would take place is absolutely ridiculous and offensive.

However, let us talk about the walls that protect our institutions. Let us talk about the wall that is supposed to exist to protect our public broadcaster, CBC and Radio-Canada, which they want to tear down and destroy. They are talking with foreign tech giants about how to get rid of a public broadcaster.

Let us talk about the wall that exists between monetary and fiscal policy in this country and what they want to do to the Bank of Canada. If the Conservatives want to talk about destroying walls, let us talk about what their plans are.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I have to choose between the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Liberal government House leader, I will take the word of the security intelligence agency. Its officials found that there had been a donation whose main purpose was to influence the current Prime Minister.

An article in *La Presse* this morning said it well: "The Prime Minister can swear that a Chinese wall separates him from the foundation, but that is not what the donors — and not just Beijing — who have been pouring dollars into the foundation since he took office seem to believe."

When will he finally admit that he is being influenced as Prime Minister because of his proximity to the Trudeau Foundation?

● (1500)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not up to me to respond. It is up to Canada's laws to protect the independence of any type of foundation in Canada. The law is there to ensure their independence, and it is totally irresponsible to attack a foundation that is responsible for awarding scholarships and ensuring that there is money for the future leaders of our country.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, a UN report revealed that the melting of glaciers is "off the charts" and is now irreversible.

However, this government does not see this as a global tragedy, but rather as a business opportunity. Believe it or not, in the most recent budget, the government allocated millions of dollars for oil exploration in the Arctic. The unchecked use of oil is what led to this global disaster, and the federal government is seriously thinking that there might be some money to be made now that the ice is melting.

Oral Questions

When will Canada stop off-loading the consequences of the climate crisis onto future generations?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It gives me an opportunity to remind her that Canada's last greenhouse gas inventory showed that, between 2019 and 2021, the greenhouse gas emissions in our country dropped by over 50 million tonnes. There was no pandemic in 2019 or in 2021.

We had the best record of all the G7 countries in 2020 and 2021 when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are doing better than the United States, better than France, better than Japan and better than Germany.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by all means, let us talk about emissions and Canada's record. In no fewer than five reports released on Thursday, Canada's environment commissioner accuses the government of choosing words over action.

Commissioner DeMarco says he is disappointed and frustrated at hearing nothing but empty promises from Ottawa on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting biodiversity.

Is the environment commissioner wrong in each of his five reports, or is the federal government putting us directly on the path to disaster with policies such as oil exploration in the Arctic?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that we have a lot of respect for the work of the environment commissioner. Unfortunately, when preparing his five reports, he did not have access to the latest greenhouse gas inventory report, which came out last week after the commissioner's reports. He will no doubt include them next year.

I would also like to remind my colleague that in the recent budget that my colleague, the Minister of Finance, tabled in the House a few weeks ago, we made record investments in clean technologies, in renewable energy, which puts us at the top of the list of G20 countries in terms of investment in this sector.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta families across the income scale will see a net loss of thousands of dollars because of the government's punishing carbon tax, so says the latest Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, but the Liberals would like to bury that one and cover it up.

The ripple effect on the cost of food from farm to truck to store continues to inflate food prices. Albertans know that the carbon tax siphons off their hard-earned money and does not lower emissions. Will this NDP-Liberal government scrap the carbon tax, or will Canadians scrap the government?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know Conservatives do not like to talk about facts, but I am going to put a few facts on the table.

In 2006, when they came into office, Canada ranked 17th in the OECD when it comes to child poverty. By the time they had left office in 2015, Canada ranked 24th. It is a little hard to take them seriously when they talk about poverty, but do members know what? After our coming into office in 2015, Canada now ranks second in the OECD when it comes to child poverty.

We will take no lessons from the Conservatives. We will continue to act and continue to support Canadians and families.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is completely out of touch with the pain and suffering his tax increases are causing Canadians. Gas is taxed. Groceries are taxed. Home heating is taxed. CPP is taxed. Payroll is taxed. Groceries are taxed, again.

While well-connected, rich Liberals keep getting further ahead, hard-working Canadians are falling further behind. I have a simple question: When will the Prime Minister give Canadian families a break and axe his carbon tax plan?

• (1505)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the Conservative member is saying this. To be honest, it represents the height of hypocrisy because the platform he ran on in 2021 said, "We recognize that the most efficient way to reduce our emissions is to use pricing mechanisms."

Climate change is a challenge that requires action, certainty and coherence. On this side of the House, our position is clear: We are putting a price on pollution and more money back in people's pockets.

When Conservatives have a coherent policy on climate change, maybe they should tell Canadians.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rural Canadians are facing real challenges trying to make ends meet because of the carbon tax. Prices went up again for groceries, fuel and everyday life. When a truck arrives to deliver groceries, it is now more expensive. For Gail and Doug in Creston, taking the children to a volleyball tournament 320 kilometres away is no longer an option.

This NDP-Liberal government's carbon tax is damaging. When will the government start listening to the common people, Canadians, and remove it?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to talk down the Canadian economy, but I have some good news. Last week, S&P, the ratings agency, published an economic analysis in which it reaffirmed Canada's AAA rating with a stable outlook. S&P concluded that Canada's AAA credit ratings “reflect the country's strong institutions; credible monetary policy; sound net external position; and wealthy, export-oriented economy.”

Our government is providing dental care, investing in health care, providing grocery rebates and being fiscally responsible.

* * *

YOUTH

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we launched the hiring period for Canada summer jobs. It is a program that provides employment opportunities for youth from different ages and backgrounds all over the country so they can learn new skills in the summer. Last year, 62 small businesses and non-profits in my riding of Hamilton Mountain participated in Canada summer jobs.

Could the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth please update the House on the importance of the Canada summer jobs program for youth across our country?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her advocacy.

Now that the hiring season for Canada summer jobs is under way, young Canadians between the ages of 15 and 30 right across the country can log on to the job banks website to find quality work experiences for this summer. As part of the youth employment and skills strategy, CSJ has helped so many young people facing systemic barriers to employment for years, because a level playing field is a key to success for everyone.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day and everywhere, Liberal friends and donors are finding themselves getting ahead when everyday Canadians are falling behind.

In 2015, this government promised to lower cellphone bills by 25%, when in reality cellphone bills have never been higher, and the former industry minister found himself a cushy, corner office job with Rogers, the company that was supposed to be reducing those costs. The way things are going, the current industry minister is going to find himself with a cushy, corner office job with Volkswagen in a few years' time.

My question to the minister is this: Minister, have you seen your cellphone bills reduced by 25%?

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members to place their questions through the Chair and not directly to each other.

The hon. Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to talk about a home run for Canada.

Just last week, we got the single largest investment in Canada's auto history of \$7 billion. This is the first car manufacturer we have attracted to Canada in 35 years, and unlike the Conservatives, and what they did to the community of St. Thomas in 2011, we are investing in workers. We are investing in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I had somebody shouting in my ear on my left. I will not mention who he was, but I want to remind everyone that when someone is asking or answering a question, a little respect would be nice.

The hon. minister.

• (1510)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I was reminded, when we made this great announcement, that I think they were saying it was a waste. I can say that competent countries invest in their workers and their industries. We are going to invest in Canada despite the fact that they do not support the cause.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a resident in the Lower St. Lawrence area in Quebec needed help and dialed 911. Nasty surprise, the operator did not speak French. Let us try to imagine asking for help from someone who does not understand us. Things do not go well and it is disturbing.

The CRTC, which regulates cellphones, must ensure that all Canadians, even francophones, have access to 911 service.

What explanation does the Prime Minister have for the CRTC's failure to provide security and access to 911 service in both official languages?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the House and members that this is completely unacceptable.

Indeed, Canadians rightly deserve to be able to get a response in French or in English, in both official languages of this country, from their telecom provider, particularly when they call 911. We will, of course, be looking into this matter.

I will repeat for all Canadians watching: This is unacceptable. We will take action to remedy the situation.

Oral Questions

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the \$1-billion crab industry in Newfoundland and Labrador is at a standstill due to poor markets. Traditionally, when the Alaskan crab fishery goes down, Japan buys more crab from Canada. Instead, Japan is buying cheap crab from Russia instead of sanctioning Russia, like the U.S. did when the Ukrainian war started.

Has the Prime Minister asked our allies in Asia to sanction Russian crab, yes or no?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have stood up for Ukrainians against the illegal war by Russia perpetrated on Ukraine. We have initiated sanctions. We have pulled its MFN status. We have raised this issue with Japan, and Japan, too, I would say, has been a strong defender of Ukraine. We will continue to stand up for Canadian fishers.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we live in the most beautiful country in the world. However, the threats to our environment have never been greater. Climate change is threatening nature, our communities and our economy.

The 2023 budget announced new measures to protect our environment, fight climate change and make Canada more resilient to the threats posed by extreme weather.

Could the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change tell the House about one of the key measures to help protect water and biodiversity across the country?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vaudreuil—Soulanges for his question and above all for his commitment to environmental issues over the past 20 years.

In the latest federal budget presented by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, we announced record investments to protect freshwater in the Great Lakes and across the country. A record \$730 million has been allocated, including \$85 million for the creation of a water agency, which will be an independent agency that will protect freshwater sources across the country.

* * *

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian air travellers deserve protections that are easy to navigate and get them the compensation they deserve. However, instead of listening to the experts, the minister seems to be doubling down on a system that is bureaucratic and expensive.

One of the most alarming aspects of his new law is a gag order on air passengers. Passengers who are not happy with the outcome of their complaint process will be prevented from speaking about it.

If the minister is so proud of his new process, why he is silencing the people who use it?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to share with Canadians the news that our government was taking action to learn from last summer's challenges that we saw in our air sector. Our government is strengthening the protection for our passengers, making sure airlines are accountable and responsible for fulfilling their obligation to their customers. We are standing up for Canadians. We are working with the sectors. We will make sure that every passenger gets the service he or she deserves.

* * *

● (1515)

HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberals, the nursing shortage has gotten worse everywhere in the country. A report today says that nurses in Ontario are leaving the profession because of inadequate wages and poor working conditions. We are losing them to private for-profit clinics, and patients are suffering. That is why the NDP called on the government to require public funds to go to public health care, but Liberals refused.

Our health care professionals deserve fair pay and dignity in the workplace, and patients depend on it.

Why is the Prime Minister allowing for-profit delivery to cannibalize public health care in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am obviously very pleased to receive this question. The member knows very well of the additional \$200 billion we announced just a few weeks ago in support of provinces and territories in addition to the normal value of the CHT and in addition to the value of tax points, but, more important, to support workers through the crisis the member correctly identified. Those dollars are designed to support the public delivery of health care services in Canada.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the four crew members from NASA's Artemis II mission: Mission Specialist, Canadian Jeremy Hansen; Commander Reid Wiseman; Pilot Victor Glover; and Mission Specialist Christina Koch.

They are accompanied by former U.S. Senator Bill Nelson, NASA's administrator, and Lisa Campbell, President of the Canadian Space Agency.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

The House resumed from April 24 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:18 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

● (1530)

[English]

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

(Division No. 303)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bérubé	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Gaheer	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley

Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lattanzio
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Routine Proceedings

Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Larouche
Lauzon
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Plamondon
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Vuong
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 204

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper

Government Orders

Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Perkins	Poilievre
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson— 113	

PAIRED

Members

Aldag	Bergeron
Bibeau	Maloney
Pauzé	Perron
Qualtrough	Schmale
Sorbara	Zimmer— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

APPLICABILITY OF STANDING ORDER 18 TO STATEMENT BY MEMBER

Mr. Garnett Genius (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could clarify the application of Standing Order 18, especially during members' statements.

The Speaker: I will come back to the House with that; I am looking into it. I want to see exactly what was said and the intent of what was said. Thank you for bringing that up.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we would be hard pressed to find an individual in this chamber who does not love Canada. However, there is a difference in approach in this House as it pertains to managing the affairs of the country on behalf of the taxpaying Canadians who have elected us.

We are servants in the House of Commons, not masters. If one wants to see greatness, they should not look around this chamber but around our ridings. In my riding, it can be seen in the coal-stained shirt of Jason, the miner who extracts metal-making minerals from the ground in Elk Valley, metals the government has not acknowledged as critical minerals. It can be seen in the hands of farmers like Tyler, who understands the science and the weather, the soil and commodity prices and how to bring food from the fields to our tables. It can be seen in Terry, the electrician in Cranbrook who can send lightning shooting through a copper wire to light up our homes.

Often these people are called ordinary, but they are not ordinary. They are extraordinary. They are the ones bearing the brunt of broken federal policies. They are the individuals paying, from their paycheques, for the inflation caused by out-of-control federal spending.

Waitress Cassidy in Revelstoke can serve 15 customers at the same time, be on her feet all day, have enough energy to help her son with math homework and pay all of her bills on a minimum wage salary, but she is unable to save any money for her and her son's future. She is not ordinary; she is extraordinary.

Police officer Constable Dianne pushes through the pain of recovering someone's overdosed daughter from a homeless camp in Cranbrook or Nelson, and then, with her husband, tucks their children in at night. She is not ordinary; she is extraordinary.

As the leader of the official opposition has said, that is “the goodness, the greatness, and even the genius of the common people.”

It is the common sense of the common people striving for the purpose of the common home. The people's common democratic home is right here in this place, the House of Commons. All of this is theirs, and it is their common-sense voice that is missing from this budget.

They are the experts on the expense of inflation, an expense caused and fanned by the government. The reality for the hard-working people in Kootenay—Columbia is that life is now more expensive, homes are unattainable, groceries are becoming a luxury and life has become more difficult. However, the finance minister says she has “never been more optimistic about the future of our country”. She is out of touch. This should not be the Canadian experience.

Government Orders

This chamber is green because the first commoners met in the fields of England over 800 years ago. They wrestled power away from high society, the nobility, to make themselves, commoners, masters in their own homeland. Would those who wrestled agree with the policies of the Prime Minister?

On this side of the House, the official opposition remembers what the government has forgotten: We are servants, not masters. It is the common people, those we serve, who are the masters in this free land, and they are the ones who fund the budgets of the day. It is their common sense that is absent from this budget. In fact, this budget continues the Prime Minister's nonsensical approach of higher taxes and inflationary deficits. It does not make Canada work for the people who have done the work.

On the point of the budget, the Conservatives asked the government for three things. First was that the budget pave the way for Canadians to bring home powerful paycheques by lowering taxes and scrapping the carbon tax. Instead of listening to Canadians, the government is continuing with its war on work and increasing taxes, which means workers are punished for working and will now take home even less of their paycheques. Inflationary spending has caused the cost of food and groceries to skyrocket. One in five Canadians is skipping meals, and people are going to food banks asking for help because they cannot afford to eat.

The Prime Minister's grocery rebate would give \$234 for a single adult to cover the rising cost of food that the government's inflationary deficits helped cause. Canada's latest food price report predicts that a family of four will spend up to \$1,000 more on food this year. That is \$600 more than the \$467 rebate they will receive.

Just this year, the government raised payroll taxes on workers and small businesses. This means that Ken, a forestry worker living in Creston making \$66,600, will be forced to pay an extra \$255 through the mandatory Canada pension plan tax this year. That worker will also have to pay an extra \$50 through the employment insurance tax. That is a \$305 increase.

The grocery rebate does nothing more than just give money back to Canadians that the Prime Minister already clawed away with his tax increases. This will not solve the cost of living crisis.

• (1535)

There is more. The government increased the carbon tax to 14¢ per litre on April 1, making it more expensive for Canadians to heat their homes and get to work. The PBO shows that the carbon tax will cost the average family between \$402 and \$847 in 2023, even after the rebates. By 2030, the Prime Minister's two carbon taxes could add 50¢ per litre to the price of gasoline. The people of Kootenay—Columbia are already paying \$1.70 a litre, which is 40% more per litre than the same fuel 30 minutes away.

We are all well aware, especially in rural Canada, that our food security is dependent on distribution from our truck drivers, those who use diesel fuel. The significant increase in the carbon tax has a direct effect on the cost of our groceries, and the more remote, the more expensive. The cost of fuel is added to all of the commodities shipped, which is a huge burden on the families and seniors in rural Canada.

I could go on. The fact remains that the budget continues the government's war on the worker.

Second, we asked that the budget pave the way for lower prices by ending the inflationary debt and deficits that drive up inflation and interest rates.

Instead of listening to Canadians, the Prime Minister added more debt than all prime ministers combined. He has no plans to balance the budget and control his inflationary deficits, which are driving up the cost of the goods we buy and the interest we pay. Canada's federal debt is projected to reach \$1.22 trillion. That is nearly \$81,000 per household in Canada, which is more than many households earn.

Worse than that, he is planning on growing the deficit by \$40.1 billion. According to the budget, Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to increase from 42.4% to 43.5%. Last budget cycle, the finance minister said that Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio was her "fiscal anchor" and that the debt-to-GDP must decline for Canada's finances to be sustainable.

I would like to repeat the finance minister's words, for the constituents of Kootenay—Columbia. The minister said:

...let me be very clear: We are absolutely determined that our debt-to-GDP ratio must continue to decline. Our deficits must continue to be reduced. The pandemic debt we incurred to keep Canadians safe and solvent must—and will—be paid down.

This is our fiscal anchor. This is a line we shall not cross. It will ensure that our finances remain sustainable.

This means, according to the finance minister, that the Prime Minister's inflationary debt and deficits are unsustainable.

The third thing the Conservatives asked for was that the budget pave the way for Canadians to bring the opportunity for homes Canadians can afford by removing government gatekeepers to free up land and speed up building permits. The dream of home ownership has gone from a reality to a dream for young and old Canadians under the government. Nine out of 10 people who do not own a home say they never will.

By every objective measurement, things are more expensive and Canadians are taking home less. This is a tired government that has no plan to help Canadians, no plan to remove the gatekeepers and build more homes, no plan to free up federal lands and properties and no plan to speed up building permits by withholding federal funding from cities that refuse to remove gatekeepers.

Government Orders

Under the government, everything feels broken. Broken is Emma, an elementary school student in Cranbrook asking why her parents cannot afford groceries. Broken is Mary, a single senior in Creston who does not have enough left over to pay for fuel and to make the 120-kilometre drive to visit her doctor. Mary has to make a choice. Broken is Ethan, a father in Cranbrook who has worked hard and done everything right and yet finds himself at the food bank because his paycheque, after taxes and inflation, does not make it to the end of the month.

These are real stories from real Canadians, but help is on its way. The Conservatives plan to turn hurt into hope.

• (1540)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I certainly have much more optimism than the member across the way regarding the position our country is in. It is a lot to say that a country is broken. I could not disagree more with the member.

Yes, from time to time we certainly have work to do, and right now, with the rising costs we are seeing throughout the country and indeed throughout the entire world, we have to help Canadians and support them. However, there are many measures in this budget implementation act that seek to do exactly that, whether it is increasing the GST to help people with the rising costs of groceries the member just mentioned or it is the various other supports in there.

I am wondering if the member can explain, if he is so concerned about people in his community, as he has just indicated, why he cannot support this budget, which takes aim at helping them directly.

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, the reality is that the people out there in our communities are not saying that. They are saying they cannot afford this budget. They are saying they cannot afford to eat. They are saying they cannot afford to drive to a doctor's appointment and eat. Seniors are struggling every day. This budget is not helping them. The carbon tax is not helping them. Our groceries are delivered by diesel trucks. That is our supply chain. We knew during COVID that our supply chains for food supplies were critical, yet we are taxing everyone more, especially with the carbon tax, such as farmers, ranchers and our deliveries, so I do not see a light at the end of the tunnel.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my Conservative colleague talked about seniors in relation to the carbon tax.

I have a suggestion for my colleague. What the seniors in my riding, in Quebec, are asking me for and what they talk to me about is a little more direct assistance to help them get through this crisis. They want an increase in old age security for all seniors to address the inequality between people aged 75 and over and those under 75. This would be a first step towards recognizing that seniors are affected by the inflation crisis.

This budget contains nothing except a one-time cheque to help them with groceries. That cheque will be used up in no time.

I wonder if he could talk more about the importance of providing much more direct assistance to seniors, specifically by increasing old age security.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, I agree that seniors are fragile and they are the ones getting hurt the most as the prices go up for groceries, when a head of lettuce goes up to \$3 or \$4 and seniors are only getting OAS. Some get CPP, and some do not. That is the most critical part of our society. Seniors are the ones who took care of us, our parents. They are the ones we have to take the time to find some funding for, so we can help them through this inflationary crisis, but we cannot do that if we keep spending money we do not have and all of a sudden inflation starts rising.

• (1545)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, my neighbour in the Kootenays spent a lot of time talking about the carbon tax. The Conservatives, and certainly a British Columbian conservative such as he, never mention the fact that the carbon tax in British Columbia is a conservative tax. It was brought in by Gordon Campbell in 2008, 15 years ago. I am sure the member voted for Gordon Campbell several times. Yes, it went up 3¢ a litre on April 1. The price of gas in his riding and my riding has gone up probably a dollar over the last year.

Instead of this fight against the carbon tax, when most people get all of that back, would he join the NDP in the fight for an excessive profits tax on the big oil and gas companies and big grocery retailers that are driving up the price of gas and groceries?

Mr. Rob Morrison: Madam Speaker, here is the issue: People cannot afford the carbon tax today. To say that it is only 3¢ is not the point; the point is that they do not have the money to buy their groceries. They do not have the money to take their children on holidays. They just do not have any money. They cannot buy homes. They cannot rent houses. The taxes we have today are overpowering. When we talk about the carbon tax, let us talk about the farmers and ranchers. They are the ones paying the brunt of the carbon tax because of what they are delivering. I cannot support that.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to tell the story of budget 2023 as it pertains to my constituents in the Yukon. This budget is one that aptly reflects the unique circumstances we are living in today. Given the present tough times Canadians face, the budget is restrained while at the same time ambitiously setting the tone for the years and decades to come.

After ensuring that we were there to support Canadians through the COVID-19 pandemic, directing unprecedented levels of fiscal and social supports to Canadians for the last few years, our government now must refocus its efforts for the future. Our planet is facing a series of challenges, from climate change to geopolitical instability. Canada must rise to meet these crises head-on and boldly go where Canada has not gone before.

Government Orders

Affordability, accessible health care and clean energy are the three themes of this budget, and I will, in these few minutes, spend a bit of time on each of these areas.

[*Translation*]

In this budget, we are making sure that our country responds effectively to the climate crisis while continuing to support Canadians through the difficult times brought on by the high cost of groceries or limited access to family doctors.

These measures are a direct investment in maintaining our leadership in a rapidly changing world.

[*English*]

While I recognize that it may be little consolation to a Yukoner struggling to pay rent or buy sufficient food to feed the family this month, it is important to note Canada's relative economic position in the world and recognize the indicators of a strong overall economy. Because we did the right thing to support Canadians through the pandemic, we are poised for a strong recovery.

Helping those who are feeling the pain of high prices the most is a government priority. I am grateful, therefore, that the House unanimously approved last week, in addition to the Canada health transfer top-up, the new grocery rebate, which will help over 9,000 Yukoners.

While we take care of those with the greatest needs, as we have always done with this government, we are laying the foundation for the new economy, one that finally pushes us beyond our dependence on fossil fuels and plants us firmly in the green energy future.

Another aspect of this budget, one important to note for those who, like me, were disappointed not to see everything they were hoping for, is that budget 2023 is another chapter in a series of budgets, not just in the 44th Parliament but since 2015, when our work of rebuilding a Canadian economy that works for all Canadians began, and more chapters will follow.

Our government has been working progressively to insulate Canadians from financial hardship. For example, the affordable child care program announced between Canada and Yukon just over two years ago is creating new regulated early learning and child care spaces for Yukon families to access for \$10 a day. The grocery rebate builds on the previous GST rebate extension and the one-time rental subsidy introduced in the fall. Continuing to build our assistance to students, we are proposing a 40% increase in the Canada student grants, which follows on the interest forgiveness for Canada student loans this past year.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

In the meantime, we are continuing with the expansion of the rapid housing initiative announced in last year's budget, the tens of billions of dollars announced in 2021 and 2022 for a host of programs to advance reconciliation, and other programs, like the green and inclusive community buildings program.

[*English*]

Now let us take a look at health care. As a physician working in northern and rural communities for much of the past 30 years, including 13 years as the chief medical officer of health in the Yukon, I saw first-hand how our already stressed health care systems strained to meet the added burden placed upon them by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated long-standing issues within our health care systems, including access to a family doctor, recruitment and retention of our health care workforce, data collection and sharing, access to care in rural communities, service gaps in mental health care and measures to address substance use and addictions, and a lack of investment in prevention.

As an advocate for better health care for Canadians, I was pleased to see our government's almost \$200-billion commitment to begin addressing these critical issues. For Yukon, this means \$380 million over 10 years, including \$195 million in new funding. An important part of territorial health funding is a commitment of \$100 million for the Yukon over 10 years to support medical travel and health care innovation through the territorial health investment fund. We also see commitments made to meet health care priorities in the Yukon, including improving access to primary care, modernizing the health care system, and addressing the mental health and the toxic drug crises.

Also of note in this budget is \$810 million to support medical travel under the non-insured health benefits program for first nations, and \$359 million to support a renewed Canadian drugs and substances strategy, including \$144 million toward the SUAP, or substance use and addictions program.

[*Translation*]

Canadians will also benefit from the new dental care plan, which will provide dental insurance to Canadians with family income of less than \$90,000. Once the plan is fully phased in, it will help thousands of Canadians and complement the new program that is already up and running in the Yukon. At last, my constituents and millions of other Canadians will receive the dental care they need to avoid costly complications and health problems down the road.

[*English*]

Underpinning the health of Canadians is a healthy economy, an economy that includes and supports all Canadians. To that end, I am pleased to highlight from this budget the investments we are making in order to transition to a cleaner and greener economy.

Government Orders

As many know, Yukon has a proud mining heritage, one that is not only integral to the Yukon's colourful history, but also key to our future economic prosperity. The days of the gold rush may be past, but renewed interest and investment in critical minerals are just getting started. Canada has an opportunity to become a world leader in this field if we grow and develop critical mining assets in a manner that is responsible, sustainable, efficient, and in lockstep with indigenous partners and communities.

The Yukon is home to 25 of the 31 critical minerals in Canada's inventory, most notably copper, nickel, tungsten and zinc. Budget 2023's introduction of a 30% clean technology manufacturing tax credit would help companies invest in the technology and equipment to responsibly extract these key critical minerals.

[Translation]

Canada will need to pick up the pace and increase its presence at every stage of mining, from exploration to processing, in order to provide the materials we need to fuel our green energy future, as well as to provide rewarding and sustainable jobs for Canadians for generations to come.

[English]

Mines need power, and so does a growing population, and that power must be clean. I am pleased to see the 15% tax credit for clean electricity investment in this budget, as this and other clean electricity measures would help communities across the north support the transition away from fossil fuels and toward achieving our emissions goals. There are a number of projects currently under way or in the planning stages that I hope will be able to take advantage of these new credits, such as the Atlin hydro expansion project, a partnership among Yukon, B.C. and first nations in both jurisdictions.

[Translation]

Other projects in the north could use the new clean hydrogen investment tax credit and other support measures that have also been announced under the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

[English]

As the IPCC's latest report warns us, we are in the last few years of having a chance to turn the climate crisis around. In the Yukon, we are increasingly familiar with the costs of climate change. Just two weeks ago, Whitehorse had to close one of its two routes into the city due to a landslide from heavy snow burden and highly saturated ground. Buildings, roads and runways around the Yukon buckle and bend under melting permafrost in a landscape that is warming at three times the rate of the rest of Canada.

Some of our colleagues across the way believe that fighting climate change is just too much to spend.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Yes, it is costly to invest in building our community's resilience to climate change. It is also costly to transition the economy and drastically reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. That said, the cost of the damage associated with climate change in Canada will be much higher.

[English]

In addition, if we make the necessary investments within the next decade, Canada could see a net economic benefit of over \$465 billion over the next 10 years.

While Conservatives may take, well, a conservative approach, I prefer to be part of a government that acts to prevent costly disasters and invests in measures that will grow our economy in the future.

Since 2015, we have committed and remain committed to the journey toward reconciliation. An important step on that journey was made by this budget in the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy, which saw a \$4-billion commitment, which, over the next seven years, will complement the three existing distinctions-based housing strategies with the CMHC. This new budget commitment will add to previously announced initiatives already under way to continue our ambitious yet much-needed housing strategy.

Affordable housing, accessible health care and investments in clean energy are all making life better for Canadians today, tomorrow and for decades to come. We are living difficult days, and there are more to come.

[Translation]

However, making significant and smart investments today will help us reap the benefits of a greener, fairer, healthier and more prosperous future.

[English]

This budget is yet another chapter in building a better Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Yukon for his speech. It is really nice to hear him speak French.

I would like to know whether he shares a concern that I have. Two or three years ago, the Prime Minister said that he would invest 2% of the budget in military spending.

That did not happen. He broke his promise a few weeks ago when he said that he would never reach that target. When we look at the conflicts around the world and the donations that Canada has made to countries like Ukraine, which I am in no way disputing, we see that Canada's military inventory is diminishing.

Government Orders

Does my colleague share my concern that Canada is or will be unable to support countries in need?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Madam Speaker, we are all concerned about Canada's security, our armed forces and the need for security in the Arctic. However, we need to recognize that that we have spent billions of dollars to strengthen our armed forces and military posture.

We recently heard about the Minister of National Defence's list of achievements. I am very pleased with the progress that has been made.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my time on the fisheries and oceans committee alongside this member.

One thing that I did not see in the budget was any mention of a national strategy for warning labels on alcoholic products. I know the member has a background in health care and did a lot of work around strategies for warning labels on these products. We know that alcohol consumption comes with increased risks of at least nine different forms of cancer, including breast, colon and liver cancer. The member is very aware of this.

Canadians need and deserve this information. Could the member give his thoughts around supporting my motion, Motion No. 61, to get warning labels on bottles, as well as the stance of the Liberals as to whether they are going to support this important work?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Madam Speaker, I also enjoy our time together on the fisheries and oceans committee.

We have had direct discussions on this really important subject, which I take to heart. It is important to recognize the many risks that alcohol poses to our health, as well as the place that it has in our society. I certainly look forward to discussing my thoughts on the motion more. It is very good that this motion is being prepared to come to the House, and I look forward to discussing this important issue with my colleagues.

• (1600)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his comments about dealing with rare earth minerals and the huge mining that we deal with not only in Yukon but elsewhere. Vital Metals is a rare earth company in Saskatoon that the federal government has given money to. I suspect the member understands that it has actually shut down because of the huge inflationary cost to produce what it is doing.

The government is proposing that this funding be sponsored by the CPP investment fund. Is the member aware that this is being used to back the investment?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Madam Speaker, briefly, there are a number of exciting investments in budget 2023 to encourage numerous private, public utility and indigenous investments in critical minerals. I look forward to their implementation over the year and the years to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to a subject that could

have been a source of hope for Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet, but that is not the case.

Sadly, this discussion is just a formality, since the costly and socialist NDP-Liberal coalition has control over the government for the next few years. In fact, that is how things will stay until the Conservatives are in power and give Canadians hope of regaining control over their wallets.

Until then, we can rise in the House, as I am doing, to criticize the mismanagement of public funds and oppose things that make no sense, such as budget 2023 tabled by the Government of Canada on March 28.

This discussion is important because it allows us to highlight the concerns of my Conservative colleagues, as well as the proposals being made on our side of the House to provide real help to people who are struggling because the Liberals do not understand the stress Canadians are under. If they really understood, they would have proposed a budget that made sense.

I am speaking here in a rather sombre economic context, namely Bill C-47, the budget for 2023. It is hard to overlook the record rates of inflation we have been enduring in the past few months. I have been talking about this here in the House of Commons for three years now. The Minister of Finance told me that this was just a temporary situation, but, unlike her, I have always believed that we are dealing with structural inflation.

Structural inflation is caused solely by an abnormally rapid increase in the quantity of currency in relation to the country's volume of production. Since 2015, Canadians have been subjected to reckless Liberal tax policies which have led to a significant increase in government spending, at a time when that was not what the economy needed at all. The Liberals injected money into sectors that were doing well. Indeed, in my riding, entrepreneurs were telling me that they were taking the money because it was being offered to them, even though they did not need it. No one understood why the government was spending so much. Today, the result is clear. Inflation always catches up with the culprits.

I thought that the budget would include some fiscal restraint and a target year to achieve a balanced budget, but no. There was talk of 2027, but not anymore. The Liberals have completely eliminated "balanced budget" from their vocabulary. A return to balance seems all but impossible now. They think that money grows on trees. They open the tap and money flows out by the bucketful. Except that, in reality, in the real world, that is not how things work. The Liberals should review the principle of cause and effect. The cause is printing money to excess. The effect is inflation being where it is, the worst in 40 years.

Government Orders

The Liberals have plunged Canadians into an inflationary abyss. The Prime Minister has caused the highest rate of inflation in 40 years by doubling the national debt and increasing our debt more than any other prime minister in the history of Canada. What are the consequences? The cost of living for ordinary Canadians is rising. The cost of groceries is skyrocketing, as is the cost of gas. According to a recent poll, 74% of Quebecers say that they are struggling to pay for their daily expenses such as groceries, gas and necessities. We are talking about workers who get up every morning to go to work so they can put food on the table for their families. We are talking about hard-working people who did everything they were told to do. They are no longer able to make ends meet because the Liberals have been totally irresponsible with the public purse for the past eight years. Furthermore, these workers' paycheques are shrinking because all the money goes to taxes, and now they are being told that this budget will represent \$4,200 in additional costs for every household in Canada. Honestly.

I know that the Liberals are going to tell me about their grocery rebate, so let us talk about it. It is only a marketing ploy, because the grocery rebate is nothing more than the doubling of the GST. They should stop presenting it as a revolutionary idea. There is nothing new about it.

As we can see, there are numerous problems with this budget. The important thing to take away from this budget is that workers have been left behind, and they are not being compensated for their work. The Conservatives want to make work pay again by cutting taxes.

• (1605)

As for workers being left behind, I do not have to go very far to see a concrete example. I need only think of the workers at the Olymel plant in the riding of my colleague and friend from Beauce. These workers will be out of a job in the next few months, since the company has announced that it is closing the largest hog slaughterhouse and meat processing plant in Quebec. We are talking about 1,000 jobs lost in a municipality of 2,000 people. Once again, the government is in no hurry to act. Worse still, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food cannot be bothered to even mention it. It just goes to show that the Liberals are not there when Canadians need them.

In addition to the Liberal war on labour, there is also the issue of critical minerals. This issue is important in my riding. I am thinking particularly of the need to add phosphate to the list of critical minerals as soon as possible. I have been asking for this for a number of years in the House, as well as at the Standing Committee on International Trade, of which I am a member.

That is why I was anxious to see what the government was proposing in this budget for critical minerals. A passage on page 92 states, "In the past year, the federal government has taken action to fast-track the assessment of mining, energy, and other major projects".

I would like to clarify that I hope the government does not really believe what it is saying there. Let us think about GNL. The government did not send a strong signal on this project. Hundreds of billions of dollars in investment projects were lost under the Liberal government because of its lack of leadership and because of Cana-

dian taxation and Canadian regulations, which are not conducive to a good investment climate.

In the section of the budget that deals with major projects, there is \$1.3 billion in funding over six years starting in 2022-23 for major project assessments and \$10.6 million in funding to help critical minerals companies get permits and approvals. Sometimes the Liberals take us for fools. How can we trust the Liberals when it comes to meeting a deadline? This six-year time frame is far too long, and we know it will take longer than six years. The possibility of mining critical minerals like phosphate and the feasibility of using them in batteries will end long before that.

We need to give a helping hand to projects that are already well under way and that have already received authorization, such as Arianne Phosphate in Saguenay. We are a long way from that because, as I said before, the budget makes no mention at all of phosphate. We know how much it is needed for lithium iron phosphate batteries, which have many advantages, such as their longer life span, better charge efficiency and lightweight nature. Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is home to the Arianne Phosphate mining company, which has one of the largest deposits of phosphate in Canada. The phosphate is also very high quality.

As I said, I am a member of the Standing Committee on International Trade, where I have often had the opportunity to talk about the usefulness of critical minerals in the economy. The findings of studies on batteries, particularly for electric vehicles, are always the same. In Canada, there is a real problem with regard to the cost and the time between discovery, extraction and production. Canada is currently extracting critical minerals for the new battery economy, but it is exporting them abroad for the manufacturing of finished products. How is it that Canada has still not developed a battery manufacturing chain, given all of Quebec's electrical expertise? I think that a big part of the answer lies in Canada's tax competitiveness and the government's top-down regulations.

In sum, this budget fails workers in every sector. Canadians are sick of being bribed with one-off cheques. We need to address the source of the problem instead of handing out cheques here and there. This waste of public money needs to stop. Canadians have had it with watching their money being thrown out the window by the Liberals. Week after week, we keep learning more about scandals involving taxpayers' money. Just look at the huge contract awarded to McKinsey. The government gave \$120 million to consulting firms, representing \$1,500 an hour in fees.

• (1610)

Time is running out, so let me say that a Conservative government will put Canadians first by stopping unnecessary spending and waste and by lowering taxes. Let us bring back common sense—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is out of time. He can finish his remarks during questions and comments.

Government Orders

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard the member talk, towards the end of his speech, specifically about the battery supply chain, questioning why we do not seem to be able to accomplish that in Canada. Meanwhile, I am wondering if he is aware that his own colleague, the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington, which is the neighbouring riding to mine in Ontario, has the largest investment coming into her riding, in terms of battery manufacturing for electric vehicles. It will be the largest plant in North America, expanded on by the company Umicore, from Europe.

I am wondering if he is even aware of that, and how he thinks that will impact the supply chain.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, these are investments in North America, but the question is, when will it actually happen? First of all, there are always delays and huge costs. It costs far too much. Taxation also needs to be reviewed, because all the delays and paperwork do not help us persuade foreign investors to come here. Everything is complicated. Projects that people think can be done quickly sometimes take two or three times as long as expected. There is also a question of timing. It is never the right place at the right time when projects need to be done.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from my neck of the woods for his remarks. I am also glad to see that the Minister of Health is here with us, because my question for my colleague is about health funding.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member just referenced the presence in the House of a minister, a member of the House, and the member should not be making those references. Perhaps she can rethink the way to say that.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is signalling to me that she understands that she should not refer to the presence of other members in the House, so I will let her continue with her intervention.

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I apologize for my absent-mindedness. That caught my attention, and I forgot the rules of the House.

The government has been underfunding the health care systems of Quebec and the provinces for many years now. That has had a negative impact on the public finances of every province, Quebec's in particular. Because Quebec and the provinces have had to compensate for the federal government's underfunding of health care,

they do not have enough money to invest in other important developments. I would like to know whether my colleague agrees that the federal government needs to contribute more to the health care systems so that Quebec and the provinces have more funds available for other things.

• (1615)

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, obviously, health transfers have been pretty minimal. They did not live up to the provinces' expectations. There comes a point when it is hard to understand why a lot more funding is not being transferred to the provinces for health care.

Basically, we have seen the current government waste a lot of money. We are talking about \$120 million in contracts given to McKinsey, when many public servants could have done the work. We know that there was \$500 billion in inflationary spending in two years. We are completely in the dark about how \$200 billion of that \$500 billion was spent. When a government cannot control its spending, it is extremely difficult to have a reasonable budget. This is creating significant scarcity in some very important areas.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, last week, when I was in the chamber, we spoke at great length about the position the Conservatives had for fixing the economy. Many of the brilliant solutions they advocated for were cutting taxes and cutting some of the most important revenue-generating aspects of the federal government, while not simultaneously talking about the services they would cut.

What services would the member cut if he and his party were to form government?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, I do not know why we are talking about cutting services. We just have to pay attention to the wasteful spending of the Liberals over there. If the government would control its spending and stop the waste, everything would be fine. I always have a problem with saying that services need to be cut. It is more a matter of putting the money in the right place.

[*English*]

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak about budget 2023 and, in particular, the recent announcements and significant initiatives taken by the federal government to improve the lives of millions of Canadians across the country. Budget 2023 has been designed to address some of the most pressing issues affecting Canadians, including affordability, education, health care and mental health. What I would like to highlight is how our government is supporting Canadians at many different life stages.

Government Orders

The most critical issue of affordability, which affects a vast number of Canadians, is an issue our government does not take lightly. In the riding of Mississauga—Streestville, I continue to hear about the rising cost of groceries, for example. The federal government has announced the grocery rebate, which will provide eligible couples with two children with up to an extra \$467, single Canadians without children up to an extra \$234 and seniors an extra \$225, on average. This will be delivered through the goods and services tax credit mechanism and will help up to 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and families, which is a significant step toward making daily essentials more affordable for those who need it the most.

I would like to thank all my colleagues from all parties in the House for voting to support the grocery rebate. Let us take a moment and think about the impact. That is 11 million low- and modest-income Canadians and families who will experience financial relief.

Affordability is important, and, as part of our government's national housing strategy, I am excited to share that, with the help of our financial institutions, we started offering the tax-free first home savings account to Canadians as of April 1. I reflect on the time when my husband and I were married, 15 years ago. I remember how excited we were to start our life together, to buy our first home and start a family. Home ownership is a very important milestone for so many.

In last year's budget, the government committed to introducing a tax-free first home savings account. This new registered plan will give prospective first-time homebuyers the ability to save up to \$40,000 on a tax-free basis. As with a registered retirement savings plan, contributions will be tax-deductible and withdrawals to purchase a first home, including from investment income, will be non-taxable as well, like a tax-free savings account. It will be tax-free in, tax-free out. With this new tax-free first home savings account, 3.5 million families across Canada will be able to start saving for a new home.

In support of families, budget 2023 would assist Canadians as their families grow. After my husband and I settled into our first home, we started to grow our family. After our son Kyle was born and after maternity leave, I needed to get back to work. I relied on our local day care to ensure Kyle would be taken care of. When I was working in downtown Toronto, child care was very expensive. At that time, it cost an average family \$1,500 to \$1,700 per month or more, depending on the location one chose.

Since 2015, the government has been investing in the middle class, growing the economy and strengthening Canada's social safety net. We continue to support 3.5 million families through the tax-free child care benefit. This year, families will be receiving up to \$6,997 per child under the age of six and up to \$5,903 per child aged six through 17.

Our government's child care program is already seeing fees being cut by 50%, on average, which is delivering regulated child care that will cost an average of just \$10 a day by 2026. This is incredible. We have already had six provinces and territories reduce child care fees to \$10 a day or less as of April 2, while we are strengthening the child care system in Quebec with more child care

spaces. This support will help parents and young families start their lives without worrying about any additional expenses. I wish I had had this when I had just gotten off maternity leave many years ago.

I also have more good news. The proportion of core-age women employed was 82% in March. This translates to close to seven million women aged 15 years and older being employed on a full-time basis. This is a huge win. In addition to child care, we have also enhanced the Canada workers benefit for our lowest-paid and often most essential workers, with up to \$1,428 for a single worker without children and up to \$2,461 for a family, as well as an additional \$737 for workers with disabilities.

● (1620)

My son Kyle is entering high school soon, and, naturally, what is on my mind is his education. My parents, Norma and Zosimo, worked very hard when they immigrated to Canada so that my brother and I would be able to seek higher education in a post-secondary academic institution. I am truly grateful for all of their sacrifices.

We wanted to ensure that we are here to support families and young adults with their education. This is an important part of budget 2023 and a key priority. The federal government has announced several initiatives to help students across Canada. These include permanently eliminating interest on Canada student loans and ensuring that borrowers do not need to make payments on their loans until they earn at least \$40,000 per year.

Our government would also increase Canada student grants by 40%, providing up to \$4,200 for full-time students, and raise the interest-free Canada student loan limit from \$210 to \$300 per week of study. Additionally, the requirement for mature students, aged 22 years or older, to undergo credit screening in order to qualify for federal student grants and loans for the first time would be waived. This would support individuals looking to switch their career or get additional education to improve their existing knowledge and skills. This change would allow up to 1,000 additional students to benefit from federal aid in the coming year.

The next area I would like to speak about is health care. I would like to first take a moment to thank our frontline workers and health care workers for their continued care for us and for taking care of all our families.

Government Orders

As we look at budget 2023, we need to take into consideration the challenges that we faced during COVID-19 and the impact it had on our economy and health care system. We will work to ensure that we can recover as quickly and as effectively as possible. Health care is at the top of the minds of constituents in my riding, as well as all Canadians. This is why the government has laid out an ambitious plan to provide an additional \$195.8 billion over 10 years in health transfers to provinces and territories, including \$46.2 billion in new funding through the new Canada health transfer measures.

This funding would be used to improve and enhance the health care Canadians receive and is not intended to replace the planned health care spending of provinces and territories. Furthermore, the government would provide \$2 billion in 2022-23 to address urgent pressures in emergency rooms, operating rooms and pediatric hospitals, building on \$6.5 billion in top-ups provided throughout the pandemic.

On top of that, the government has also announced \$25 billion over 10 years through a new set of bilateral agreements to address individual provincial and territorial health care needs. This includes expanding access to family health services, supporting health workers, reducing backlogs, increasing mental health and substance use support, and modernizing health systems.

A few months ago, I met with the Service Employees International Union and spoke directly with several personal support workers. I listened to their heartbreaking stories about what they endured during the pandemic. They spoke about how underpaid they are, considering how much they were required to work at the time. Considering their sacrifices, they deserve more. The government has listened to our health care workers and, as a result, will provide \$1.7 billion over five years to support hourly wage increases for personal support workers and related professions. This funding aims to improve the health care Canadians receive. These additional investments are contingent on continued health care investments by provinces and territories.

I would like to highlight the importance of mental health supports, which have been a critical issue for Canadians during the pandemic. The government has proposed to provide up to \$50 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, to Employment and Social Development Canada, to develop and test innovative solutions to strengthen the retirement savings of personal support workers without workplace retirement security coverage. This funding would go a long way toward helping those who work in this critical field. Furthermore, the government would also invest in expanding mental health and substance use support services for Canadians.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the initiatives announced in budget 2023 would be a significant step forward toward improving the lives of millions of Canadians across the country from many different walks of life. From making daily essentials more affordable to enhancing health care, education, and mental health supports, the government is committed to making Canada a better place for all its citizens and tackling the most pressing issues we face.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, since we began debating the budget bill, I have asked government members many questions about the housing crisis.

There is absolutely nothing in the budget to address the housing crisis. They themselves admit it and say that they invested in housing last year. Yes, but there is still a crisis this year. The National Housing Council released a study last week showing that, between 2011 and 2021, Canada lost 550,000 affordable housing units, meaning housing that rents for about \$750. That is Canada-wide. Not only does the national strategy, which was launched five years ago, not create housing that people can afford, but we are also losing housing.

The National Housing Council believes that there should be a fund to purchase private housing and turn it into non-market housing in order to maintain affordability. Does my colleague think this would be a good measure?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Madam Speaker, housing is certainly a priority for us as well. I know that the Minister of Housing is committed to ensuring that initiatives, like the rapid housing initiative, which is part of our overall Canada housing strategy, will continue to help Canadians be supported across this country.

In my riding, there are many different housing initiatives that we have continued to support. That will help ensure that even the lowest-income constituents get the help they need.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, in her comments the member opposite spoke a bit about health care and the importance of strengthening the health care system.

I would like her comments on a recent announcement by the Leader of the Opposition. It is a proposal to have a national accreditation, a blue seal, for health care workers, whether they are new Canadians coming into the country or those looking to work in other provinces.

We should be investigating this and looking at the many ways we can be breaking down the barriers to ensure that health care workers can work in their field anywhere in this country. To my knowledge, the Liberals have not made any comments regarding that proposal.

Can the member share any comments on that?

• (1630)

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Madam Speaker, as I indicated in my speech, our focus is definitely on health care. I want to give a shout-out to my mom, who is a registered nurse. She worked really hard to get her credentials recognized in this country.

Government Orders

I am going to continue to work with my colleagues across the way to continue supporting our Canadians in health care.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think it is important that we work across party lines to put forward real solutions for people. One thing I was happy to see in the budget was the red dress alert that is being put in place. It is something similar to an Amber Alert which is being put in place regarding missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people so we have a platform to alert when something has happened. It is a very good resource.

Despite this particular piece in the budget, we are not seeing the level of investment and resources needed to address the crisis being experienced with ongoing murdered and missing indigenous women. Why are we not seeing that prioritized and when will we see that done?

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy for indigenous peoples across Canada.

I agree the effort that we put into our budget with the red dress initiative is definitely one step; however, there is so much more work that can be done. I hope we will continue to work together to address those concerns for those who need it most, particularly indigenous peoples.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-47, the budget implementation act.

Before I begin my speech, I hope my colleagues will humour me while I take a brief moment to wish my daughter, Maddie, a very happy 16th birthday.

There is a lot in this bill, of course, and I want to start by providing a few words about dental care, which is the most significant, optimistic and powerful policies contained within this legislation. I hear all the time from seniors, young families and people who do not have dental insurance and cannot afford to get their teeth fixed. They are so excited to see dental care finally coming in this bill, and it cannot come soon enough. It is the most significant expansion of public health care in a generation. It is going to make a difference for some nine million Canadians, including folks in Skeena—Bulkley Valley in the beautiful northwest of British Columbia, which is the area I am so proud to represent.

Today I want to focus on the portions of Bill C-47 that deal with air passenger rights. As the NDP's transport critic, this has been my preoccupation over the past year or so. It is something we studied at the transport committee and it is something the Minister of Transport has chosen to slip into this budget implementation act in order to, what he claims, finally fix air passenger rights in this country.

The Liberals brought in their air passenger protection legislation back in 2019. The former minister of transport brought it in to great fanfare. He claimed that it was going to be a world-leading approach and that air passengers were finally going to have a government that would have their backs, yet what we have seen over the past four years has been anything but world-leading.

We have seen thousands of Canadians put in extraordinarily difficult situations by the big airlines. We have seen passengers sleep-

ing on airport floors. We have seen families having to miss much-awaited vacations and trips. We have seen people out thousands of dollars. This system the Liberals claimed was going to be world-leading and was going to have air passengers' backs has really left people in a lurch.

What we see before us in Bill C-47 is the government's third attempt at fixing this problem. Of course, this problem exists because the big airlines make commercial decisions that delay and cancel flights and leave passengers picking up the slack. What we have seen in other parts of the world, particularly in the European Union, are effective approaches that get passengers compensation when that happens, and yet the approach we have seen here in Canada has not succeeded in protecting air passenger rights.

In fact, right now there are over 44,000 complaints before the Canadian Transportation Agency. Who are these folks? These are the most determined air travellers. I say "determined" because they have the fortitude to navigate not one but two complaint processes. Under the Liberals' current system, not only does a passenger need to complain to the airline and wait 30 days for a response, but when the airline almost inevitably declines their claim for compensation, they need to file a complaint with the Canadian Transportation Agency and then wait in line while this very complex bureaucratic and expensive process runs its course. Right now the wait time to proceed through that complaint process is over a year and a half.

As I said, the transport committee has been studying this issue. We heard from the leading consumer advocates working on air passenger rights in this country. We heard from all sorts of witnesses and put together a report with a whole host of recommendations aimed at finally bringing Canada's air passenger protection regime up to the standards set by the European Union.

I also had a chance, about a month ago, to table in this place a private member's bill, Bill C-327, the strengthening air passenger protection act, which aims to lay out in legislation precisely which changes are required to create a robust regime of air passenger protections in this country. Then the Minister of Transport brought forward his proposed changes, this third attempt at fixing air passenger protections.

• (1635)

I want to start by giving credit where credit is due. There are a couple of things in this new approach that have been called for fairly consistently by advocates and by me through my private member's bill. One is increases to the fines within the legislation that can be levied against airlines that continue to break the rules and not award compensation as they should. There are other pieces in the legislation, particularly around delayed baggage, that have also been called for, so there are a couple of things the minister got right.

Government Orders

One of the key concerns with Canada's current system is a loophole that exists in the Canadian Transportation Act. Unlike the European system which sets out a very simple two-category classification system for flight disruptions, our system has three categories. In Europe, disruptions, which are cancellations or delays, are considered either ordinary disruptions, such as things that fall within the reasonable influence of the carrier, or extraordinary disruptions, things like major weather events, acts of terrorism or recalls by the airplane manufacturer. Nobody is suggesting that airlines should be held accountable for factors entirely outside of their influence, but we have been seeing airlines deny compensation for factors within their influence that cause delays and cancellations, such as making sure they have enough crew to fly the flights, ensuring the aircraft are properly maintained, and ensuring their computer system is working properly.

This bill was intended to fix that. Everyone knows this loophole exists. It has been a matter of much conversation and debate. The minister claims to have fixed this loophole in the legislation that is before us. I do not see it. When I look at the section of the Canadian Transportation Act where this loophole exists, I see those same three categories.

The category that is particularly problematic here in Canada is the category of disruptions that are within an airline's control but are required for safety reasons. When we are talking about companies that fly passengers around in aluminum tubes at 30,000 feet, I think pretty much everything related to that industry is related to safety. The issue here is that airlines are making decisions within their sphere of influence that are causing real hardships for air passengers. In those cases, passengers should be compensated and treated well.

There are other things in Bill C-47 around air passenger rights that are very concerning. I had a chance to speak to this earlier today. One aspect is essentially a gag order on passengers who pursue complaints through the Canadian Transportation Agency. It states:

All matters related to the process of dealing with a complaint shall be kept confidential, unless the complainant and the carrier otherwise agree⁷.

If Canadian air passengers file a complaint with the CTA, go through its resolution process and are not happy with how they are treated or the outcome, this legislation is going to prevent them from talking about it. If the minister is truly proud of this system he has put forward, why is he silencing the people who will be using it? It is incredible.

We are at a point now where the minister has claimed to have closed the loophole. He and I have had this conversation. He said that a lot of it will be forthcoming in regulations, which we have not yet seen, sort of like the answer to my questions will be self-evident over the next rise. He is empowering the CTA with a tremendous amount of discretion over this process instead of making the changes in the legislation itself. That is the process we wanted to see, yet what we see falls well short of that mark.

Another issue we see is with respect to transparency and the amount of information the CTA provides. We think the amount of compensation paid through this complaint process should be part of the disclosure. That is something we will be working on when it comes to amending this bill.

• (1640)

I will end with this. Canadians deserve real protections that are easy to navigate and get them their compensation. That is what we will keep fighting for.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I prepared a question about the budget. My colleague's speech was about a lot of things as he acknowledged that the budget is about a lot of things. There are a lot of Canadians and a lot of concerns out there. It does cover a lot of bases.

Two of the things that I am the most proud to bring to my constituents are two programs that are going to help them a lot: the dental care program and the grocery rebate. I have been out there talking to them, knocking on their doors and answering their phone calls. In my constituency just over 1,000 young people have been supported by the dental care program. That means 1,000 smiles will be brighter and cleaner, thanks to our dental care benefit. The grocery benefit is going to support 11 million households across the country with up to \$467.

These are really phenomenal measures that are going to support our neighbours. I was wondering if my colleague had any reflections on dental care or the grocery rebate.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, one of the things I think we can be proudest of as Canadians is that starting in the 1960s, we said that every Canadian, regardless of their income, deserved the dignity of access to adequate health care. We have known right from the very beginning that health care does not just include going to the doctor. It includes being able to afford the medications that doctor prescribes. It includes eye care. It includes mental health care and it includes dental care.

We know that oral health is so integral to our overall health and yet there are millions of Canadians who cannot afford to visit a dentist. Frankly, it is shameful that it has taken this long for us to get to this point. We in the NDP have been pushing for it from the very beginning. I am so proud that we have been able to get to a place where we have leveraged our position in this minority Parliament to finally get dental care for millions of Canadians.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague did talk a little about the dental program and I would like to just ask him this. Former premier John Horgan, when he was the head of the Council of the Federation, encouraged the federal government to not seek new national programs when important programs such as health care need reinforcement.

Government Orders

I am sure the member knows of the drastic needs of rural communities for health care funding. Former Premier Horgan had said to not add any new social programs; reinforce the current ones like health care. What does he think of this when someone who led his own party provincially said that this is not a priority and now he says this is? How does he square that?

• (1645)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, the member's question was whether I agree with remarks by a former premier. I think that former premier would agree that the health of our teeth, oral health, is integral to our overall health. Dental care is going to help millions of Canadians.

We also need to be investing heavily in our overall health care system and ensuring that coming out of the pandemic, our health care workers and our hospitals have the resources that they need to function effectively.

However, this is going to help millions of Canadians and I know that my party and many people right across the country support it, moving forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague talked a lot about the national dental program. Since this is an area of provincial jurisdiction, as my colleague indicated to him earlier in his question, it is up to the provinces to decide what to do within their jurisdiction. This is basically a Quebec sovereigntist asking that the Canadian Constitution be respected.

Does my colleague agree, if this national dental program exists, that Quebec should have the right to opt out with full compensation and no strings attached?

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, the question was: Should Quebec be able to withdraw from the dental care program?

If we are going to be one country, we need to ensure that every Canadian has access to dental care. Within that question, there are going to be different nuances across the country, and those can be negotiated. However, what we are talking about is a national program delivered by the federal government, and I think a lot of Quebecers are going to benefit from that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to the budget implementation act. This is a budget that will impact so many Canadians in various ways, and I will spend my time focused on a few of those.

The one issue I want to talk about, which I have not heard talked about a lot, is the initiative that has been put into the budget with respect to doubling the tax credit for individuals who are in the trades for the tools they need to purchase for their particular trade. We know that, in our country, there is a lot of demand right now for people in the trades. We would pretty much pay whatever is asked these days if we are looking to hire a plumber, electrician, dry-waller, a painter or just anybody in the trades. There is high de-

mand right now in this country, and we need to get more people involved in the trades. I have been saying for years now that I genuinely believe that this is where the money is in the future.

So many people throughout Canada's history came to this country seeking better lives. For some reason, at least within my family, and I think of my grandparents who immigrated from Holland and Italy many years ago, all they wanted for their children was to be professionals in terms of doctors, lawyers and other such professions. There seems to have always been this stigma towards getting involved in the trades, as though it was somehow not as well regarded as being a doctor or lawyer. However, this is where we need people working right now. I encourage people, on a daily basis, including my son who just graduated from high school, to get involved in a trade, especially if they do not know what they want to do with their lives. It is a great way to get started in the workforce by getting involved in a trade. This budget specifically seeks to assist people in doing that by doubling the tax credit available for the tools that are required for a skilled trade.

Another item in the budget that I have not heard talked about a lot are the supports that are in there for Ukraine. I am glad to see that the rhetoric from politicians in the United States, and I think particularly of Donald Trump and Governor DeSantis of Florida, who have been questioning the role of the west, or in their case the role of the United States, in Ukraine has not found its way into this House. There seems to continue to be broad support in terms of resources from Canada going to Ukraine.

It is indeed an issue of democracy to stand up and support Ukraine in any way possible. We can think about what this world would be like if Vladimir Putin was successful with his efforts in Ukraine. He certainly would not stop there, and look to other countries to invade until, I am sure, he met his end objective, which is solidifying that Soviet bloc that used to exist during the Cold War. So it is in the interest of western democracies, western civilization, to ensure that Ukraine is successful and wins this unwanted war with Russia, or with Vladimir Putin specifically, I should say. To that end, it is the responsibility, at least in my opinion, of other allied countries to support Ukraine in any way we can. That is why I am very pleased to see ongoing supports in this budget that specifically target it.

When I was on the defence committee, I had the opportunity to travel, study Operations Unifier and Reassurance, and see the incredible things that Canadian troops were doing abroad. It was really moving, while I was in Ukraine as part of the defence committee study, to sit with the chair of Ukraine's defence committee and hear him say to us that other allied countries were lining up behind the Canadian brigade. They wanted to be part of the Canadian brigade, because it was Canada leading it.

• (1650)

That says a lot about a country. That says a lot about the reputation that a country has throughout the world, when there are other brigades being led by the United States, for example, and countries like Italy and Poland are saying that they want to be part of the Canadian brigade. That speaks tremendous value to what we have to offer. I am very glad to see the ongoing resources that are being allocated through this budget toward supporting Ukraine.

Government Orders

I am even more encouraged by the fact that we are not having that rhetoric that we are seeing in the United States coming from people like Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis, specifically about questioning whether or not there is a role for our country to be playing in supporting Ukraine. Indeed, there is.

The other thing I wanted to talk about, again an issue that I have not heard talked about a lot in this budget debate, is specifically the section of it that relates to crypto protections. It is not a mystery to most Canadians who have been following politics that the Leader of the Opposition, back in the heyday, not long ago, of cryptocurrency, when he went and purchased a shawarma, I think he was live on Facebook or Twitter at the time, made the exchange by paying for that with bitcoin. It was celebrated by him and his entourage with him at that event.

From that moment on, he started talking up cryptocurrency and how important it was to embrace the change of how we were going to transact in the future. There is no doubt that there are real discussions to be had about blockchain and crypto currency, more generally speaking, but the reality of the situation is that, in Canada, we rely on the Canadian dollar as our only peg, as we reference back to value and what we are going to use as a form of currency in this country.

When we have the Leader of the Opposition, who is openly out there, encouraging people to invest in bitcoin, almost as though he is encouraging them to bet against the Canadian dollar, it is extremely discouraging.

In this budget, there are specific resources being put towards the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions to consult with banking institutions to ensure that they disclose what their exposure to cryptocurrency is, in terms of how much they are investing in it. Also, it would be a requirement for federally regulated pensions to disclose how much of those pensions are invested in crypto currency.

There is also a provision to ensure that any tax deductions being made as they relate to GST and HST, and the treatment of anybody who was mining specifically, and if they were making claims against paying GST and HST, and trying to get a refund out of it, would not be considered supply for HST purposes, and the input tax credits specifically would not be available.

It is extremely important that we stand firmly behind the Canadian dollar as the only form of currency in this country. The Bank of Canada, only two blocks away from here, provides a valuable service to our country, in terms of being at arm's length from this place and from the government, and being given direction on what we expect the inflationary rate to be, and to ensure that it gets to that as expeditiously as possible, and to maintain that.

That leads me to the last part of my speech, and that is specifically with respect to inflation. Inflation is, indeed, something that is not just happening in Canada, despite the fact that folks from across the way would like to suggest that this is a made-in-Canada problem, that only Canada is experiencing inflation. That could not be further from the truth. Canada is actually, of the OECD countries, one of the countries that is experiencing lower levels of inflation.

That does not provide a lot of comfort, and understandably so, to those who are experiencing inflation, especially as it relates to some of those very important items that we need, like groceries. However, it is important to understand the context. It is important to understand that inflation is not something that is just in Canada. It is throughout the world. When we live in a globalized economy and have as many trade deals as Canada does with other parts of the world, it is only understandable that we will be impacted by others' inflation as well.

• (1655)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke quite well about Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and that situation, and I agree with him that we should continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies. However, my concern is that Canada has lagged behind in its NATO commitments and military spending for quite some time. Recent reports have indicated that the Prime Minister has said privately that Canada will never meet its military spending targets when it comes to our agreements and commitments to NATO.

If the military and standing shoulder to shoulder with our allies are so important to the government, as the member claims, could he explain why the government continually underfunds our military?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. There is actually a really good answer to it. NATO, and the U.S. in particular, is asking all countries to spend 2% of their GDP. The problem is that not every country measures that in the same way. For example, the U.K. includes pensions in its 2%. The United States includes their Coast Guard because it has armed vessels. In Canada, our Coast Guard does not have armed vessels, so we do not include it in our 2%.

The other thing it does not account for is what I talked about before, and that is the incredible value that Canada has. We punch above our weight compared with the dollar value of our military capacity. When Canada goes abroad, our troops are so well regarded, as I indicated, that other nations want to line up and be part of the Canadian brigade because of the reputation we have. That is priceless. One cannot put a price on that.

I respect the fact that NATO is trying to get somewhere by saying everybody should spend 2%. However, for starters, it is very difficult to measure. Moreover, the reality is that when trying to measure it, one can exclude things like the value that a country has outside of the monetary portion.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, in 2019, when the Liberals got elected, there was one key promise that was very prominent in the election campaign, particularly in Quebec. It was repeated everywhere. They were going to plant two billion trees. Here we are, four years later.

Government Orders

After four years, 800 million trees should have been planted, considering that they were talking about two billion over 10 years. Take a guess. Have they planted 800 million, 500 million—or maybe not quite so many because politicians never keep their promises—say 200 million, or 10% of the total? No, this week we learned that we have planted 2.3% of the two billion trees in the last four years.

I have a question for my colleague. Were they all planted in his backyard?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am not sure if trees work the same way in Quebec as they do in the rest of Canada. One starts with a seedling; that seedling takes time to properly germinate and get to the point where one can actually get out there and plant it. I know the member would like to think that if we commit to planting a billion trees, we should be walking out there with shovels and starting to plant them the next day. The reality of the situation is that it does not happen that way.

We should all set very ambitious targets in relation to our environmental commitments. We should all strive to do even more than we possibly can because of the dire circumstances that we are in. However, to trivialize the reality of the task in planting that many trees and the process it takes to do so is not a genuine way to debate.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a fact that Canada's greatest resources are our workforce and skilled labour. That is why Trade Winds to Success, a fantastic organization across Alberta, helps indigenous people who want to enter the workforce and the trades. It ensures that they have the support and financial assistance they need to get those outcomes. Unfortunately, it has been underfunded. As a matter of fact, it closed its Calgary operation because of a lack of federal funds.

Organizations like Trade Winds to Success that help indigenous tradespersons are not receiving the funds they need now. Would the member speak directly to how the government is going to support organizations like this to continue to do that good work?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I started my speech by talking specifically about trades and the increase in the tax credit for individuals in the trades, where the amount has been doubled. We need more trades and more people in the trades in this country. We need to support that in any way we can.

I am unfamiliar with the particular organization that the member is talking about, and I would love to hear more about it.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise in the House on behalf of the residents of Brantford—Brant. The budget released by the current out-of-touch government, blindly supported by the NDP, fails to support the number one issue to my constituents and to many Canadians, which is the cost of living crisis. The costly coalition is solely responsible for the financial uncertainties Canadian families have been facing for the last eight years. Conservatives and Canadians have been calling out the Prime Minister's inflationary taxes and spending as they continue to hurt the hard-working people of this country the most.

With the support of the entire Conservative caucus, our leader demanded that this budget work for the people who work for this country. We had three clear demands, which were as follows: ending the inflationary deficits and spending; lowering taxes, including scrapping the carbon tax; and removing government gatekeepers to free up land and speed up building permits, so that people can afford housing in this country once again. Unsurprisingly, this budget fails to fulfill any of these demands. Instead, it would bring an extra \$43 billion of new inflation, debt and taxes. This is what the Prime Minister delivers year after year: debt, inflation and more costs on the backs of hard-working Canadians.

Last year, the Deputy Prime Minister pledged that the debt-to-GDP ratio would decline and that deficits would be reduced. She said, "This is our fiscal anchor. This is a line we will not cross. It will ensure that our finances remain sustainable." A year later, her boss and the entire Liberal team definitely crossed that line numerous times.

I will specifically discuss how this budget fails to address the cost of living crisis that is hurting Canadian families, how the coalition focuses on flushing out the pockets of taxpayers and punishing workers and what the next Conservative government would do differently.

On April 1, the Liberal carbon tax increased to 14¢ per litre, making it more expensive for Canadians to heat their homes and get to work. Despite the Liberals claiming for years that 80% of households that were paying the carbon tax would end up with more money in their pockets, the PBO confirmed what we Conservatives have been saying all along: The carbon tax will actually put Canadians in a worse financial position. As outlined by the PBO, the carbon tax will cost the average family between \$400 and \$847 in 2023, even after the rebates.

The carbon tax is not now and has never been an environmental plan. It is a costly tax plan that is damaging to families, especially those on a fixed income and those who live in rural areas. In fact, the current government has failed to hit any of its emissions targets.

Statistics Canada recently reported that grocery prices are rising at the fastest rate in 40 years. Almost a quarter of Canadians have had to cut back on the food they buy to keep up with rising grocery prices; to cope with food costs, 20% of families are skipping meals. As the current government knows, last summer was the worst for Canadian food banks in 40 years. They recorded 1.5 million visits in just one month, which is a 55% increase over 2019. The number of visits is projected to be greater this year. Working Canadians need and deserve concrete and fiscally responsible changes. The all-talk, no-action approach taken by the Prime Minister is failing Canadians.

Canadians are the ones paying for the government's agenda. What is the government offering in return through this budget? It is offering a grocery rebate; in reality, this is nothing more than an enhanced GST credit of anywhere from \$200 to \$500. Shockingly, this will not be made available until July of this year. This works out to approximately \$3.85 to \$9.61 a week. The government is making a mockery of the cost of living crisis by suggesting that this credit would make a tangible difference in the lives of Canadians. This is not even enough to cover the cost of milk and cereal for children in a given week.

In addition, "Canada's Food Price Report 2023" predicts that a family of four will spend over \$1,000 more on food this year. This is almost \$600 more than the \$467 rebate that such a family would receive. This so-called rebate would not even come close to covering the rising cost of food that the Liberal deficits and tax hikes have caused. It would permit the rising cost of living, however, as the price of food is expected to increase by an additional 5% to 7% by the end of the year.

● (1705)

The budget contains no new policies to increase the supply of Canadian housing, even as record-high immigration places unprecedented stresses on home and rental prices. The reality is that home prices have doubled since the tax-and-spend Prime Minister took office in 2015.

There are 35-year-olds who have no choice but to live in their parents' basements; they are unable to buy a home and start a family. According to Bloomberg, Canada has the second most inflated housing bubble in the world. Monthly payments on mortgages are rising even as house prices are dropping.

We have an amount of available land that is second in the world, yet Vancouver and Toronto are the world's third and 10th most overpriced housing markets. To put that into perspective, renters in Toronto can now expect to pay over \$2,300 per month for a one-bedroom apartment. The government housing benefit, involving a one-time payment of \$500, was nothing more than a small bandage on a serious crisis.

To give this point greater emphasis, The Canadian Press reported today that only 44% of those who would have likely been eligible for the one-time top-up to the housing benefit actually received it, and just over one-half have received the Canadian dental benefit. That is unbelievable and inexcusable incompetence.

The expenses of the government are driving up the cost of living. In the Prime Minister's legacy, he will stand as the one who has doubled Canada's deficit, adding more debt than all Canadian prime ministers combined.

Inflation is at a 40-year high. Canadian homeowners experienced eight consecutive interest rate hikes, at the fastest rate in decades. If families bought a modest home with an affordable mortgage five years ago, and it is now up for renewal, they will pay \$7,000 more a year.

The former chief economic analyst of Statistics Canada says that, by failing to control spending, the government's budget is working against the Bank of Canada's policy to reduce inflation. The Prime

Government Orders

Minister believed that the budget would balance itself, claimed he was not interested in monetary policy and took on debt so people would not have to. He is now advising, with a serious face, that Canadians should be fine with using their credit cards to pay for tuition and home renovations.

CTV News reported that more and more Canadians are resorting to debt to pay bills amid high inflation. This is not to mention that the average increase in debt payment because of higher interest rates is another \$2,000. Despite the Liberal political narrative, it has been revealed that 40% of all new spending measures had nothing to do with COVID. That is an astonishing \$205 billion.

Despite this abysmal track record, it is important for Canadians to know that not all hope is lost. A Conservative government would turn the financial situation in this country around. To be specific, a Conservative government would create more cash flow by creating more of what cash buys. We would produce more food, gas and other resources here in Canada.

We would remove government gatekeepers by building more homes and making Canada the place where one can get a building permit most quickly in the world. We would make energy more affordable. The next Conservative government would repeal anti-energy laws and get Canadian energy out into the world market.

We would cut corporate welfare and scrap the carbon tax, while simultaneously tackling climate change by making alternative energy cheaper instead of making everything else more expensive. We would reform the tax-and-benefit system, making sure that Canadians are rewarded for their work, and putting those hard-earned dollars from picking up an extra shift into their pockets, not the government's pocket.

We would be a government that restores hope. We would rekindle the belief that people's paycheques and savings can buy them a decent life. We would make fiscally responsible decisions to create an affordable life for Canadians. We would restore Canada's promise in a country where everyone has the ability to achieve their goals, regardless of who they are.

I will continue to stand for the interests of my constituents and fight for all working Canadians. I will not be supporting this inflationary budget bill.

● (1710)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened keenly to the member's speech. At the end, he said that he will always stand for the interests of his constituents. I wonder if that means their financial interests.

Government Orders

I know that, like Milton, Brantford—Brant is a family community. The member actively talked down the importance of immigration as a direct contributor to our economy. He talked about building permits, as if the federal government had anything to do with building permits in his community. He also ignored the fact that 32,000 households in his riding are likely to benefit directly from the grocery rebate in this budget.

Demographically, his riding is a lot like mine, so I also know that over 1,200 kids in Brantford—Brant have accessed dental care because of our health care investments. At the same time, our child care agreements are saving a lot of money for families in his riding. It is not the best it has ever been, as he claims we say. Times are tough, but we have solutions. The members on the other side have only slogans and absolutely no solutions for Canadians.

What does he have?

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, we, as Conservatives, have so much more to offer Canadians than this particular member and that entire Liberal government. They are failing Canadians. They continue to fail Canadians with their failed policies.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Name one measure.

Mr. Larry Brock: One measure? I will give you measures—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that they are not to be asking questions when they have already asked a question, and when I have not asked if there are questions and comments.

I would ask the hon. member for Brantford—Brant to not engage in any other conversations going on or questions being asked.

The hon. member for Brantford—Brant has the floor.

• (1715)

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, perhaps my friend failed to listen attentively to the last part of my speech, where I identified six key measures the next Conservative government would take to address the affordability issue.

To address the member for Milton specifically on that issue, we will start, number one, by scrapping the carbon tax. How is that for an answer?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is something quite interesting in Bill C-47 that has passed under the radar because it is hidden in a pile of measures. In division 31 of the bill, which is in part 4 and on page 325, the government introduces a measure that has absolutely nothing to do with the budget. It is asking us to recognize Charles the Third as King of Canada through an amendment to the Royal Style and Titles Act. It is not clear what that has to do with anything.

Furthermore, currently, any time a government makes an order in council appointment, as is the case here, that individual may be called before a parliamentary committee to verify their qualifications. My question for my colleague is this. Does he think that Charles the Third, by the Grace of God King of Canada and His other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth, should be called before a committee to verify his qualifications?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if there was a distinct question there but, I make no apologies for the beliefs and values I bring to the House. I swore an allegiance to Her Majesty at the time. Although I did not have to formally swear an allegiance to His Majesty, I stand fully in support of the monarchy and always will.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listen intently every time Conservatives stand to speak in the House because I am listening to hear if we are finally going to hear something about the climate crisis and protecting our environment, but yet again, we are not hearing anything about that.

We do, however, hear about carbon capture. That is the push they would like to see, despite the International Panel on Climate Change making it clear that this method of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is unproven, risky and one of the most expensive options.

When will the member and the Conservatives finally acknowledge that we are in a climate crisis and start pushing the government for real solutions for future generations?

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to push the government for solutions on many issues, including the environment. We have never shied away from that.

I would encourage the member from the NDP to stand by her values and her principles the next time she is blindly supporting the government on these issues.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is a question that probably deserves more time than we have, but we are talking about inflation, and a lot of what we are experiencing right now is not typical inflation. It is not a wage-price spiral. It is from events that are making things cost more, such as the impact of Putin's attack on Ukraine and the impact of climate events, which make various foodstuffs cost more.

I wonder if the hon. member has some thoughts on that, about how he distinguishes between inflationary trends the Bank of Canada can affect, for example, and things costing more. How do we alleviate those costs for Canadians?

Mr. Larry Brock: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her thoughtful introspection on this particularly important issue.

Government Orders

The thrust of my speech was very obvious. It is the failed fiscal policies of this government that have created the financial crisis, the affordability crisis that we find ourselves in.

I am not diminishing world events. I think it has taken root around the world and it has impacted Canada to a certain degree, but as many economists have argued, as many former random Liberals have argued, it is the failed Liberal policies that have contributed to the crisis we are facing.

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-47, budget implementation act, 2023, No. 1.

• (1720)

[English]

I want to start, first, by explaining that Canada has probably been the most successful country coming out of COVID in the last two years. In the last year, we have seen the best and strongest economic growth in the G7, which is quite impressive.

Canadians had created 1.2 million jobs prior to the pandemic. Now we have recaptured that 1.2 million, and Canadians have created another 830,000 jobs. That is over two million jobs in the last five years. I would say that is very impressive.

Yes, we are facing inflation, which is a challenge the world is facing, but in the last month inflation has come down from 8% to 4.2%. The banks and economists are saying we are going to be down to about 3% by September. That is quite impressive as well.

We know there are challenges. We know the banks raised the interest rate, which is putting more pressure on individuals and Canadians, yet the unemployment rate is at a record low, which is extremely important.

What we have seen as well with unemployment is the fact that we brought forward the learning and child care program. We have seen a lot more women joining the workforce, which has shown us at a record high of 85.7% of women between 25 and 55 years of age participating in the workforce.

This budget targets inflation relief, strengthening public health care and dental care, the clean economy, and of course, maintaining our lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

The grocery rebate is directly helping 11 million Canadians. It is extremely important. A family of four is receiving about \$467. Single Canadians are receiving about \$234, and seniors are receiving \$225. That is for low-income Canadians who are receiving the GST, of course.

For students, we are increasing the student grant by 40% and raising the interest-free Canada student loan limit so we can be of help on that end as well.

There have been various programs for seniors. I just mentioned the grocery rebate for those with low incomes. We also increased the OAS and GIS, which will grow by 30% by 2027-28. That is

about \$20 billion a year in increases, so that is direct support for seniors to ensure they are able to enjoy their retirement.

In the riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, there have also been investments, like in the Beaverbank Kinsac Lions Club, which received \$25,000 for upgrades. Also, the Sackville Seniors Advisory Council received \$25,000 for programming. Those are direct investments into the riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

On the housing front, which is extremely important, for first-time homebuyers, young people, there is a new tax-free savings account, which will allow them to save \$40,000 tax-free over, I believe, about seven years. This is tax-free going in and tax-free coming out for first-time homebuyers, which will be a very good investment and definitely a major help to young people.

It is also creating more flexibility around existing mortgages by extending amortization payments, adjusting the payment schedule or even authorizing lump sum payments. In the riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, there have been some successful housing projects in the Chezzetcook area, the Lake Echo area and the Preston area.

Under the economy, industry and competitiveness for the green economy, which is a focus of our government, there are tax credits that will entice, invite, encourage and build on green electricity. We will see a 15% tax rebate on clean electricity. We will also see up to 30% in tax credits for machinery or equipment used for manufacturing or processing clean technology. The cleanest, hydrogen, will get up to a 40% rebate, which is encouraging. We know that Canadians will move forward on those major initiatives.

Through the Canada Infrastructure Bank, we have invested up to \$20 billion for major projects in electricity and clean growth, and for those in Ontario, we have seen a major project, which is a game-changer, in the Volkswagen battery manufacturing, which will be an asset for the workers and people in Ontario.

I will quote the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters: “CME welcomes #Budget2023 and the initial steps it takes to respond to the US Inflation Reduction Act...drive net zero transitions, improve labour shortages, and alleviate and supply chain disruptions.” That will also be an asset.

Private Members' Business

There are also industry-targeted investments we have for our space industry, our forestry industry and our tourism industry. We know our tourism industry took a major hit during COVID. We need to support our communities, so they can have more ways of attracting more tourists to their communities and also invest in bringing more international investment in conventions and events in our regions.

With that, of course, I cannot go without mentioning the investment in Michelin, the tire plant in Nova Scotia. It has three plants, of course, and the Bridgewater one is where they are going to modernize and also create innovative technology for tires to be more efficient, including the electric vehicle tires. Of course, they will cut on emissions, which will mean more jobs and a reduction to the environmental footprint of our economy.

We have also seen some reductions and savings, of up to \$15 billion over five years, by reducing spending on consulting firms. There will be a 3% reduction for each department right across the government and \$6 billion in savings over six years through the realignment of former announcements.

I do need to touch on a couple of key things. Health care is extremely important in Nova Scotia. We had been receiving \$3.5 billion over 10 years. Now, we will be receiving \$5 billion, which is \$1.5 million, or a third, more. That would be very helpfully invested in home care, long-term care, dental care, oral health care, major doctors and nurses, and also in promoting initiatives to bring them to rural and remote communities.

Our workers are very important, and one of the things I want to talk about is the doubling of the tradespeople tool deduction from \$500 to \$1,000. I have heard many tradespeople tell me that was something they wanted. Also, I think a very important initiative is the employer ownership trusts, which mean there would be tax changes to allow private owners to sell to their employees the shares in the business, which would make them directly engaged in the challenges, but also the profits as well.

● (1725)

Our student work placement program is creating quality work-integrated learning opportunities. I will share with members that there is an announcement we had in Nova Scotia not so long ago of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency's START program, which sees many students who are learning on the ground as well as in their institutions.

There are many other investments, of course. The one I want to talk about is the investment in veterans to reduce backlogs once again. We already reduced the backlogs by 70%. We want to bring that down to 0. Also, we will continue to support our veterans through various services. There are some investments in my riding, of course. The Royal Canadian Legion branch in Waverley would receive \$159,000 for a roof replacement, and the one in Eastern Passage would receive over \$21,000 for renovations as well.

There is lots of investment, of course, in Atlantic Canada, in the Coast Guard, the ferry services, protecting our fresh waters and the Atlantic loop, which would help Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and others.

In closing, very importantly, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister. I also want to thank all Canadians who contributed to the success of this budget, because it is a budget for Canada.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC) moved that Bill C-323, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (mental health services), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here this evening to introduce this bill, which would exempt psychotherapy and mental health counselling services from the goods and services tax. There is a mental health crisis in Canada. Unfortunately, these problems affect 33% of Canadians, from the youngest to the oldest. This is serious. It is a very serious problem.

[*English*]

This evening I rise to address an extremely troubling issue for Canadians, which is mental health. It is very difficult to capture exactly what we are talking about when we speak of mental health. I will talk a bit about it, as we go forward, in multiple areas, using my experience as a physician over the last 30 years, and about what it means to me and those folks whom I have had the opportunity to treat with respect to their mental health.

Before I start that, though, I want to read a letter I received today:

Good morning Dr. Ellis,

We met in April last year...and had a memorable discussion about the impact of the tax on psychotherapy and counselling therapy services on your constituents. I am now a full-time clinician working with children and youth, and our conversation especially touched on the main barriers to mental health care for these vulnerable young people in Canada.... I have followed this issue closely. I appreciate that you called [the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association] to speak before HESA, and your commitment to rectifying this issue through your Bill C-323.

As you likely know, our parliamentary petition e-4126 [has] been rejected by the Government due to semantics over the different regulatory titles of our profession in the various regulated provinces. Unfortunately, I now need to increase my fees in order to account for this unfair tax. I am deeply concerned about the financial strain it will have on my clients, and clients of all clinicians across Canada and in your constituency. Inflation has significantly increased the cost of psychotherapy and counselling therapy services.

It causes me considerable discomfort to have to read that here and underscore the importance of the need to change the unfair Excise Tax Act. We know that many therapists who help to look after the mental health of Canadians do not charge tax on their services. For instance, psychologists, psychiatrists and family doctors do not have to charge HST on their services.

The difficulty here is access. We all know that when someone is referred for treatment for mental health issues in Canada, it takes an inordinate amount of time to access those services. That is one of the things I have learned, having been a family doctor. Actually, I graduated from medical school 30 years ago this year, which is shocking since I was 12 when I graduated. Doogie Howser was my name. I am just joking; this is a serious subject.

That being said, I think it is important to say that, as clinicians, one thing we understand is that when someone comes into our office and has finally made the decision and realized that they are suffering with a mental health problem, they want treatment and they want it now. The sad state of affairs that exists in Canada is that we are not able to provide that. Of course, delays may easily mean someone does not get the treatment they need, only to then slip further into the issues they have. That presents a significant difficulty.

We know there is a significant range of mental health issues we can see from a clinician's perspective. Whether it is an issue with a young person whose relationship is breaking up, more severe depressive type symptoms or generalized anxiety disorder, there is a whole host of issues, all the way to schizophrenia and depression in later years in seniors. All of those things form the basis of what we understand as mental health.

• (1735)

There have been considerable efforts made around the world, and in Canada in particular, to look at mental health issues and make it more acceptable to speak out loud about mental health so that people know speaking about it is what will allow them to seek out the help and services they need. However, those services may not be available. It would be an absolute shame if someone has made that decision and then is unable to receive the services they need.

Mental health, of course, affects our physical health. Often, as a family physician, I would spend a lot of time in the office trying to understand exactly what was wrong with someone. A common presentation, like maybe insomnia, a lack of ability to sleep or feeling tired all the time, requires a significant amount of workup to ensure there is no physical health problem.

Oftentimes, I would go down that road of understanding and try to convince somebody that their problem lies with an illness such as depression. Once they are convinced of that, which is not always the case, then of course the treatment regime is what follows. It could be medications, but counselling is an essential part of treatment to help people begin to undo some of the negative thought processes they have and help them with a more resilient type of thinking for the future.

We know that those two things go hand in hand. They are essential. Again, there is a multitude of ways to receive that type of treatment, but we know that psychotherapy and mental health counselling can be a significant part of it.

Private Members' Business

With the letter I read, we know very clearly that there is a significant financial burden on folks who are working in this industry and how difficult it is for people who are coming forward. Oftentimes, psychotherapy services and mental health counselling services, for those fortunate enough to have a health care plan, have a limit within a plan. Often there is no coverage, of course, for those not fortunate enough to have a health care plan.

That means, specifically for these two types of services, that people are paying GST or HST on top of a significant amount, perhaps \$150, \$175, \$200 or \$250 an hour, to receive those types of services. Of course, as we all know by doing simple math, that can add up fairly quickly, which becomes a disincentive. If we do the math quickly, we can understand that if we remove this tax from these services, almost every eighth visit will be free for a person. To me, that is a significant issue.

Another thing I want to mention is the breadth of Canadians who are affected by mental health issues. I had the opportunity to speak to some international medical graduates this past week in the Toronto area who were in this country from two years to 28 years. Unfortunately, as we know, with the systems that exist, all 15 folks I had the opportunity to speak with were unable to gain licensure here in Canada as physicians. They worked as lab techs, security guards and physician assistants, and some of them had moved on. One guy rose through the ranks to be vice-president of a company. They were all very well-educated and hard-working folks.

The other part of this is that sadly, Canada, in the international medical community, has become known as the graveyard for doctors. That is the term they use. When they come here, they get in an interminable cycle that does not allow them to practise. Why am I talking about this? It is not because we have this great program called the blue seal program, which would eliminate these problems. It is because of the heart-wrenching stories I heard from these international medical graduates, who were very well trained in their own country.

One of the telling stories I heard was of a gentleman who said his children knew that he was a physician, but when he went to work, they asked why he was dressing up in a security guard uniform. When we hear that, we can understand the heart-wrenching nature of the amount of effort that all of these folks put into their work, into their profession, which they are unable to practise here. I could tell that the tears were very close to the surface and ready to flow.

• (1740)

That is an important story because we know, as I said at the beginning, that mental health can affect people of younger ages all the way to the end of life. We know that is a significant issue. We also know that there are other significant groups, such as racialized minorities, immigrants and people who identify as part of the LGBTQ community, that suffer with more mental illness than other portions of the population. We need to understand that mental illness affects everybody across every spectrum of the population in Canada. It is a very important thing we need to underscore.

Private Members' Business

We also need to understand that the health care system is failing us. We know that in Canada, some services in mental health care are paid for, such as in my province of Nova Scotia, but we also know that for expenses in health care, Canada is ranked first among 30 OECD countries in percentage of health care spending as part of the economy. We know that we are severely lacking in doctors per 1,000 people, in specialist wait times and in access to resources. For this reason, we know that when the government has the opportunity to make changes on some very specific things, that could perhaps cross party lines if there is something we can significantly do about it.

It behooves us to look at a few things regarding the way the pandemic has impacted the mental health of Canadians.

We certainly know that youth have been significantly affected, more so than other segments of the population. Since COVID-19, fewer Canadians report having excellent or very good mental health. It was 68% in 2019 and it was down to 55% in July 2020. Prior to COVID, youth aged 15 to 24 were the least likely to report excellent or very good mental health, a sad state in and of itself, but they reported the greatest decline, a 20 percentage point reduction, from 60% pre-COVID to, sadly, 40% in July 2020. Inexplicably, it appears that seniors aged 65 and older have not experienced declines in mental health since the pandemic began. As I mentioned previously, women continue to report lower levels of mental health compared with men, from 52% to 58%.

Another very important thing to note is that there are groups in Canada doing very good work. I will give a shout-out to my daughter, Allison Fitzgerald, who was on TV this morning talking about Kids Help Phone, which has done excellent work. It has some shocking numbers, though, when we think about it. Since the pandemic began, it has had 14 million interactions with youth in Canada. We know that is a significant issue that continues to come forward.

The Canadian Paediatric Society put out policy briefs with respect to child and youth mental health, recognizing the significant issues associated with it. It said, "Accessible, evidence-based treatments can help mitigate long-term disabilities and support academic and occupational success." It also said, which we again need to underscore, "Those under the age of 25 have been uniquely impacted by the pandemic." They have had stress, anxiety, disrupted access to learning and identity-affirming activities, and reduced academic and economic opportunities.

In conclusion, what can we do to help support all Canadians? We can modify the Excise Tax Act and eliminate the taxes on psychotherapy services and mental health counsellors. Even though we may say this is not a huge issue, we have an opportunity to do something. The government needs to look at opportunities so we can stop talking, make a difference and do something to help the health of Canadians.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for introducing Bill C-323.

The basic objective of the bill is to expand access to mental health services, and we agree with that. However, given that the majority of provinces do not yet have a definition for psychotherapy and mental health counselling services, how can we ensure that the bill will be applied in the same way in every province?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important to find a way to address the problem. We can find proper titles for professions such as psychotherapist and mental health counsellor. I think that it is possible, then, to group together all professions offering the same services even if they have different names.

I think that this is a way to find the process that will be best for all Canadians.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, can my colleague tell us whether each province has its own criteria for officially recognizing the profession of psychotherapy? Are the criteria consistent? I would like him to tell me more about this subject.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I think I have used up all my French today, and I apologize to my colleagues. It is hard to speak and think at the same time in a different language, so maybe I used it all up.

As I said previously, there are some different definitions, but if we look at this as a broad definition in a different basket to be able to say that these are the types of services that are provided by these individuals, then I think we have a pathway forward to begin to say that we need to provide help for these services. The other way to look at it is from the opposite point of view. The mental health counselling services that are required to charge GST or HST are the folks we want to be exempted from this.

I do not think the nomenclature needs to allow us to not be able to move forward and cause us to have paralysis on this. We need to move forward for the betterment of all Canadians.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleague for Cumberland—Colchester, because he did draw pretty high in the order of precedence to move forward with a bill that is going to remove barriers for people to get access to mental health care and psychotherapy, which is very important. My colleague from London—Fanshawe had a bill that was very similar, as he is well aware.

Private Members' Business

We believe, as New Democrats, that there should not be tax on health care, and I think most of us agree. We need to do better to make sure there is access. Does my colleague agree that we need to go much further, that there needs to be true parity between physical and mental health in our country, that it should be universal and everybody should have access?

We know this will increase access, but many are still going to have to pay out of pocket in a two-tiered mental health care system, and they cannot afford it. Does my colleague agree that we need to create a pathway to get to a truly universal mental health care system in this country?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we often find here in the chamber and in the federal government, or at least I have found since I have been here in the last 18 to 20 months, is that sometimes we try to swing for a home run, but we strike out. I think this is something we can start with and actually make a difference in the lives of many Canadians in an area of health care that we know is in significant crisis. If we start saying, “Hey, we’re going to do this, or let’s add that, or something else,” then we are not actually going to accomplish anything, which is my fear in saying, “Yes, we should aspire to greatness.”

Of course, everyone in their own life should aspire to greatness, but I think we should aspire to things that we can actually do so that we can make a difference in the lives of Canadians, and then we are moving things forward here. Again, when the Conservatives have the ability to form government, we will attempt to do great things, hopefully with the support of all of our colleagues, and then we can see Canada move forward as a greater country.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to take part in today’s debate on Bill C-323, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act with regard to mental health services.

[*English*]

I want to thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester for bringing forward this important subject. The MP for London—Fanshawe also introduced a bill on this subject.

The bill would exempt psychotherapy and mental health counselling services from the goods and services tax and the harmonized sales tax.

[*Translation*]

I would begin by pointing out that our government has been taking meaningful action to support mental health care services for Canadians since 2015.

[*English*]

These investments include \$5 billion over 10 years to provinces and territories starting in 2017 to improve and increase the availability of mental health and addiction services.

[*Translation*]

The toxic drug and overdose crisis claims the lives of 20 Canadians a day, on average. Many of them are homeless and have mental health problems. That has a major impact on our communities, our health care systems and our social services.

[*English*]

To address this crisis and save lives, we have invested more than \$800 million since 2017. We have restored harm reduction as an essential pillar of our strategy and work to support a compassionate and evidence-based response to the overdose crisis and the stigma associated with it.

[*Translation*]

Since 2020, we have also invested over \$270 million in the Wellness Together Canada portal, which gives Canadians free tools and support for their health and well-being.

[*English*]

Starting in 2021, we began delivering \$100 million over three years to support projects for innovative mental health interventions for populations disproportionately impacted by COVID, including health care workers, frontline workers, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and racialized communities.

[*Translation*]

Since last year, we have begun investing \$1.5 billion over six years to support trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, indigenous-led services to improve mental wellness, including over \$825 million through budget 2021 and budget 2022 to support distinctions-based mental health and wellness strategies with first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

[*English*]

Building on these historic investments, budget 2023 proposes significant new funding to build upon and complement the substantial existing investments for mental health and substance use supports for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

On February 7, we announced an investment of nearly \$200 billion over 10 years to improve health care services for Canadians, including mental health care services. This commitment includes billions of dollars in additional federal funding transferred to the provinces and territories to improve health and mental health care over the coming years through a combination of an increase in the Canada health transfer and an additional \$25 billion over 10 years to support bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

The new FPT bilateral agreements include an integrated inclusive approach to mental health in family health services, the health workforce, as well as data and digital tools. These investments will support the health and mental health needs of Canadians and will require provinces and territories to produce detailed action plans.

[Translation]

This approach is the most effective way to integrate mental health and substance use services into the health care system, including primary care, and to ensure transparency and accountability on the part of the provinces and territories as to how this funding is spent and where it is spent.

- (1755)

[English]

In addition, budget 2023 proposes to provide a total of \$359.2 million over five years starting in 2023-24 to support a renewed Canadian drugs and substances strategy.

[Translation]

Budget 2023 also proposes providing \$158.4 million over three years, starting in 2023-24, to support the implementation and operation of the new national suicide prevention line, 988.

We have partnered with CAMH to oversee the implementation of this new crisis line and we are working closely with our U.S. counterparts to learn from their four-year implementation process for the similar service they launched last year.

We know that the fundamental principle of Bill C-323 is to make mental health services more accessible and that is a principle we support.

[English]

However, our government also appreciates that tax changes, like those proposed in Bill C-323, should ideally be undertaken through the budget process, extensive debate and in discussion with provinces and territories. This enables us to fully consider trade-offs, balance priorities, close potential loopholes and undertake new fiscal commitments only to the extent that they are fair and affordable.

[Translation]

In short, this approach ensures consistency with the tax framework and the uniformity of the entire tax system. Making a tax exemption through the ad hoc passage of a private member's bill such as Bill C-323 has the potential to undermine this process.

[English]

Viewed through this lens, this bill raises a number of issues.

[Translation]

Because health care is essentially a provincial responsibility, the federal government uses provincial funding and regulatory practices as criteria to determine which services should be considered basic health care services for taxation purposes.

[English]

In this regard, if a service is covered by the health care plan of two or more provinces, it may be considered basic health care and exempted from the GST/HST in all provinces. Likewise, if a profession is regulated as a health care profession by at least five provinces, the services of that profession may be exempted from the GST/HST in all provinces.

[Translation]

However, psychotherapy and mental health counselling are not currently covered by the public health system in any province and are not regulated in at least five provinces.

[English]

This means that exempting the GST/HST on psychotherapy and mental health counselling services as proposed by Bill C-323 could undermine the long-standing criteria established for determining the GST/HST status of health care services.

[Translation]

Consequently, this could make it more difficult to make objective decisions about any possible future efforts to exempt other services.

[English]

While psychotherapy and mental health counselling services do not currently meet any of the long-standing criteria that were established to determine which health care services supplied by health care practitioners should be exempt, psychotherapy services provided by a psychologist or other regulated health professional such as a physician, nurse or social worker do meet the criteria and are already exempt if the services are within the scope of practice of their profession.

We look forward to exploring these issues through the legislative process. In particular, whether the bill would apply in the same way in each province is an important issue to be explored through debate. This is a basic question of fairness for Canadians.

[Translation]

We look forward to exploring these issues through the legislative process and, in particular, whether the bill would apply in the same way in each province. That is an important issue that should be discussed in this debate.

[English]

Canadians deserve to have access to the mental health services they need.

[Translation]

Canadians deserve to have access to the mental health services they need. That is why our government is committed to ensuring that mental health care is treated as an equal and integral part of Canada's universal health care system.

• (1800)

[English]

While we do support removing barriers to Canadians' access to mental health support, it is my hope that the considerations that I noted earlier will be addressed through parliamentary debate and review.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House this evening to speak to Bill C-323, which was introduced by the member for Cumberland—Colchester. I know that my Conservative colleague is a physician and, quite honestly, he is to be commended for introducing this bill. Sometimes we wonder whether we can really make a difference in people's lives as members of Parliament. This evening, I get the feeling that, yes, by supporting this bill, the Bloc Québécois will be helping improve the lives of people who need it.

First of all, it is important to point out that, right now, only physicians and psychologists have the right to GST exemptions. That does not make any sense, because we know that psychotherapy is now carefully regulated in Quebec and that there are professional bodies that have the right to regulate the professional service of psychotherapy using very strict criteria.

When a person in Quebec has a problem, their first instinct is not necessarily to call the federal mental health help line. If a person needs help in Quebec, they will first turn to their local community service centre, or CLSC, which helps people with anxiety, or they will turn to a support group. I am lucky because there are three great mental health support groups in my riding, namely *Psycohésion*, *Ancre et Ailes* and *Le Dahlia*. These groups help people every day and welcome them into their organizations to give them support and foster a feeling of solidarity with others in the group. These services are provided by community groups specializing in mental health, which, by the way, are not funded by Ottawa. They are entirely funded by Quebec.

As far as psychotherapy services are concerned, it may be worth repeating that Quebec passed legislation in 2009 that very clearly regulates psychotherapy. First, psychotherapists are required to be members of a professional association. Having spoken to osteopaths in Quebec, I can say that obtaining a professional designation is an exceedingly long and demanding process. Osteopaths are required to charge GST because their services are not governed by a professional body. They cannot make representations or participate in negotiations. It is very hard to become a member of a professional body. Professional designations are very strictly regulated.

Furthermore, to practise psychotherapy, a person needs to have a master's degree. That means doing an undergraduate degree first and then a master's in a very specific field related to psychotherapy. The person also needs to have 765 hours of training in psychotherapy at the university level. That is a lot, because added to that is 600

Private Members' Business

hours of a work placement, where the student provides psychotherapy consultation services under the supervision of a psychologist or a member of another professional body that is eligible to provide psychotherapy. In Quebec, it is very strictly regulated. The member introducing this bill is right to introduce it, because the current situation is unfair. It is not right.

As I often mention, I am a social worker and a member of my professional association. If I were to take all the required courses and complete a work placement, I could become a psychotherapist, but my clients would pay the GST. However, if they go see the psychologist in the office next door, they would not pay the GST. That is completely unfair and unjust.

I have a great deal of respect for my colleague, because, as a physician, he has the humility to say that other professionals besides doctors and psychologists have the ability, the intelligence, the competence and the knowledge required to support people through psychotherapy, and he agrees that these people should have the same privilege as he does of not having to charge the GST.

It is very difficult to access mental health services. If these services were provided only by psychologists and doctors, many people in Quebec would not get help. That is why it is a shared responsibility.

• (1805)

Social workers and psychologists may take different therapeutic approaches, but both are equally effective for supporting someone who has a problem or who wants to be supported in a certain decision in his or her life plan, someone who is experiencing upheaval, shock or trauma and who wants to be supported and treated by professionals. The bill recognizes that this professional association has the right to provide psychotherapy based on the criteria I mentioned earlier.

We hear a lot about mental health. I heard the member for Sherbrooke praising her government, but one thing is certain. Our support for this bill is meant as a concrete gesture to make a difference for people who seek help from various professionals who are able to support them in their psychotherapy. It is also our way of telling people that if they need help, there are many professions that can help them and that are all equally professional.

Mental health is a professional field, an action, that belongs to the provinces. Local community service centres and community groups are in the best position to lend support to people in distress. Having a federal crisis line that competes with the Quebec crisis line will not provide better support. It is just confusing.

Go to our ridings and ask anyone who is depressed and thinking about ending their life who they will call first. If they need help, their thoughts will turn to crisis lines like *Tel-Aide*, *Kids Help Phone*, or other community agencies in their riding. They will think about the social worker they visited at the local community service centre or the psychoeducator at their community support group who talked to them and treated them like someone who is different, but who has problems.

Private Members' Business

If a person is really in a bind and really in distress, they would never think to call a federal help line. I have looked at the federal portal that my colleague from Sherbrooke was talking about. It is true that there is a lot of information available there, but Quebec already has a help line. I do not know whether the other provinces do or not, but we have many different help lines for all sorts of people.

I am sure members will understand that I am not thrilled to see the federal government infringing on Quebec's jurisdiction when it comes to mental health, because all that is going to do is cause confusion in Quebec. When someone is not doing well, they do not need a whole bunch of telephone numbers and a big directory to know who to call. They really need to be connected to their community. The best place to be and the best support a person can get in their community is from their family, friends, local community service centre and community groups. Those are the people who will help the individual move forward and get through difficult times.

The Bloc Québécois is really pleased to support Bill C-323 to make a real difference in the lives of those who need help and to offer them a GST exemption.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I get started, I want to spend a minute thanking my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester for tabling this important bill, Bill C-323, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act for mental health services. As we know, this bill would expand the category of health care services exempt from point-of-sale taxes to include psychotherapy and mental health services. As I stated earlier, my colleague from London—Fanshawe tabled a very similar bill a while ago, and I was glad to see that my Conservative colleague stepped forward and moved forward with this bill, because he is much higher in the order of precedence.

We know that physical health services such as optometric, chiropractic and physiotherapy services are already exempt from federal sales taxes. Eliminating federal sales taxes from psychotherapy and mental health services would be a step forward, but, really and truly, there should be no taxes on any health care in this country. A tax exemption would reduce the cost of these services directly, by increasing access to them, but it is not the complete solution, as I stated earlier. Taxes are certainly a barrier, and it would help with that, but many Canadians still cannot afford these services, which are critical, especially in the crisis that we are seeing right now with mental health. In terms of increasing the availability of these services, it does not do that, but it does reduce barriers for those who can afford, or barely afford, to access these services.

As we know, right now in Canada, provinces are spending about 5% to 7% of their budget on mental health. Actually, some are even lower. Ontario is at 3%, under its Conservative government. OECD countries are at 12% to 14%. The U.K. is at the higher end of that.

We know we have to do more to create parity between mental and physical health in this country. We have a two-tiered health care system when it comes to mental health in this country; we truly do. We know that Conservatives believe that we should have a two-tiered health care system when it comes to our physical health in this country. As New Democrats, we believe that everybody

should have access to mental health supports, including psychotherapy, and we believe that everybody deserves timely access to a full range of a mental health treatments and services regardless of their ability to pay. We talked about the need for parity between physical and mental health in our country and the importance of that.

Like I said, my colleague from London—Fanshawe tabled Bill C-218 to take a step forward and to remove barriers. According to a report by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, almost 35% of respondents report moderate to severe mental health concerns. Fewer than one in three people with current mental health concerns are accessing mental health services. A key barrier to accessing services includes financial constraints and long wait-lists, so this does move a few people along. It is really important that we move forward. We know that counselling and psychotherapy are the most unmet needs of Canadians seeking help with mental health care. We are very appreciative of this bill.

My colleague highlighted earlier, and I really appreciate his doing this, that Canadians' mental health concerns have worsened throughout the pandemic. We have seen that. Again, Canadians are experiencing more and more difficulty making ends meet as they deal with increased inflation, a cost of living crisis and stagnating wages, so reducing the cost of access to services and, of course, treatment is important. Increasing the access to treatment for all Canadians who need it, by reducing financial barriers, is critical. We just want to highlight that one in four Canadians cannot pay right now for a \$500 emergency. Mental health treatment can easily far exceed this cost.

I want to talk a bit about our party's history on this. A 2017 NDP-sponsored bill would have removed GST from psychotherapy services. Bill C-218, sponsored by my colleague from London—Fanshawe, would also have removed GST from psychotherapy services. It is currently out of the order of precedence, so, again, we commend our colleague for moving this forward. The same colleague from London—Fanshawe presented a petition to the House of Commons to remove GST from counselling therapy and psychotherapy services. That petition received over 14,000 signatures.

• (1810)

When the Conservatives' order of precedence comes forward, we do like it when they take NDP bills. This is something we are just starting to get used to.

Members will recall that Scott Duvall, my friend from Hamilton, a former MP for Hamilton Mountain, brought forward a bill on pension theft to protect pensioners and their pensions from corporations that were going after their pensions. We were glad to see that a Conservative colleague took his bill and advanced it. The Conservatives had voted against a very similar bill when they were in government before the current Liberal government.

Also the small business transfer really started with the late Jack Layton. He brought that idea forward. It was carried by Guy Caron. We were glad to see the Conservatives advance another NDP bill.

These are important bills. I really think that is the spirit of Private Members' Business, members working collectively together trying to find pathways to support Canadians. This is another example of that.

A 2023 finance committee report included the following recommendation:

Recommendation 32

Exempt counselling therapy and psychotherapy from the application of GST/HST.

This is something that was supported at finance committee and now is being advanced here in the House. This is great news.

We hear from stakeholders who are concerned about the lack of access to mental health services and the lack of availability. As New Democrats, we want to increase both. I stated that this bill might not increase availability, but it will certainly increase access to services by reducing costs.

Almost all Canadians support publicly funding mental health care, making it the same as physical health care, creating parity. Ninety-four per cent of Canadians think that provincial and territorial government health plans should cover mental health care. This was according to a study done as recently as 2019.

My colleague talked about New Democrats always going for the home run. If we want to talk in baseball terms, I would say this is a bunt. It is getting some people to first base. We actually could go for the home run. As New Democrats, we have proven that with our dental care plan to make sure that children under 12 get access to dental care. We hit second base this year with seniors and people living with disabilities. Next year we hit third base with all families that earn \$90,000 or less.

We are going to hit a home run. Some day I hope that everybody in this country has access to dental care. If we brought forward a bill saying that we were going to remove GST from teeth cleaning, I do not think many kids would get their teeth cleaned. I will be really honest, it might be a step forward, and maybe a few might get their teeth cleaned, but we believe, as New Democrats, that we actually can hit some home runs in here.

I want to work with my colleague, and I hope he wants to work with me too, to hit a home run when it comes to mental health and making sure that people get access to treatment. I believe we can do it. I think we can do better than a bunt. We can get to first base, second base, third base and a home run, if we set out a plan and if we work together, which is really important.

One thing I was really disappointed about, and I have heard this from my colleagues on this side, is that the Liberal government is trying to find barriers to supporting this bill on a definition, on terms of what identifies psychotherapy and mental health. We have some really well-paid public servants who I am sure could make some recommendations at committee. Let us get the bill to committee. Let us do the right thing and work collectively.

This is a step. I support the bunt all the way. Let us get to first base. Let us get this to committee. Let us move this forward. However, the government has to get behind this. It always tries to find a barrier. I do not know what it is about Private Members' Business.

Private Members' Business

Maybe the government feels like it is not going to get credit for it and it just wants to go out and oppose it. There are a lot of really smart people in this House. I want to thank my colleague, because he is one of them. He is a physician. He has experience in this, and he is trying to move things forward.

I want to support him. My team wants to support him. This is supported by a tax-free therapy campaign. This is really important. It is supported by mental health providers.

Also, when it comes to gender parity, women and gender-diverse people are disproportionately impacted by the costs of and barriers to health care. They would benefit from this bill. It is really important that we support the bill.

● (1815)

In closing, I want to thank my colleague. I hope all members in this House will get behind this bill, a bill that we clearly support. We tabled a bill almost identical to it earlier in this Parliament. Let us start removing more barriers from people getting access to mental health care in this country.

The Deputy Speaker: Do not forget that on a bunt one can get an infield home run as well, so it can actually happen.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and privilege to stand in the House of Commons on behalf of my community of Peterborough—Kawartha. It is an even bigger honour when I am able to speak to the issue which I believe is the biggest crisis facing our nation: mental health.

There is not a person in this House or watching at home who has not been impacted by mental health. According to a 2020 UNICEF report, Canada ranks 31 out of 38 in children's mental health and happiness and 35 out of 38 in teen suicide. Approximately 12 people die every single day by suicide. That is 4,500 deaths a year that we know about. Suicide rates are approximately three times higher among men compared to women. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among youth aged 15 to 34 years.

I should have put a trigger warning at the beginning of this speech in the event this bothers anyone watching, as we are talking about mental health and suicide.

Private Members' Business

Self-reported suicidal thoughts, and I would make note of the language “self-reported”, and attempts are higher for people earning lower incomes. As we know, in this cost of living crisis, financial anxiety is impacting more and more people. What used to be considered good money is barely enough today. I am not going to get into the debate on carbon tax and the Liberals' failure on cost of living. I really want to focus on what we can do today.

I have some stats that put this crisis into perspective. Incidences of suicide are higher in rural settings. Adults with mental disorders, such as major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and PTSD were more likely to report suicidal ideation. Adults who experienced pandemic-related impacts of isolation and loneliness were more at risk of suicidal thoughts.

In fact, today I met with the Retired Teachers of Ontario, who shared with me that mental health among its 83,000 members is a major concern. Many seniors do not have access to a doctor, and it is deeply impacting their mental and physical health.

Almost every single day I hear from a parent or caregiver who shares their despair, their fear, about the mental health of their child. One gentleman started to talk to me one day and he broke down in tears because his teenage son would not come out of his room. He said, “The son I had before the pandemic and the son I have now is not the same, and I am so worried for his future and his health.” One parent shared with me that she waited eight hours in an emergency room with her teenage daughter because she was having a mental health crisis.

We have not even begun to understand the impact of the pandemic on our children. Their developing brains were exposed to trauma and isolation, and it will take years to get the data to understand the full magnitude of how our children have been impacted.

I sit on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and we recently completed a study. The report is titled “A Step-by-Step Approach to Supporting the Mental Health of Young Women and Girls in Canada”. The study brought forth many witnesses and a list of recommendations tabled with this House, some of which included education in schools, including self-regulation and empathy; mental health first aid; supports in rural and remote communities, including clinical and virtual care; access to housing; access to virtual mental health care; providing transitional services for individuals who are discharged from addictions and mental health-related hospital programs; youth who are aging out of foster care and individuals who are leaving emergency situations such as violence.

Another recommendation that came out included increased resources for health care practitioners. The reality is our frontline health care workers are suffering from compassion fatigue and burnout. As the old saying goes, the caretaker must first put on their oxygen mask if they are to help those who need it.

Dr. Rakesh Jetly was one of many witnesses who testified in the study. It was this quote that jumped out at me: “It's a year and a half wait for a psychiatrist for a teenager.... A year and a half is a lifetime at that age.”

All that information I just provided seems overwhelming and a huge task to try to change the course we are on, but we cannot give up. How does one climb a mountain? One step at a time.

For many people watching from home, this place of debate can be extremely frustrating and painfully slow. Trust me, I know how they feel.

• (1820)

If the member from Kingston wants to continue to talk while I do my speech, I would ask that he respectfully leave. It is rude.

Mr. Speaker, would you please address that?

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask members to hold conversations outside so we can get through the debate.

The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This topic is extremely serious. If he did not intend it to be rude, I do take that back, but this is really serious for his constituents and my constituents.

Today feels somewhat exciting—

• (1825)

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North and I respect the conversation. I apologize if there was some mistake. We were having a private conversation among ourselves and perhaps we were too loud. I apologize to the member for that. We certainly were not commenting on the content of her speech.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for that clarification.

The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today feels somewhat exciting because what my colleague has put forth is a simple, tangible action item that will move the needle in opening access to mental health supports. The member for Cumberland—Colchester, who also happens to be a doctor, has put forth a private member's bill, Bill C-323, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (mental health services).

Currently, many health services, including optometry, chiropractic, physiotherapy, foot care, acupuncture and many other services, are exempt from charging goods and services taxes. That means GST or HST depending on which province someone lives in.

However, psychotherapy and mental health counselling are not exempt, meaning the service provider must charge tax. If we remove the tax, that would work out to about every eighth appointment being free. The reality is many Canadians do not have coverage for psychotherapy and mental health counselling. This would make a difference.

This would also help alleviate the administrative stress on the providers. As I outlined earlier, these professionals are already managing an incredible workload to meet the demand. This would be a small but important step in making things more manageable.

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, or CAMH, psychotherapy is a general term used to describe a form of treatment that is based on talking work done with a therapist. The aim is to relieve distress by discussing and expressing feelings; to help change attitudes, behaviours and habits that may be unhelpful; and to promote a more constructive and adaptive way of coping. Successful psychotherapy depends on a supportive, comfortable relationship with a trusted therapist.

Psychotherapy can be life changing for many people. It can be maintenance of one's mental health, like visiting the gym to keep one's body healthy. One of my favourite sayings is by Fred Rogers, that anything mentionable is manageable. That is exactly what psychotherapy provides: the ability to identify and name behaviours and feelings so people can better manage them.

I would love to see everyone have access to psychotherapy. This bill is a great stepping stone to making that happen, by making it more affordable and also highlighting how important and valuable this service is.

One of the biggest hurdles in accessing support is asking for help. We have come a long way in how we talk about mental health, but we have a lot farther to go. Acknowledging access to mental health counselling and psychotherapy is a healthy and credible way to take care of oneself and it is wonderful, but now we must ensure people have access when they ask for it and ensure those services are affordable.

The president of the Canadian Paediatric Society said that behavioural and psychosocial problems “serious enough to disrupt functioning and development affect approximately 1.2 million youth in Canada” and “fewer than 20%...receive appropriate treatment.” Furthermore, he told the committee that support services can be very difficult to access and that sometimes this lack of access to specialized services results in a doctor prescribing medications. We have an addiction crisis. We should not discount how much this is connected.

I want to leave everyone with a message from Dr. Stuart Shanker, another witness from the status of women committee. Dr. Shanker studies neuroscience and is a leader in teaching thousands of people about self-regulation. In his testimony, he said, “You can change every single kid's trajectory”. This goes for adults too.

The science shows it takes a lot of different ingredients, but when someone is able to access them, the results can be wonderful and life changing.

I would say to everyone at home that wherever they are in their mental health journey, it is not permanent. There are amazing resources and people to help. Their life matters and they matter.

Today, I ask every member in this House to support Bill C-323, a private member's bill which says to Canadians that this House cares about mental health, that this House recognizes the value of psychotherapy and mental health counselling, and that this House is

Government Orders

making it a priority to make it easier to access and to make it more affordable.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1830)

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise this evening to talk about budget 2023 and all of the investments it is going to make in our country and in our communities right across Canada from coast to coast to coast.

Since the tabling of budget 2023, I have had the opportunity to spend some time in my riding, as we all did, throughout the Easter break. However, it was more than just Easter break in my riding. There were quite a lot of activities, festivities and things to celebrate, including Sikh Heritage Month, Ramadan, Passover, Easter and many other things. It was good to be back in Milton to engage with industry leaders, families, students, academics and various advocates on budget 2023 and put into context what it means for Milton and Miltonians.

Budget 2023 is designed to meet the challenges and opportunities of today by building an economy that works for all Canadians while supporting our communities towards a greener, healthier and more sustainable future. These are really ambitious objectives. We are meeting the moment, and we are going to achieve those objectives by providing targeted relief to help families, seniors, students and workers afford everyday essentials, with some fairly historic investments in health care. We are expanding our dental care rebate and focusing on families and the people who do not currently have access because they do not have any insurance.

Government Orders

When I was an athlete competing for Canada, I did not have a dental care plan, so I paid out of pocket for dental. At the time, I thought I was a minority. I thought I might be one of only a few Canadians who do not have access to dental care. However, as it turns out, fully one-third of Canadians do not have access to dental care, and that is too many. It turns out that many seniors in my riding fall just over the income threshold for the provincial program that seeks to provide support and dental care for seniors. One has to have very low income in order to qualify for some of those programs.

A lot of self-employed people, and we have plenty of those as we have a lot of entrepreneurs in Milton, do not have access to benefits, and some of their kids will not have access to dental. Friends of mine in Milton, Carly and her husband, have three jobs between the two of them. They work really hard serving our community, yet their three kids do not have dental care insurance, because their jobs do not cover it. However, with these new investments, all three of those kids will be able to visit the dentist, and it will not provide the family with any sort of financial burden, which is great.

I would like to take a deeper dive on some local implications of budget 2023, and how it will invest in the clean economy and deliver some great jobs and great careers for now and for generations to come.

First and foremost, I would like to focus on how budget 2023 makes life more affordable for Milton families. Too many people in our community and across the country are faced with real, tangible affordability challenges. They are struggling with the effects of higher grocery prices and rising housing costs. Budget 2023 is providing relief with a one-time grocery rebate, which is a \$2.5-billion measure targeted on inflation, for the Canadians who need it most.

It is a proven method to address these concerns, by using the GST rebate, which a lot of people are familiar with. Over 11 million low- and middle-income Canadians and families will receive the grocery rebate, and that means an extra \$467 for families. Canadians without children will receive \$234, and seniors will receive up to an additional \$225. These measures are means-tested, which means they will be targeted to the families that need it most.

I looked into this a little bit and did some research on the rising cost of groceries in Canada, and indeed, in 2023, groceries will cost families, on average, about the same amount. Many families are changing some of their eating habits. My partner, Emily, does not eat meat, and I eat less meat as a result of eating many meals with her and find that eating vegetarian a couple of times a week lowers our total cost.

Adding all of those supports and programs that our government has introduced and improved over the last couple of years really puts this into context. I encourage Canadians who are interested in the budget or in any of these cost-savings measures to go to the website and check out how certain families will be implicated with all of these changes. I will post the website when I post this speech.

I actually did a bit of research, taking an arbitrary four-person family in Milton with an income of \$85,000. I found that, with reduced child care costs, the Canada child benefit, the Canada dental benefit, tax relief from an increased basic personal amount and the

increased climate action incentive payments, this family will save over \$11,000.

• (1835)

I actually went a step lower on the income scale. I applied the same income that my family would have had when I was growing up, with two kids under six and a combined income of around \$60,000, which is probably more than my mom made back in the day, but obviously times have changed a bit. With the grocery rebate, the increase in the Canada child benefit, the climate action incentive results and reduced child care costs, for a family that earns \$60,000, that would result in a net savings of over \$21,000. These are real, tangible impacts the budget would have on cheques-books.

I was knocking on doors throughout January. Families in Milton were saying that times are tough, but they recognize the measures we have brought forward as a government, which are really helping their families. That was good to hear, and it makes me want to come back to work to keep working hard on these things.

I have stood in this House before to talk about the \$198.6-billion investments in health care that this budget formally introduces, but I would like to focus on one aspect that impacts many of our neighbours, and that is the health care human resource crisis. My mom is at an age now when she is looking to have a few procedures done. One of those is a cataract surgery. She also needed a new knee, and she has been waiting a long time. That knee was ready to get fixed during the pandemic. She went on a couple of lists, and that was delayed, obviously. Many of those challenges are worsened by the health care human resources crisis.

Canada needs more doctors and nurses, and we need them now. We are addressing this need with a number of priorities outlined in bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories. Namely, we are streamlining foreign credential recognition, so that internationally trained medical professionals in Canada can get working in their fields of expertise more quickly. We are investing in wages for PSWs and other workers to encourage retention, and we are also investing in education for better recruitment to the sector. We want young people to know that if they are considering a job in health care, we are here to support that ambition every single step of the way.

Government Orders

For students, the budget is really extraordinary. Over 750,000 post-secondary students rely on federal assistance each year to help them cover the cost of tuition, housing and everyday essentials. We want to make those expenditures more affordable, so budget 2023 seeks to do this by improving financial assistance for students with a 40% increase to Canada student grants. That is \$4,200 for full-time students. We are also raising the total federal aid available to full-time students by over \$1,000, up to \$14,400 for 2023. In all of that, we would also eliminate all of the interest on Canada student loans and Canada apprenticeship loans forever. There will be no more interest on those loans. I think this is an incredible measure. The next generation of students will never know the additional burden of that financial hardship going into their working years. I was really glad to hear that.

Two weeks ago, two of the awesome co-op students working in my constituency office in Milton organized a day when I went into their schools, Milton District High School and St. Francis Xavier, and I spoke to teachers and students about the impact this would have. The majority of those teachers have experienced student debt. I asked the students who was planning on going to university or college next year, and everybody put up their hand. I asked the teachers who had student loans when they were in school, and every teacher there put up their hand, obviously. I asked them how long it took to pay off that debt. It took a while. It took a couple of years; there is no question. It is important to note that this is not just for college and university; it is also for trades and apprenticeship graduates, so that those students would never have to experience that same financial burden.

I would like to skip forward a bit to some of the measures in this budget that would support seniors, specifically. In budget 2023, we are strengthening pensions by providing \$76 billion in support to over seven million seniors through critical programs like the guaranteed income supplement and old age security. Really importantly, these benefits would continue to be adjusted to keep up with inflation, and we would also expand dental care to seniors and redouble our efforts to support local seniors through programs like the New Horizons for Seniors. I recently announced over \$100,000 in funding for seven local senior-serving community organizations, groups like Ontario Seniors' Forum and many others, which are hosting events in the library and at the arts centre to combat loneliness and isolation and serve our seniors.

This budget would do so much for Milton. I had a chance to visit local small businesses to talk about the fact that we are going to work with credit card companies to reduce the costs of constantly swiping our phones or our cards on small purchases. I am guilty of buying at least one coffee a day with my telephone, and I know those costs get downloaded right to the small businesses.

These are just some of the ways the lives of Miltonians would see positive change with the passing of this budget, and I am glad I had the opportunity to engage with some of my local members and stakeholders. Now, I would like to engage with some of my fellow members here in the House of Commons.

• (1840)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Milton talked a lot about local implications and being back in his riding. I, too, was back in my riding

over the last couple of weeks. When I was there, I heard a totally different scenario from my constituents. They were talking about the huge inflationary cost of everything that is impacting them. In fact, they talked an awful lot about the servicing of the debt, which is going to be \$42.9 billion, and who will pay for that. Those were concerns they had.

One of the big things in my riding was a concern about the fact that there was not a single mention of the coal transition or, using the new wording that Liberals like to use, sustainable jobs. The reality is that none of that was there to try to help the people who are going to be losing their jobs. Jobs are not being created in the riding.

I do recognize that the member has been involved with health care. He and I both met yesterday with the Canadian Chiropractic Association. In his speech, he talked about student debt and its impact. Does he recognize that the chiropractic students who are paying back student loans are not actually included in this? Would he agree to adding them to this?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, it was nice to see my colleague at the Canadian Chiropractic Association's meeting yesterday. I had a chance to give a speech as the parliamentary secretary for health. I had a chance to acknowledge that the doctor opposite is in fact a chiropractor. I know that he was well received by many of those constituents.

Indeed, when we frame the conversation around what one likes about the budget or what one does not like about the budget, we are very likely to receive different feedback. However, it is undeniable that the measures in this budget that I went through, measures for seniors, to tackle the climate crisis and to invest in jobs, will have an impact in Saskatchewan. My dad used to live in Regina, and I have a lot of great friends there.

I saw my former teammate Kia Byers just a couple of days ago, and she was talking about the need of Saskatchewan to get off coal and join the green revolution and to invest in more sustainable practices going forward. I could not agree more. There are enough people in Saskatchewan that I think they deserve their own nuclear power plant and they should start using some of that great uranium they take out of the ground in that fine province to fuel their province rather than burning coal.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to hear my Liberal colleagues today, I really get the impression that everything is just fine and dandy.

Government Orders

I thank my colleague for his speech, but there were many things that piqued my attention. I could ask tons of questions, but I will try to be brief.

An annual income of \$85,000 for a family is good, but my colleague said that his government was helping seniors. What is it doing for seniors whose annual income is \$20,000? Does he really think it is possible to live with dignity on that amount?

I just reread a press release by FADOQ because I too have been consulting the people back home. In fact, I organized a conference on seniors' health. FADOQ says that the only thing for seniors in this budget is the one-time help for groceries, a single cheque that seniors will receive once. That is not going to help in the long term. FADOQ is critical of the fact that the guaranteed income supplement was not increased.

As far as old age security is concerned, I would remind my colleague that, currently, every senior under 75 is still not getting help from their government, and those 75 and older got an increase of only 10%. Those 75 and under got absolutely nothing.

My colleague just spoke about nuclear energy. I cannot believe how much greenwashing there is in this budget. As I said, I could go on at length about that, but his government is putting the same spin on its approach to seniors.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments and mini-speech. There were a lot of questions in there.

This government has done some amazing things over the past seven years.

• (1845)

[*English*]

I am going to speak in English so that I can get my idea out because I have never actually said this in French before.

There is no government in history that has done more to solve seniors poverty. When we took power in 2015, seniors poverty was at a totally unacceptable rate, something around 9% or 10%. Seniors as a cohort in Canada are now the least impoverished group socio-demographically. That is not to suggest that we ought not to do even more to support seniors, but we have done more than just cut seniors poverty in half in this country by investing in old age security, which my colleague erroneously pointed out has not been reinvested in.

We have increased all sorts of funding to seniors-serving organizations, and seniors poverty is now at an all-time low. That does not mean that we should not continue to invest, but to suggest we have done nothing is false.

The Deputy Speaker: All right, here is my reminder of the evening: I really do not want to interrupt people's thoughts or to limit the time that people ask questions or answer questions, but we just asked two questions and other parties are not going to get an opportunity to answer. Try to keep the questions short and try to keep the answers short so everybody can participate in this debate.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is so much to do in politics. There are people to listen to, people to convince, people to defend and people to support, but the most important thing for politicians to do is to keep their word and their commitment to the people they have met, listened to and shaken hands with.

I got into politics as a member of the Bloc Québécois by promising the community of Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix and all of Quebec that I would speak on their behalf, do my utmost to defend the things that matter to them and that they are concerned about, and live up to the expectations that they have of the federal government based on the taxes that they pay. Those taxes take a significant portion of their hard-earned, proudly earned money out of their pockets and, as good citizens, they hope to see it used to benefit society in general.

This is my second term and, once again, I have the opportunity and, of course, the privilege to share their messages in the House, to speak on their behalf and to make the government aware of their reality.

People in my riding have a different reality than that of people living in urban centres, where activities and investments are buzzing. Along the Côte-de-Beaupré, in Île d'Orléans, Beauport, Charlevoix, and from Courville to Baie-Sainte-Catherine, the people from my neck of the woods are creative, innovative and resilient. They are hard workers.

Entrepreneurship is very popular, and, every year, we salute the excellence of good work at galas worthy of major social events in the big city. People in the regions are resourceful, proud and forward thinkers, because we have no other choice. All too often, we cannot count on anyone but ourselves to develop our socio-economic potential, which is too often ignored in favour of the electoral potential that can be courted in major urban centres. Our economic levers are considered negligible, whereas they are often levers that ensure food sovereignty and national economic vitality. SMEs, non-profit organizations and their human potential are the socio-economic vectors that ensure the stability and constancy of the economy in general, in addition to allowing regional development and providing people in the communities with the services and the means to stay where they were born and where they have chosen to live and raise a family.

That is what has informed my opinion of Bill C-47, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023. It is a 430-page bill that amends 59 pieces of legislation, as well as the tax regulations, and that, in its current form, once again prevents a full discussion on all the important measures it contains. Unfortunately, we will be voting against this bill because, despite its volume, it contains significant gaps. The position we have taken is because of these gaps.

Government Orders

There is nothing for seniors, who are the forgotten ones. It is impossible to live decently on benefits that are well below the poverty line. The Bloc Québécois is calling for seniors to be given the bare minimum, specifically an additional \$110 per month starting at age 65. They deserve it. They are entitled to it, period. We also need to encourage seniors who want to put their knowledge and experience to work for a few more years by offering them attractive tax benefits. Everyone agrees, except the government.

There is nothing for housing. We continue to tread water. There is no ambitious plan for accessing affordable housing. The government is handing out crumbs just to save face. People, families and thousands of people are waiting, completely destitute. Their despair is palpable. Everyone knows it except for the government.

There is no long-term solution to the underfunding in health. I could go on about that. Quebec and the provinces have been picking up the slack for years to make up for the lack of federal funding in health. The result is that Quebec and the provinces are getting poorer year after year trying to maintain acceptable health services without adequate federal funding, which means they cannot invest properly in other sectors. Budget after budget, they are falling behind in several areas.

Canada is getting richer on the backs of Quebec and the provinces, and nothing in this budget suggests that things are going to improve.

When the pandemic hit, the balance that was already so fragile collapsed, and health care services completely broke down. Essential investments for the economic health of the provinces and Quebec, to enable them to keep up with international development, fall short. On the whole, there is a general decline in services and quality of life. I think it bears repeating that this is a significant problem.

Every person and every socio-economic area is affected in one way or another by the federal government's failure to meet its obligations to the provinces on health care. Everyone knows it, except for the government. It is serious.

• (1850)

We do not talk enough about the recent provincial agreements. They are ridiculous. The provinces so urgently need a lot of money for health care that they would rather have these ridiculous agreements than nothing at all. They are between a rock and a hard place.

The government slipped in some surprising provisions about the monarchy. What is that all about in 2023? Millions of dollars will be wasted on an outdated exercise that is the symbol of futile and unjustified supremacy, and, even worse, of submission for Quebec. Most Canadians and most definitely the National Assembly of Quebec and Quebecers themselves agree that they want no part of the monarchy. Everyone knows it, except the government.

There are the lovely stories from oil country. Bill C-47 will create infrastructure to let organizations that are not accountable to Parliament manage billions of dollars that the government plans to invest in the green transition. Who will measure the results of these investments? The oil companies? Who will tell us if it is a real green transition or simply an exercise in greenwashing? Given what

we know about environmental forecasting, how can we allow oil exploration in 2023, let alone invest in it?

I cannot believe that we have not made more progress. All that money should be invested solely in developing clean energy. That is the only way. The year 2030 is tomorrow. Everyone knows it, except the government.

What about employment insurance? I am not going to dwell on this topic for long. Not only are there no partial provisions to help EI claimants in seasonal jobs, but there is nothing to signal EI reform in the short or medium term. The Employment Insurance Act stipulates that the fund cannot run a surplus or deficit on average over seven years.

Last year, the government grabbed nearly \$2 billion that belonged to workers. The same thing happened again this year, and the 2023 budget calls for another \$13 billion to be taken away by 2030. In the end, we are talking about \$17 billion that the Trudeau government intends to take from the pockets of EI fund contributors. We have no right to let this happen. It is not okay for the government to use the premiums taxpayers pay into the EI fund to pay off some of the government's pandemic debt. It is unacceptable.

The EI fund is balanced and must be fully reserved for workers who experience a break between active work periods. Insurance is meant to insure, not to prop up the government when it makes financial blunders. Everyone knows that, except the government.

What about the fisheries, which have been adversely affected by the Prime Minister's and the minister's decisions to cut pelagic fishers off from their livelihood with 48 hours' notice? What is being imposed on the fisheries is shocking: no measures, no consideration for the fisheries, no on-site consultation, no funding for modernized ships and research, both for measuring the consequences of climate change and for properly and adequately assessing all resources. What about the lack of predictability, a word that is not in DFO's vocabulary? Everyone knows it, except the government.

Together with the Bloc Québécois, we established a fishers' round table in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. Everyone was there, including suppliers, fishers, scientists and processors. We listened to them, and they made us aware of the issues. We heard some great solutions. Everyone knows what needs to be done, everyone, that is, except the government.

The legendary passion and genius of our regions have kept them going so far. However, with each federal budget, the regions are forgotten, ignored and impoverished. One day very soon, the regions will forget, too. They will ignore the federal government and demand to regain full control of their economic potential. Quebec will get fed up with the federal government's moods and its lack of consideration for Quebec and its socio-economic development. On that day, Quebec will become independent. Everyone knows it, except the government.

Government Orders

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because the member says it does not necessarily make it true. To give a false impression that the government is not in the different regions of the country is absolutely ridiculous. In every region of the country, the government is actively there supporting Canadians in a very real and tangible way. Whether it is our trades, our health care, our seniors, building a healthier and stronger economy, by being there for the environment, there are ample examples throughout the budget implementation legislation that clearly demonstrates that we have a national government that is genuinely concerned about the development of our communities, no matter the size, big or small.

Would the member not agree that she is being a little selective in her interpretations of the readings that she made and compared to other governments, this is a government that genuinely cares about all the regions of our great nation?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Speaker, to echo what my colleague said earlier, one would think that everything is going great for this government. Everything is just fine and dandy.

On the ground, we are hearing from desperate people, destitute fishers, who are under the thumb of bureaucrats and technocrats who have never consulted in the field. This is just in the fishery. What about employment insurance, which is a major lever for economic development?

Business owners and workers alike agree with the Bloc Québécois's position that EI must be adapted for seasonal work done by people in the regions. If that does not happen, seasonal work will cease to exist.

How can the government tell me that everything is fine and that the government supports the regions?

That is not what I am hearing in my region.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I agree with a lot of what the member said. There is a lot of disappointment in the budget, including especially the delayed commitment to address indigenous housing. There is \$4 billion and I understand that would not start until next year. I wonder if the member could explain what the Liberal government needs to hear to make sure that we are doing better for indigenous housing, including in Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Speaker, the plight of indigenous people is terribly sad. We are talking about housing, of course, but there are still some indigenous people who do not have access to clean drinking water.

The government is congratulating itself on its big investments and fine words about truth and reconciliation, but it still has not given these people clean drinking water, let alone affordable housing. The government would rather stimulate the construction of

condos worth \$700,000 or \$800,000 than help people who need it and who are dependent on government decisions.

I agree with my colleague. We absolutely need to band together and force the government to invest more in affordable housing, particularly for indigenous people.

• (1900)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to remind the member for Winnipeg North that my colleague and I were being sarcastic when we said that everything is just fine and dandy. That is my first point.

My second is that my colleague spoke about employment insurance. I will be more brief than I was earlier, I promise. Employment insurance is vital. The current government is all about fake feminism. By not investing enough in health transfers, it is harming the community groups that work to prevent domestic violence. By failing to invest in EI reform, it is harming women, who are penalized more by the current EI system. That is also true for those who go on maternity leave. The government is all about fake feminism. These investments are being called for.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with my colleague. I think that she added to my speech, which I had to condense, so I was not able to provide all the detail that I wanted to.

I thank my colleague. That is absolutely right.

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join the debate on the budget implementation act.

There are some interesting numbers in this budget. Total revenues coming in to the government are \$456.8 billion and expenses are \$446.6 billion. On the surface, when one looks at that, one would think that is not too bad. There is actually some money kicking around, but the problem is the government has run up our national debt so high that the debt charges alone are just shy of \$44 billion this year, and they are going to increase to \$50 billion. That is creating a deficit this year of \$40.1 billion, which is \$10 billion higher than what was originally projected.

Why is the interest rate so high? That is because the government, under the Liberal Prime Minister, has run up our national debt so it is now twice as big as what it was when he took office, at \$1.2 trillion. That is a travesty, and it is shameful what the government is doing to our taxpayers today and in the future. Our children and grandchildren are going to have to pay off this spending binge that the Liberals have been on for the last eight years.

As shadow minister of national defence, I want to talk a bit about the expenditures in this budget. If we look at the budget and the estimates today, Liberals are going to spend \$26.4 billion. That is down from last year's \$27.58 billion. Despite the rhetoric coming from the Liberals, they are not spending more, they are spending less. The Prime Minister, we know from leaked documents, has no intention of ever reaching the NATO target of 2% of GDP being spent on our national defence.

Government Orders

However, the Prime Minister has no problem spending \$6,000 a night in luxurious hotel rooms in London. He has no problem wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer money to go on his luxurious vacations in Jamaica and the Bahamas. It relates back to the Prime Minister just not prioritizing our national defence and how important it is, not only in protecting Canadians here at home, but also in standing up for our allies around the world and having serious relationships.

The Conference of Defence Associations Institute just wrote a letter, signed by 60 prominent Canadians. In it, they say, “Years of restraint, cost cutting, downsizing and deferred investments, have meant that Canada’s defence capabilities have atrophied.” They go on to say, “the recent federal budget was largely a summary of previous announcements without any acknowledgement that the Government must accelerate program spending, and make significant additional funding available to address the long-standing deficiencies in military capabilities and readiness.”

Our safety is not a luxury. We have to make sure we are treating national defence like we do in our homes by buying home insurance and fire insurance and paying the premium. Investment in our military is a premium that we have to pay to protect us at home. In the letter from those 60 prominent Canadians, they said, “Canada cannot afford to conduct ‘business as usual’”.

Part of the responsibility we have in national defence is to stand up for our democracy and protecting democracies around the world. For 426 days, we have watched in real time the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine and have witnessed barbaric war crimes and atrocities being committed by Putin's war machine. For 426 days, the people of Ukraine have now only stood up to the Kremlin's genocidal attempt to Russify Ukraine once again.

This is a war of attrition. Vladimir Putin is prepared to play the long game, turning this war into a frozen conflict to let war fatigue overtake western resiliency. Unfortunately, it may be working. I just never dreamed that Canada would be the first ally to show signs of war weariness. One may ask what the proof of that is. In the Liberals' recent budget, the finance minister, surprisingly, offers Ukraine little more than platitudes. So much for her being a champion for Ukraine.

Despite President Zelenskyy asking for more assistance and Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, who was just here, hoping Canada would donate more armoured vehicles and ammunition, budget 2023 provides only \$200 million in new spending in military equipment for Ukraine. Much of this is a bookkeeping exercise to account for the eight Leopard tanks that we have donated to Ukraine. We can only hope that the Canadian Armed Forces will use that money to buy new tanks to replace the ones we just donated.

- (1905)

Regrettably, the Prime Minister and his Liberals have spent our fiscal cupboards bare. After eight years of the Liberal government, our national debt has doubled to \$1.2 trillion. Our federal deficit is \$10 billion higher, and it will soon reach \$50 billion, which is more than what we spend on National Defence. The size of our government is \$151 billion bigger than it was in 2015.

The Liberals have increased spending on just about everything in this budget except National Defence. A case in point is that they have spent a whopping \$22 billion on consultants. As our Conservative leader pointed out in his reply to the budget, “Now the interest costs on the national debt have doubled. We are spending double the national defence budget on the interest costs on the national debt. It is ridiculous.”

Sadly, well-connected consultants, big bankers and wealthy bond holders will get more from these Liberals than our troops will. This is all bad news for taxpayers, and it inhibits Canada's ability from helping allies such as Ukraine or investing in our National Defence during these troubling times in Europe, the Indo-Pacific and our Arctic. To be clear, as His Majesty's loyal opposition, we have supported the military, humanitarian and financial assistance provided to Ukraine by the government, but Canada's Conservatives believe the government can and must do more to help Ukraine win this war.

Conservatives have strongly advocated to increase the production and exportation of our ethical oil and natural gas, along with other energy products, to Europe to displace the Russian oil and gas that is fuelling Putin's war machine. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine 426 days ago, Conservatives have consistently called on the government to send more lethal weapons. In fact, since March 2022, we have been asking the government to donate to Ukraine our armoured ambulances; Harpoon missiles; Role 3 mobile hospitals; sniper rifles; and our soon-to-be-retired fleet of light armoured vehicles, also called LAVs, specifically the Bison, the Coyote and tracked LAVs, also known as M113s.

National Defence confirmed in writing, in its response to an Order Paper question tabled in this House, that it has 149 LAV II Coyotes; 142 M113 tracked LAVs, and 196 LAV II Bisons. These LAVs will soon be replaced with 360 brand new LAV armoured combat support vehicles, which are currently sitting in London, Ontario. Instead of decommissioning our old LAVs and turning them into war memorials or selling them for scrap, the Ukraine defence forces would gladly welcome them. A case in point is that the U.S.A. and Australia donated 130 M113s last summer to Ukraine, and they were crucial in the liberation of Kharkiv.

The Liberals have sadly argued that our Coyotes, Bisons and tracked LAVs are too old, too worn out and have not yet been declared surplus. DND had noted that 62 of the Coyotes were deemed repairable, but they would take 220 days to procure the parts and put them back into service. That was 309 days ago, back in June of last year. Did the Liberal government act? Are we able to donate those LAVs now? Unfortunately, the answer is no, so Ukraine does without.

Government Orders

Regardless of the Liberals' apathy and excuses, I remain confident in the resiliency and ingenuity of the Ukrainian people. I know that if we sent our fleet of older LAVs to Ukraine, the Ukrainians would immediately put them to good use. What works, they would fight with; what does not, they would cannibalize for parts. This is not a novel idea. Just ask our Royal Canadian Air Force. The Liberals stuck it with 18 old, worn-out F-18 Aussie fighter jets, and they had to buy another seven broken fighter jets for the spare parts.

The black, fertile plains of Ukraine are soaked with the blood of millions of innocent people who were murdered during the Holodomor and the Holocaust. We must stand with Ukraine and stop today's genocide being committed by Putin's war machine. Canada must not waiver. We cannot grow weary. We must not falter. During difficult times like these, we remember great leaders such as Sir Winston Churchill, who said in his famous "blood, toil, tears and sweat" speech, "victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival." Ukraine must survive. Ukraine must win.

As I said earlier, with respect to National Defence, the Prime Minister does not seem to care. His rhetoric does not match his actions. In the leaked documents that came from the Pentagon that were on the Discord app, it said, "Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has told NATO officials privately that Canada will never meet the military alliance's defense-spending target". It goes on to say—

• (1910)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Even though we are quoting, we cannot say a name, so we are going to back that up to say, "the Prime Minister".

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, yes, it was the Prime Minister. The documents go on to say that the "defence shortfalls hinder Canadian capabilities, while straining partner relationships and alliance contributions." That impacts our bilateral relationships, which not only affects defence and security but also impacts our trading relationships with those partners.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it has been the incredible leadership of the member for Etobicoke Centre, the Deputy Prime Minister or the Prime Minister himself, not to mention the different ministers responsible, whether for defence or foreign affairs, we have been very much on top of the Ukraine file. In many areas, we have led.

In other areas, we continue to work with the United Nations and our allied partners. I think it is somewhat shameful that the member would try to give a false impression that the Government of Canada has not been supportive of Ukraine because, in every way, it has been supportive of Ukraine.

My question to the member has to do with the member making reference to the Government of Canada not hitting 2% of the GDP. Does the member not remember that he was, after all, the parliamentary secretary of defence and it was the Harper government that actually dropped below 1% of Canada's GDP? I can assure the

member that this government has never even come close to that, as we get closer to 2%.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member for Winnipeg North that they are going backward, not forward. They went from 1.34% down to under 1.29% of GDP this year.

They have also gotten very creative with their accounting. They added in veterans' pensions, Global Affairs Canada costs and Coast Guard costs, which we never added in. If we added all of those things in when we were government, we would probably have had 1.5% during the time that we were in Afghanistan.

Yes, we did take a bit of a fall in spending after we pulled out because we were balancing the books, something that the government has no plans of ever doing as it continues to saddle our kids and our grandchildren with its reckless spending.

I will just say this on Ukraine: This budget only has \$200 million in it. It is nothing for Ukraine. We supported everything that the government has done in the past, but it is doing nothing in this budget, and that is shameful.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in one of his recent books, Michael Mann, a physicist at the University of Pennsylvania, said that the oil industry's primary strategy to deal with climate change was first to deny reality. Then, as the consequences of climate change became visible, the industry changed its strategy to mislead the public. It is trying to make us believe that there is hope that new technologies will emerge in a few years and that we will be able to defeat climate change easily.

I would like to know whether my colleague is prepared to accept science and recognize that taxpayer-funded carbon capture strategies are a ploy to mislead taxpayers. Those subsidies and tax credits for carbon capture and storage represent a significant amount of public funds. Is my colleague, who is so concerned about a balanced budget, prepared to rise and take a stand against these subsidies?

• (1915)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, in this budget, there is some money for our Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, Lake Simcoe and every other lake across Canada. It is only \$650 million spread out over 10 years. That is not an investment in making sure that we protect our freshwater lakes, which are a precious resource.

I was proud that over the time I was a member of Parliament in government, the Lake Winnipeg Basin got over \$35 million, just for one lake. This government is not even going to commit that over 10 years for any lake in this country. That is what is disturbing.

Government Orders

I will just say this: The government's idea of reducing carbon emissions is to tax Canadians more, and as a rural Manitoban, as someone with an agriculture background, and as someone who has family that is still farming, I see the impact this is having on our seniors. I see the impact that this is having on farmers. Their costs of production continue to go up. The price of food gets more expensive, and it is all because of the government's tax plan, which is not a carbon plan.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise the issue of support for students. I met with members of the Graduate Students' Society at the University of Victoria. They were hoping for support in this federal budget, and they shared the struggles that many grad students are facing, living on less than \$20,000 a year. In addition to skyrocketing rents and groceries, they also have tuition costs. They are going into debt. Low-income students are adding to their undergraduate student loan debt.

I was concerned when I heard a Conservative member, a couple of days ago, say in the House that the government should be charging interest on student loans. That penalizes low-income students. I think we need to do more to support students, not less.

Grad students are asking for an expansion of tri-agency grants and increased awards. They are organizing a national walkout on May 1 to demonstrate how integral they are to institutions and how they are affected by these funding decisions.

Could the member speak to his opinion on how we can better support these students, who are asking the government to invest in the next generation of leaders, often while they are struggling to put food on the table?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I would say this: The one thing I detest about the student loans program is that it is very much prejudiced against kids who come from farms and small businesses, especially in rural areas. Because of the assets owned by their parents, they do not qualify for a student loan. That works against their ability to get an education, which often ends up costing a lot more because they have to travel great distances and move into cities, where those universities are located. I want to make sure those barriers are removed for all rural students.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I quote:

...let me be very clear. We are absolutely determined that our debt-to-GDP ratio must continue to decline and our deficits must continue to be reduced. The pandemic debt we incurred to keep Canadians safe and solvent must [and will] be paid down.... This is our fiscal anchor. This is a line we will not cross.

Who said that? It was our finance minister. A year ago, she made that bold statement, said those bold words, when she proclaimed to the world that Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio would be Canada's anchor and that she would not cross the line of allowing it to increase.

Here we are a year later. Can we guess what happened? Our finance minister took a big step across the line. The issue for Canadians is this: Whom do they trust to manage this country's finances?

We asked for three things. We asked that the war on work and lower taxes for workers be ended, that the inflationary deficits that are driving the sky-high cost of living be ended and that the gatekeepers be removed from home construction across Canada so Canadians can have their dream of home ownership restored. None

of those three requests were followed through on by the Liberal government.

I want to touch on a couple of issues, including affordability and inflation, the problem of uncontrolled spending, the staggering cost of government and, finally, economic performance. I do not know if I will have enough time to cover all those issues, but I will do my best.

First is affordability and inflation. Taxes on everything are going up. There is a reason that Canadians should not trust the current government to manage finances. It is a tax-and-spend government under which the cost of living has skyrocketed, including the cost of groceries, gas at the pumps and home heating.

Let us not forget the cost of housing. Under the Liberal government, nine out of 10 Canadians now say that dream of home ownership has disappeared. It is a dream I grew up with. I assumed it was attainable for most, if not all, Canadians. Today, nine out of 10 young Canadians say that dream is no longer a reality for them. A down payment on the average Canadian home, the average mortgage payment and, quite frankly, the average rent payment have doubled in Canada over the last seven years under the Liberal government.

Inflation has eroded what a dollar buys. We see stagnating wages across the country. It is at the point now where the gap between the rich and the poor is growing ever greater. Those with assets are growing richer, whereas those who earn paycheques are growing poorer. We now have one in five Canadians skipping meals just to get by and have enough to eat. Let us think about that. There is a perverse situation in which the poor are going to food banks and asking for medical assistance in dying, or in other words, assisted suicide. This is not because they are sick but because they do not want to go hungry. Is that the perverse situation in which we find ourselves in Canada? The government is expanding access to medical assistance in dying, while at the same time, it is not providing the resources Canadians need to at least survive and have some kind of satisfaction in their lives.

● (1920)

I will talk about the problem of uncontrolled spending, which is a critical issue for this country. Today, the government is spending \$151 billion more than it did in 2015, when it came to power and took over from the Harper government. That spending has created unprecedented inflationary pressures that are driving the skyrocketing cost of living for Canadians, who just cannot afford life in Canada anymore. Today, we have a deficit of \$43 billion. Does everyone remember when the Prime Minister, back in the 2015 election, promised tiny deficits of no more than \$10 billion? Every year since then, budget deficits have been much greater than that.

Government Orders

We all acknowledge that, during COVID, there had to be supports and benefits provided to Canadians to allow them to make it through that very troubling period. However, we are out of COVID now, and the deficits continue despite the government's promises to return to balanced budgets. The Minister of Finance promised we would return to a balanced budget. She promised that last year, just one year ago, and today she broke that promise. Promise after promise after promise is broken by Canada's corrupt and failed government.

The result, of course, is that over the last seven years, Canada's national debt has doubled. In fact, the government has racked up more debt than all other Canadian governments combined. That, by definition, is profligacy. That is irresponsible use of taxpayers' money. The government does not understand that we have to live within our means, the way any Canadian family has to.

I will go on and talk about the staggering cost of government. Under the current government, the federal public service has increased by nearly 31%. In seven years, over 80,000 new federal government positions have been added. I can ask an average Canadian citizen out there whether they are getting better service. Those 80,000 professionals who have been hired by the government must be providing an enhanced level of service. How are passports doing? What a failed program that is. How are visas doing? That is a failed program. Immigration is a failed program. It goes on and on and on. Service is going down, and the cost of government is going up. Who pays for it? Canadians do.

Finally, I will talk about economic performance. One thing I had hoped the government was going to include in the budget was something addressing the issue of competitiveness. We compete with other countries around the world for capital, for investment and for human resources, and we have a productivity gap in this country that continues to grow. Canadians are producing less and less product. That is undermining our national competitiveness, and it is driving inflationary pressures. Every economist will tell us that. There was nothing in the budget to address that gaping hole in our productivity.

I have had so little time to flesh out why we, as Conservatives, cannot support the budget. This is a failed budget. Canada has a failed government, and Canadians deserve better.

• (1925)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just a few minutes ago, in his speech, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman talked about the fact that the Harper government cut the defence budget in order to balance the books. I notice that my hon. colleague across the way is also talking about balancing the books. It just seems like the Conservatives sometimes want it both ways. They talk about balancing the books, but then on each individual thing, they say, “Oh, but we need to increase that, and we need to increase this.”

I would ask the hon. member opposite this: Does he agree with his party's defence critic that we should cut defence spending to balance the books?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, my colleague across the way just had an opportunity to ask the defence critic that question.

I would suggest to the member that it was her finance minister who, last year, said that she could balance the budget in four years. How would she have done that? It would have required controlling spending and being responsible with taxpayer dollars, which is something the finance minister has been unable to do. That is why we will not support an irresponsible budget.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague has spent a lot of time telling us that we need to shrink government and reduce debt and the deficit. I understand that; he is a Conservative. I respect his point of view, even though I do not share it.

That being said, the government has fundamental responsibilities that should be important, even to a Conservative. One of those responsibilities is employment insurance. He and I will both agree that a company like Sunlife is not going to provide a decent private-sector EI program.

For years, the Liberal government has been promising to reform the EI system. We need to expand coverage, ensure that there is no longer an EI spring gap and change the way it is funded, because we are going to shift the burden of pandemic-related expenses to our businesses and workers. Does my colleague agree that the government has broken its promise, and does he think that the system needs to be reformed?

• (1930)

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague and I might agree that the EI system must be reformed but disagree on how it should be reformed.

In terms of his suggestion that I would advocate for shrinking government, I will say that I did not mention that in my speech. I talked about controlling spending. If we control spending and grow the economy, we suddenly have the capacity to deliver the services that Canadians need. It is about balancing those two things, and I believe that, as a Conservative government, we will be able to get that done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which focused on fiscal responsibility, a balanced budget and a zero deficit. I would simply like to remind my colleague that a deficit was posted in eight of the nine years of Stephen Harper's Conservative government. The only year that did not show a deficit was the year before the election, and that was because his previous government had sold the GM shares it purchased during the auto sector crisis. It was a bit artificial.

I have two questions for my colleague. What would he cut and where would he look for the additional money to balance the budget?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I am very proud of the Harper years. During the Harper years, of course, the globe experienced an economic crisis that Canada also had to address. The member knows that Canada was the last country in the G7 to enter that global recession and the first to emerge from it. This occurred because of the management of Stephen Harper. I am very proud of our accomplishments.

By the way, the member is right that, in 2015, we left the Liberal government a surplus of \$2 billion. We had balanced budgets. Since that time, the Liberal government has been unable to achieve balanced budgets. In fact, the deficits this government has incurred are actually atrocious when we look at the generational debt that has been created for my children and my grandchildren and for his.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, every single day we hear new stories and new reports about the affordability crisis in this country. Canadians are struggling. Never mind luxuries; basic necessities are out of reach for far too many Canadian families.

Food bank usage continues to skyrocket and break records across the country. Some have even resorted to dumpster-diving to feed their families. Mortgages and rent prices have nearly doubled since the Liberals have taken office and nine out of 10 young Canadians have reportedly given up on the dream of home ownership. This costly coalition is squeezing Canadians' drive.

Budget 2023 was yet another opportunity for the NDP-Liberal government to course-correct. Conservatives put forward three clear demands to support Canadians in the lead-up to the budget. We asked for the elimination of the inflationary carbon tax and deficits, lower taxes so that it pays to work and the removal of the gatekeepers who are driving up the cost of housing. Not a single one of these demands was met in the budget. Instead, the finance minister doubled down on her government's record of higher taxes and inflationary deficits.

Budget 2023 is an absolute failure. It is a failure even by the finance minister's own standards. Just a year ago she stood in this place and told Canadians that the country's debt-to-GDP ratio was her "fiscal anchor" and that it must decline for Canada's finances to be sustainable. In fact, she said it was a line that she would not cross. Budget 2023 crosses that line, so according to the government's own finance minister, this costly coalition's inflationary debt and deficits are unsustainable.

Budget 2023 introduces \$40.1 billion in additional deficit spending that will be paid for by the taxpayers. That number is almost \$10 billion more than forecasted just last fall. The Prime Minister has added more to the national debt than all other prime ministers combined, racking the debt up to \$1.22 trillion. That breaks down to nearly \$81,000 per household in Canada.

The Prime Minister's new spending in this budget alone costs every Canadian household an additional \$4,200. It is the Canadian taxpayers of today and tomorrow that will pay the price for Liberal mismanagement. The cost to service Canada's debt has nearly doubled in two years climbing from \$24.5 billion to \$43.9 billion. That

is money that is added to the government's ledger annually but that delivers no services or benefits to Canadians.

The reality of this costly coalition's inflationary debt and deficits is that it is adding more pressure and more costs to the household budgets of Canadians. They are responsible for driving up inflation and interest rates. What is even more concerning is that in budget 2023, we find out that there is no longer a path to a balance in Canada's budget projections. The government has completely abandoned any efforts to balance the budget. Canadians are being squeezed from both sides.

Despite the endless deficits of this government, Canadians are still paying more in taxes than ever before. Payroll taxes are costing workers and small businesses more this year and the increased carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything. It is making it more expensive for Canadians to drive to work, buy groceries or heat their home.

For those in the communities that I represent and for rural Canadians across this country those costs are even more punishing. We know that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that the average family is paying more in carbon taxes than they get back in rebates and now the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has finally admitted that as well. The costly coalition's high-tax agenda is cutting directly into the paycheques of hard-working Canadians and inflationary deficits are ensuring that whatever is left of their paycheques does not go nearly as far as it once did.

● (1935)

This NDP-Liberal coalition is costing Canadians more and more, but they are not getting more for their money. Canadians are not getting better or more efficient government services. In fact, some line items were noticeably missing from the budget. The budget offered no support for our rural municipalities, for the retroactive RCMP wage cost that is constraining their municipal budgets. The one-time back pay costs were negotiated by the Liberal government, and it was their decision to not consult or include the municipalities in those decisions. The negotiated agreement far exceeds what it told municipalities to plan for, and it has left them holding the lion's share of the bill.

Certainly, our RCMP members deserve appropriate pay for the work that they do, work that is so important to our communities, even more so as the Liberal government's catch-and-release crime policies are making our communities feel less and less safe. The fact is that the government failed to consult with the municipalities, and the Liberal government is the one that should be responsible for that one-time cost. Those costs have serious implications for the municipalities in my riding, and yet there is no relief for them in this budget bill.

Government Orders

Another noticeably missing line item from the budget, and subsequently the budget implementation bill, is a time to attach benefit for adoptive and intended parents. The government has been promising parity to adoptive parents since the 2019 election, and the creation of a new benefit has been in the minister's mandate letters since then. The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion publicly alluded to the long-promised benefit, but it is nowhere to be found. Adoptive and intended parents should not have to keep waiting to get the parity they deserve and that they need.

My private member's bill addresses this inequity, and I sincerely hope that it finds support from all sides of this House. It is time that Canada works for the people who work. Budget 2023 and this budget implementation bill fail hard-working Canadians. They fail to ensure that Canadians could get ahead when they work hard and they play by the rules. They fail to reverse the inflationary deficits and taxes that are burdening Canadians and limiting their ability to provide for themselves and their families.

This budget proves that this costly coalition is unable and unwilling to reverse course on its harmful policies. Only with a change of government would Canadians get the relief that they so desperately need and deserve. Only Conservatives have a plan to make Canada work for everyday Canadians. Conservatives would lower taxes so that hard work does pay off. We would keep more money in the pockets of Canadians so that they could spend more of their own money on what they need and their priorities.

Conservatives would reverse inflationary deficits that are driving up inflation and interest rates within this country, and we would eliminate the costly carbon tax, a tax that is driving up the cost of basic necessities on just about everything in this country, all while doing nothing for the environment. We know that because the Liberal government is lining its pockets off the backs of Canadians while missing every single one of its emissions targets that it sets for itself. Conservatives would also remove government gatekeepers who are contributing to the soaring housing costs.

Those are all common-sense principles and policies that Canadians deserve, but that are nowhere to be found in this budget. This costly coalition has put forward a budget bill that for the sake of Canadians cannot be supported.

• (1940)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every so often we get a sense of what it is the Conservatives are really up to.

The critic for the defence department says that they are going to work towards a balanced budget, that they are going to be doing some cutting and that defence is on the chopping block. He has made it very clear. The Conservatives support cutbacks to defence. The Conservatives have also made it very clear that they would get rid of the dental program.

We just had a major announcement for the community of St. Thomas and in fact all of Canada with the Volkswagen electric battery plant. It would be Canada's largest factory. The leader of the

Conservative Party has been very critical of it. Could the member explain why the Conservative Party does not support it?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, one thing that we have noticed with the government is it does not have any fiscal restraint. When there is defence of the Prime Minister going on lavish holidays or even going to a state funeral and spending \$6,000 a night, which is Canadian taxpayers' money, there is a problem. There is so much wasteful spending from the government, which could be going to help Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, in her speech, my colleague spoke about the gatekeepers of housing construction. This gives me an opportunity to remind her that Quebec is the only province with a permanent program for the construction of social housing among other things.

With respect to housing construction, the worst gatekeeper for many years has been the federal conditions. The national housing strategy in particular has deprived poor Quebecers of housing because much time was lost in administrative delays.

Does my colleague agree that the federal government's conditions have hindered the development of housing? Is she ready to admit that money to help build housing should be paid directly to the Quebec government without any conditions and with respect for its areas of jurisdiction?

• (1945)

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I am someone in this place who is on the record about respecting provincial jurisdiction. I believe provinces actually know better than the federal government does when it comes to their own jurisdiction and what works. Again, I respect provincial jurisdiction and provinces know what is best for the people who live in them.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the member talked about this budget including harmful policies. It is because of the NDP that the budget included \$13 billion over five years and \$4.4 billion a year on an ongoing basis to support dental care.

How can she describe that as a harmful policy?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, what is in the budget is a lot of spending. I mentioned in my speech the RCMP: our municipalities are being struck with millions. Some of my municipalities have millions of one-time, retroactive pay. There are places where there is spending in the budget and there are places where the spending is missing. I think it is imperative the government be prudent on what it spends that money on.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I believe I clearly heard my hon. colleague from Battlefords—Lloydminster say that we needed to remove the gatekeepers who stop home building.

Government Orders

What federal department or federal operation has anything to do with local home building?

I also respect the provinces and I do think that is under provinces and municipalities. I agree that we should remove barriers to home building, but I do not think that resides with the federal government.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I think this particular Liberal government has a problem with railroading provinces and provincial jurisdiction, and respecting that. I really believe that if we had a different mindset coming to the table working with municipalities and working with the provinces, we would see a more collaborative approach and things would get done, as opposed to the federal government always wagging its finger and telling the provinces what to do.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to be able to enter into debate to discuss the issues that are impacting my constituents.

I would like to note, before I get into the substance of my debate, how ironic it is that the Liberals often claim that Conservatives are somehow holding up their agenda by simply doing our jobs, and I would like to highlight how yesterday was a clear example of how that is a falsehood in every way imaginable. Yesterday, Conservatives were ready to debate the budget. In fact, we even moved a motion, in a procedural manner, to help ensure we could get to debate the matter. What did the Liberals do? They wanted to dither and delay, and the consequences are that now we have some late-night sittings. I fear that, in the not-too-distant future, we will see time allocation moved, where once again the Liberals will shut down the ability for us to meaningfully debate the important issues, like budget 2023 and, specifically, the bill we have before us today, one of the budget implementation acts.

I will share a few observations before getting into what my constituents have shared with me about this matter. There are big costs and big announcements, but few results and even fewer benefits. The consequences of that are that Canadians from coast to coast are feeling the effects of now nearly eight years of Liberal mismanagement of our economy, Liberal mismanagement of the federal government and Liberal mismanagement of virtually everything the government touches.

More and more Canadians are losing confidence in the ability to receive even the most basic services, the most basic things a government should be able to accomplish. Canadians are losing faith in those institutions. Instead of the government being able to focus on things like governing, instead of it being able to focus on things like signing a deal with public servants that is two years late, we see the Prime Minister, time and time again, embroiled in scandal.

My advice to any Liberal in this place is to cut that guy loose. He is damaging their credibility to accomplish anything and is damaging and eroding the trust Canadians need to have in their institutions.

When we look at budget 2023, the big picture is not that rosy. We see the fiscal and economic outlook of our country increasingly discouraging for so many. Nowhere is that more clear than in the fact that we are likely going to see a recession. The definition of a re-

cession is a contraction of the GDP over two consecutive quarters. That is the economic definition of what a recession is.

I would expand that a little to include what I would call a “functional” recession. If we take into account the per capita GDP, Canada would have been in a recession for many of the last quarters, certainly the last years, with a few exceptions as we saw rebounds from COVID. It certainly was not just because of COVID. The economy was not doing well prior to COVID. Even though the government pumped out hundreds of billions of dollars of cash, deflating the value of the Canadian dollar, we are seeing Canadians who are not getting ahead.

We see a deficit of \$40.1 billion, and the budget will not be balanced for years and years. We see a massive deficit, to the point where the debt-servicing costs, if one can believe it, are greater than the deficit itself. Canadians are needing to borrow to even be able to keep up with the extreme spending of the Prime Minister, who, I suspect, does not know how to balance a budget in his own life, but certainly not that of the government.

We see \$43 billion in net new spending. We see \$63 billion in gross new spending. The impact per Canadian household is absolutely astonishing, as is the debt, which is rising to well over a trillion dollars. The consequence is that it is not the government's debt. The Prime Minister may have that illusion. In fact, he said during the COVID pandemic that the Liberals took on debt so Canadians would not need to.

● (1950)

Here is a reality check for the Liberals: It is Canadians who carry that debt. The consequences of that have hit the pocketbook of every single Canadian, and the failure to recognize that has devastating consequences on Canadians. The impacts of this budget and the overall fiscal mismanagement are certainly severe.

It is interesting to look at the polls over the last while. Generally, when big dollars get spent in Ottawa, there is a bump in the polls. We have not seen that. Some would suggest it is because of the Prime Minister's scandalous behaviour, and some would suggest it is because of some of the absurdity that members opposite often spout out, but I suspect that Canadians are getting wise to the fact that, time and time again, the Liberals are just tired and have no new policies.

Government Orders

In fact, we see that they have nothing new to offer, by the fact that one of the keynote commitments in this budget is not even a new rebate or a new benefit for Canadians, but is, rather, simply a renamed one within the increase for which we have ensured an expedited passage through the House because we see the value in Canadians having a few extra dollars to be able to afford things like groceries or home heating. The irony is that they simply renamed the GST rebate as the grocery rebate. They are functionally acknowledging that Canadians cannot afford their groceries. The reality is that the Prime Minister and the Liberals have created economic circumstances in which Canadians are suffering in ways that are absolutely astounding.

I had the honour of having dinner with some beekeepers from my constituency. Although I cannot reference whether they are or are not present here, it was an honour to talk about some of the issues our nation is facing and to hear from individuals who are facing the consequences of some of these things.

Like many in this place, I ask my constituents questions on a regular basis, whether that is through town halls or surveys and different things like that. I would like to read into the record, in the time I have left, some of the responses I received from a recent mail-out. I got about 700 or 800 responses, so it is a pretty good representation of the folks in rural Alberta. These are regular, hard-working folks who received my survey, which went out, on paper, to every household in my constituency, plus a whole bunch of emails I was able to send out as well.

Let me say that the picture is not very rosy when we see the consequences of the Liberal economic mismanagement. There were 97.5% of people who said that inflation has directly impacted them, and close to 90% of people have seen their grocery bills grow by \$100 or more on a weekly basis. That so-called grocery rebate, the renamed GST rebate because they could not even come up with a new idea, is not even close to covering what Canadians are paying. There were 89.2% of my constituents who told me that their utility bills have grown by \$100 or more every month.

Let us get into the just transition. I have a suspicion that the members on this side probably know how my constituents would feel about this. When I asked my constituents, 94.3% of respondents said no, 2.5% of respondents were uncertain, and 3.2% said they supported the just transition. Only 3.2% of those in east central Alberta support the Prime Minister's attempts to take over the energy sector.

There is a whole host of other things. One of the questions I asked was about the need to ensure that fiscal policy is a priority within government. Two-thirds of constituents said that it needs to be a priority and that they do not see that under the management of the current Prime Minister. We are seeing huge costs that are of not even a little benefit, but are pain being inflicted upon Canadians. I would note as well that, in the back of this omnibus budget bill, which the Prime Minister, in another broken promise among many, said he would never introduce, we see that the Prime Minister is unilaterally extending the equalization formula.

Once again, the elitism demonstrated by the Prime Minister is devastating the unity of this country. The number one job of any prime minister should be to unify this country, yet the current Prime

Minister has done nothing but divide it for his personal political gain, and the consequences are devastating.

I would simply conclude by saying—

• (1955)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, Senate.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, what an absolute load of revisionist history that was. The member said that the economy was not doing well even before COVID. We had the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, and we still do, by the way. We had an AAA credit rating. We had the lowest unemployment rate since we started recording it in the 1960s. To suggest that the economy was not absolutely booming in Canada before COVID is absolutely ludicrous, but I am not surprised to hear it from that member.

What I find even more interesting from Conservatives is that they seem to be really hung up on the idea that we are branding a GST rebate as a grocery rebate. Who cares what we call it? At the end of the day, the Conservatives are voting against it. They are voting against Canadians' getting more GST back to help them with the rising costs that have been affected by global inflation.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, that member is unequivocally incorrect. Conservatives allowed that measure to be expedited, so he should apologize and retract that statement, because it is untrue. If we want to talk about revisionist history, it was the finance minister on those Liberal benches who said, only last year, that we would never see an increase to the debt-to-GDP ratio in this country. What happened? Obviously, they were either untruthful or they did not understand the economic reality. Canadians can judge for themselves. When it comes to the reality Canadians face, they were not doing well before COVID, they suffered during COVID, and they continue to suffer now. For the Liberals to suggest otherwise is untrue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, our emotional colleague gave a very interesting speech.

He told us that Canada is not yet in a recession because the GDP is going up. He is inventing some sort of recession that he calls a “functional” recession, where he tells us the per capita GDP is going down. That means, in his opinion, that the Canadian population is growing too quickly.

First, if we receive too many immigrants, it is likely a sign of economic success. Then, according to the calculation he pulled out of thin air, is he not saying that he thinks Canada's immigration targets are too high?

Government Orders

• (2000)

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, let us look at the facts. Canadians are suffering, and here is the reality: The Liberals have destroyed confidence in so many aspects of our institutions, including the immigration system. We see that there are longer lineups than ever. Now that there is a general strike on, I shudder to think how many people are trying to pursue a better life, people who want to become Canadians and are going through the lawful process but are being denied that ability because of the government's mismanagement. Nonetheless, we have the government also encouraging lawbreakers, encouraging what is called "irregular immigration", which affects the member's province specifically, as well as all border provinces across the country.

I think it is rich that the government claims to be standing up for the middle class when, in reality, it is diminishing it and diminishing the prosperity Canadians, including new Canadians, should be able to attain.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about the fiscal and economic outlook of our country, but also about how Canadians are struggling, and I want to raise one issue that impacts seniors in particular. I was disappointed, because the budget made no mention of pharmacare. Right now, one in five Canadians is not taking the medicine they need, because they cannot afford to pay for it. This disproportionately impacts seniors. Seniors are skipping their doses, cutting pills in half and ending up in the hospital because they cannot afford essential medication.

The member also spoke about reducing government spending. The national single-payer pharmacare program would save government money. The annual savings would be incredible. Within a few years, it would save an estimated \$5 billion per year. It has been over two decades since the Liberals promised Canadians pharmacare, so does the member agree that the government should stop putting the profits of big pharmaceutical companies ahead of what Canadian families need, and deliver single-payer universal pharmacare?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I have two points. First, the irony of a member of the socialist New Democrats suggesting that somehow there is something wrong with the budget they have said they support no matter what happens, outside of a few rather vague commitments made in the so-called "confidence and supply agreement", is somewhat rich.

The second point is that we have a Prime Minister who has refused to take seriously his obligation to work with the provinces to ensure that the provinces can deliver the health care Canadians expect. We have seen that time and time again, and now we are seeing it with a unilateral extension of the equalization formula as a little side item in the budget bill. The reality is that Canadians deserve better, certainly better—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure and honour to rise in this place, even when

it is time to speak on yet another poorly prepared Liberal budget, as I am here to do tonight.

Budget day used to be the most exciting day of the year in the House of Commons, but it fell flat. It was ridiculous. The finance minister stood up, green dress, saying everything is fine in Canada. Well, this just in: It is not fine in Canada. To the contrary, this country is in massive trouble and a difficult economic position. Canadian families are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet, and businesses are struggling every day just to keep their doors open because of the carbon tax, which is one of the reasons I am hearing in my province of Saskatchewan.

I will agree that 2022 was a year of high inflation, massive deficits, a rising cost of living and tax hikes, and 2023 looks like it will be much of the same. I remember that not a long time ago, the finance minister said we would have deficit inflation. The member for Carleton, in the House, for over two years, signalled there was going to be massive inflation. The member for Carleton was right. When we continue to spend and spend, as this government has done, we are going to get inflation trouble, and that is what happened in 2022.

We are in an economic crisis that has impacted Canadians across regions and all age groups. As we have mentioned in the House a lot, one in five Canadians is skipping meals. The average rent in this country has nearly doubled in the last eight years. The down payment needed to buy a house has now doubled, and inflation continues to drive grocery prices higher and higher. For young Canadians, the dream of starting a family or even owning their own house is getting further and further out of reach.

For many families, there is a growing reliance on food banks, and I see it in my city of Saskatoon. More and more families each month, unfortunately, arrive at the food bank looking for food to tide them over for a paycheque or at the end of the month. We have never seen the numbers so high in my city. Saskatchewan is the economic engine right now of this country, yet we have many families visiting the food bank in my city. It is really tough right now to put gas in vehicles or even sign kids up for sports. Many seniors living on fixed incomes are having to choose between filling the fridge and paying the rent.

We had a constituency week two weeks ago. I have the largest number of seniors facilities in Saskatchewan. That is right: Saskatoon—Grasswood is number one in Saskatchewan for seniors facilities. I spent a lot of time visiting them over the two-week period, and everything is going up: food, rent and heat. In fact, at one facility, which I will not name, during the round table, seniors told me that rent was going up \$15 a month. Last year, that facility did not raise the price of rent, but it had to raise it this year, in 2023, by \$15. For many, that is a drive-through trip at Tim Hortons. However, these seniors were stressed out over the \$15 extra they are going to be paying next month on their rent. That speaks volumes about what has happened in this country.

Government Orders

We emerged from a financial crisis in 2007-08 with a stronger economy than any other country in the G7. Our economy was growing steadily because it was competitive. We were aggressively exploring international trade. We had a government focused on fiscal restraint. However, we have lost that. We have lost our competitiveness.

Just today, a story in a newspaper in Saskatchewan said that Vital Metals has halted construction of rare earths at the University of Saskatchewan. That is the same facility where, about six weeks ago, the Prime Minister was gladly sharing photos. He was there at Vital Metals. Well, now it is shut down. This is the sort of economy we are losing not only in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, but certainly across the country.

• (2005)

What happened? What changed between 2015 and now that has led to the massive economic problems we see? Well, I think we can all point to 2015, when the Liberals came to power in October. Do we remember the early promise that they would just have small deficits that would be gone within three years? What has that turned out to be? It is massive deficits blown right out of the water.

We are eight years into the Liberal government's reign, and it has added more debt to the books than any other prime minister in the history of this country for over 150-plus years. It has blown that out in eight short years. Fiscal restraint, as members know, has been thrown right out the window, has led to record levels of inflation and has certainly driven up interest rates.

It was interesting listening to the finance minister as she was preparing for the budget, because a month before she made the announcement that everything would be fine and the Liberals would haul in their spending and control it, she was talking to the banks in the country. They all said she needed to reel in spending, so we were prepared for that. Wow, did Canadians get a surprise when she announced the budget that day in this House.

What does the finance minister propose to do to fix the problems her government has created? Unfortunately, it is more of the same, as we found out the day the budget came out.

This year, the minister proposed to tack on another \$43 billion to the debt, with no path at all to balance the budget. When the Liberals came to Parliament as government in 2015, they said that after three years they would balance everything. However, eight years in and they have not even come close to balancing the budget.

The finance minister also proposed to continue to raise taxes, including the carbon tax. By 2030, which is seven years away, the government's two carbon taxes could add 50¢ per litre to the price of gas. Diesel in this country is roughly about \$1.80 and is going to be over two dollars again this summer. Then we will all sit here and bark about why food prices have gone up. Well, it is because of the transportation costs the government is imposing with its carbon tax. As we have seen from coast to coast, the carbon tax is adding to everyday expenses.

What should we do? Well, any plan should focus on three pillars. On this side of the House, for the last eight years, we have talked about lowering taxes, tackling high inflation and removing the gov-

ernment gatekeepers that make it more difficult to get business done here in Canada. We have seen that. I just mentioned that Vital Metals is closing today in Saskatoon.

We need to lower taxes. At a time when so many Canadians are already struggling to make ends meet, the obvious first step is to make sure they have more money in their pockets. Then they can pay down their debt and maybe enjoy a vacation, something the Prime Minister casually goes on every two or three months. Normal Canadians are cutting back on vacations. In a recent survey, we heard that six in 10 will not be taking a vacation this summer as it is simply too expensive.

This year, a family of four is going to spend over \$1,000 more on food. A family will also pay between \$402 and \$847 because of the carbon tax, even after the rebate. The government says that it will all be revenue-neutral, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer knows too well that in my home province of Saskatchewan it is not revenue-neutral.

We are concerned in this country. We are concerned because of the out-of-control spending and the growing deficit we are seeing in this country of \$1.22 trillion. I cannot add that up fast enough for every household. The average Canadian household share is now \$81,000. How are we going to get this down? I think that is the biggest area of concern for the next Conservative government, because Canadians want to get the debt down and are looking forward to a new Conservative government to show them the way.

• (2010)

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my colleague's speech, there were several instances where I think he shared with all of us in the House and with Canadians misinformation, perhaps, or was not clear on the facts.

There was one in particular where the hon. member referenced the idea that the Prime Minister goes on vacation every three months. With all of the research the hon. member has done, can he please share with us, in detail, and with his constituents, given that the Prime Minister's schedule is public, what vacations the Prime Minister has gone on? There should be four in the last year. Can he name all four vacations the Prime Minister has gone on?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, the Aga Khan's island is one. He has gone to Tofino when he should not have done that. He just went to Jamaica for \$9,000 a night, which he should be paying back out of his own pocket. He has not admitted to that in the House.

The Prime Minister, for the last week, should be paying \$81,000 for his recent trip. He will not do it. It was a friend of the family for 50 years. That way, he does not have to pay for any rental on a \$9,000—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, he only named two vacations and one was in 2016. Could he actually answer the question?

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is debate.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

• (2015)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure to listen to my colleague. We thought he was covering a hockey game, his voice is so pleasant to listen to. That being said, I thank him for his concern for the middle class.

I would like him to talk about an issue that is far from trivial but is not properly addressed in this budget; we are talking about measures for an air transportation security charge, which is going to be passed on to the consumer. The problem is that for us, even airplanes are no longer reliable. Air Canada no longer covers Abitibi—Témiscamingue and the regions in Quebec. There is a real problem with respect to air travel into rural communities.

What does my colleague think of this situation? What is the reality in Saskatoon? Should there be real reform to ensure that every rural destination in Canada is properly served?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, yes, it is a big concern in western Canada with Air Canada. It seems to have pulled out. We only have two flights a day, hopefully, from Saskatoon to Toronto and from Vancouver to Saskatoon. It had many more. It is down to four flights for the Diefenbaker airport. That is all it does. We are concerned because Saskatchewan is the economic engine of this country right now.

For the mining companies, like Cameco, NexGen and others, for the university, for the rare earths and for agriculture, everything I have talked about, we desperately need more flights in and out of Saskatoon. We are not getting that. It is the same for Regina. We talked about it as a caucus in February, but what we are seeing is that Air Canada is leaving western Canada, and Westjet is trying to fill the void.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague brought up the carbon tax a number of times. In my riding, the soup and salad bowl of Canada and home to the Holland Marsh, we are seeing onions come in from Egypt and Morocco. I talked to farmers and they tell me we are losing our competitive edge on pricing now with the carbon tax.

In my riding, we have no choice but to dry our beans and our onions with propane. We cannot even get natural gas lines in with infrastructure spending.

I am wondering if my colleague could comment further on the carbon tax and how it is affecting our agriculture.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, we have lost our competitiveness in this country. It worries me. I am worried for vegetable farmers in the member's area, who are trying to get workers in to help out with planting and the harvest. We are about two to three weeks away from planting in my province of Saskatchewan. We are the breadbasket of the world right now, but the carbon tax is killing every farmyard in my province. Food prices are going up because

of the carbon tax, and it will continue to go up and put tremendous stress on every food bank we have in this country.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise this evening to debate Bill C-47, the budget implementation act.

I would like to start by wishing my daughter, Julia, a very happy birthday yesterday. She brings us much joy.

The budget was tabled about a month ago. We have already voted in principle on these measures, but this bill is a chance to debate in more detail about the legislative changes needed to carry out the initiatives outlined in the budget.

The most impactful part of this budget is the full funding for dental coverage for all Canadians making less than \$90,000 who do not already have coverage through an existing plan. This would change the lives of millions of Canadians.

I keep hearing stories from friends and constituents who grew up without dental care because their families simply could not afford to go to the dentist. One friend phoned me soon after she heard about the new dental care plan. She is retired now, but grew up painfully shy after having many of her teeth pulled out as a child because of the lack of regular dental care. That shyness changed her life and personality so much that she still avoids social gatherings. She was very emotional when she told me how much the new dental plan would really make a difference to the lives of Canadians of all ages, but particularly to those of young Canadians. Her example is a clear case of how the lack of dental care is the single visible mark of poverty for Canadians. This dental care program will change all of that forever.

This is an addition to our public health care system that New Democrats have been calling for ever since Tommy Douglas brought universal health care to our country in the 1960s. It would not have happened without the NDP using its power in the current minority government to force the Liberals to act. Both the Liberals and Conservatives voted against dental care in the last Parliament when former MP Jack Harris introduced dental care legislation in this very chamber.

Government Orders

The other missing piece in our national public health care system is pharmacare. Right now, Canadians can go to a doctor for free, but if they are prescribed medication for their condition, they have to pay for that themselves. Millions of Canadians cannot afford their prescriptions and end up in emergency rooms, putting pressure on the critical care part of our health care system, which is already overloaded. A public pharmacare program would provide free prescription medications to all Canadians, while saving us a minimum of \$4 billion a year. It is a no-brainer. The Liberals have promised to bring in framework legislation for pharmacare by the end of this year, so it is really concerning there is no mention of it at all in this budget, not a peep.

There is good news in this budget about investments in the clean-energy economy. Significant tax credits will spur development in growth in this critical area. Thanks to the NDP, those tax credits will be tied to good jobs with good union-scale wages. Too often governments give out millions of dollars to big companies only to find that the funds went to executive bonuses and a boost in shareholder dividends. The strings attached to these incentives will ensure that workers are at the centre of the shift to a new clean-energy economy.

I used to work at the University of British Columbia, so I know first-hand how valuable investments in higher education can be. They are essential in this new knowledge economy. This budget has some help for post-secondary students. It will increase the Canada student grants by 40%, up to a maximum of \$4,200.

However, the government totally missed the mark by not including anything to help graduate students who are living in poverty. Grad students work full time in their studies. It is their job. Many grad students across Canada are funded by scholarships from the federal government. These students are our best and our brightest, and these scholarships have remained at the same dollar figure and same level since 2003, for 20 years. Masters students are now trying to live on \$17,500 per year. It is below the minimum wage. It is below the poverty line.

Students and researchers have been campaigning for over a year to change this. They had big demonstrations here in Ottawa last summer. They appeared before House of Commons committees. The science and research committee recommended that the government not only increase the amounts of individual scholarships, but also increase the number of scholarships. This would help us compete in the information economy and help us stop the brain drain of these young researchers moving to other countries that properly value their talents.

● (2020)

The students were profoundly disappointed when this budget had nothing in it for them. Students and researchers across the country will be staging a big walkout on May 1 to highlight this lack of recognition from the government and this lack of respect. They will not give up until the government agrees to pay them enough so they can live above the poverty line while they generate the innovations that Canadian companies need.

Canadians pay some of the highest interchange fees on credit card payments in the world. This is a real hardship for small businesses that increasingly rely on credit card transactions. New

Democrats have been calling for reduced fees for years, for decades. Jack Layton was big on this point. We want to put us on the same level as other countries.

In my role as small business critic, I have talked to Visa, Mastercard, Moneris, the banks, Aeroplan and other players. I know it is a complicated issue, so I was very happily surprised to see that the budget announced real action on this. The lowered fees will save small businesses an average of 27%, which is over \$1 billion over five years.

We have been hearing a lot about labour issues in recent days with the job action by the federal civil service. The ability to withhold labour in the face of unfair pay and work conditions is the only power organized labour has. Unfortunately, companies have often chosen to bring in replacement workers when faced with striking workforces. This flies in the face of the right of workers to strike and creates divisions within communities and between neighbours.

The NDP has been trying to get anti-scab legislation passed in this place for years. I remember one of the first private members' bills in 2016, when I was a rookie here, was anti-scab legislation brought forward by one of my NDP colleagues. Unfortunately, the Liberals and Conservatives voted against that bill, as they have for every other piece of anti-scab legislation. Again, I am happy to see that the NDP has used its power here to force the Liberals to bring forward federal anti-scab legislation.

The big disappointment on the labour front in this budget is the lack of any real employment insurance reform. One thing the COVID epidemic quickly taught us was that most Canadian workers are not covered by EI. Only 40% are covered. We desperately need a new EI system to protect workers for future job losses. If the predictions of some economists for a recession in the near future are correct, those job losses may be just around the corner. We must be ready to protect Canadian workers if that happens.

Government Orders

As I said earlier, while the NDP supports this budget, it is not a budget that an NDP government would table. That is clearly shown on the revenue side of the ledger. Every year Canada forgoes billions of dollars in taxes through legal tax avoidance by Canadian corporations and wealthy individuals. Every year the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The government has made baby steps to reverse the trend that has been going on for decades.

In this budget, the government changed the alternate minimum rate from 15% to 20.5%. That will raise the amount that wealthy Canadians must pay no matter what tax deductions they declare. It will recoup about \$3 billion over five years, and 99% of that increase will come from people making more than \$300,000 per year.

What we need is a wealth tax that will force super-wealthy Canadians to pay their fair share. What we need is legislation that eliminates the option for Canadian companies to hide their money in offshore tax havens. What we need is an NDP government and a real NDP budget.

• (2025)

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay for highlighting some really important measures in the budget this year.

Given that this week is National Tourism Week, and I have the honour to work very closely with my colleague on the all-party parliamentary tourism caucus, I wanted to highlight some things in the budget that relate to tourism. There are some major investments being made in supporting local events, in attracting large events like conventions to Canada, and many measures that will make it easier to travel within Canada. This includes at airports to make sure that passengers are able to be compensated more easily if there are issues with delays or cancellations.

Could my colleague speak more to the importance of tourism and how the budget this year is going to help this critically important sector right across the country?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the work the member does with the all-party tourism caucus.

I come from a tourism riding as well. It is a big part of the economy in South Okanagan—West Kootenay. There are some things in the budget that would really help tourism. There is increased funding to Destination Canada.

However, when I talk to hotels and restaurants, all the businesses in my riding that depend on and grow with tourism, they say that what tourism really needs is a bigger, more available labour force, and what that labour force needs is more housing. There is very little in this budget on housing. That is at the core of so many of the things that are holding the Canadian economy back.

I would simply ask the government to be more bold with housing investments that would allow us to bring in more workers to create the wealth—

• (2030)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated my NDP colleague's speech. He talked about the widening gap between the rich and the poor in Canada.

The Gini coefficient indicates that, quite clearly, in the Liberal government's time in power, there is a wider gap between the people who are rich in this country and the people who are, as they would like to say, trying to join the middle class, although the middle class is the middle at the end of the day. Anyway, between the bottom and the top, that gap is widening because of measures put in place by the Liberal government.

One of the issues in this budget is, of course, the flow-through tax, the increasing flow-through shares available for critical mineral companies. That is targeted at rich Canadians.

Would my colleague consider, in an NDP budget that he supports the government on, withdrawing that huge tax break for the rich in Canada in order to develop critical minerals?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would say first off that the gap between the wealthy and the poor or less well-off Canadians has been growing for the last 40 years. It has been growing over multiple Conservative and Liberal governments. It is not a new phenomenon. It has happened ever since we started believing in trickle-down economics. Until we realize that does not work, that gap will continue to grow.

As for investments in critical minerals, that is something we have to do. It is something we have to encourage. However, what the NDP is concerned about is the wealth to individuals generated by that, to wealthy Canadians, should be taxed at a rate that does not make them uncomfortable but is their fair share of the tax. Too many people are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): For the last question, the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, last fall, I stood in the House and I asked a Liberal member if it was not time to eliminate fossil fuels. He said yes, in 2023, it is all going to stop, fossil fuels will no longer be subsidized. That is a promise that the Liberals made.

Unfortunately, in the budget, that is not the case at all. All sorts of direct and indirect assistance is still be provided for fossil fuels to companies that are already making astronomical profits. In 2022, Exxon Mobil made \$56 billion in profits, Shell made \$40 billion, adjusted to \$36 billion, Chevron made \$36 billion and BP made \$27 billion.

Government Orders

There is a housing shortage in Canada, yet we continue to send billions of dollars to billionaire companies. I do not know what my colleague thinks about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, this is something the NDP has been calling for, for years. It is something the Harper government promised to the G20 to do years ago.

The Liberal government has not even come up with a definition of what a fossil fuel subsidy is, what an inefficient subsidy is.

We see that the cost of the Trans Mountain pipeline is now at \$30 billion. People complain about how much dental care—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my concerns regarding the budget implementation act, 2023, No. 1. This type of bill obviously concerns me as the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, and I will explain why.

First of all, I find it hard to understand why such a fundamental segment of our society, the people who built our identity and to whom we owe so much, is once again being ignored in the measures announced in this 430-page tome. The government has thought of amending 59 laws, as well as tax regulations, and yet it has not provided anything for seniors, who are increasingly marginalized. This is totally unacceptable. It is crucial that budget bills be carefully scrutinized and that citizens be given the opportunity to voice their concerns, which does not appear to be happening. How else can we explain that the government has completely ignored seniors?

With that in mind, let me explore some of the issues that many of us have raised and that motivate our party to vote against Bill C-47.

This is not the first time that changes have been made here by the Liberal government through this process, but there is something pernicious about going about it this way. First, where is the transparency? Where is the predictability that people so desperately need to make decisions that affect their lives? It is simple. There is nothing in the bill for seniors, housing, long-term support or health care funding. That much people understand.

The bill also creates infrastructure for agencies that are not accountable to Parliament to manage the billions of dollars the government intends to invest in the green economic transition. No one can make me believe that there are not people who will just smell the money and not really care where that money goes.

I did manage to find some measures that are of particular interest to me, and I want to highlight them. After talking repeatedly about farm succession and the plight of our agricultural producers, one measure is worth mentioning, namely removing the uncertainty surrounding the taxable capital gain on intergenerational transfer of small businesses. This is a decades-long battle that I was part of and that many other colleagues, long before me or with me, were able to fight.

The text of the bill deals with a variety of issues related to agriculture in Canada, and I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to speak to the nuances that the government must consider if it wants to serve the interests of many ridings, including my own.

Nearly 50% of the land in Abitibi—Témiscamingue is undervalued. We still have a long way to go to ensure that our agricultural land is valued and used to feed the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Quebecers, Canadians and others. We must first ensure that we work on classifying agricultural land through a fund dedicated to the safeguarding of agricultural land. Such funding would allow Quebec and its municipalities to begin this important, or even critical, process.

Then, to encourage recultivation, subsidies comparable to those offered for reforestation must be introduced. This funding would allow our grain producers to increase their production, for example, and would allow our cattle producers to create new pastures for raising their livestock. Above all, these subsidies would be a more important lever for our young farmers by making it easier for them to access land. With this simple measure, our farmers would be able to put more of their products on the tables of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Quebec, Canada and the rest of the world, in addition to ensuring the sustainability of our villages and our rural communities as well as real and sustainable land use.

It is also important that the program to plant two billion trees be amended to exclude devalued agricultural land from the areas that are targeted by the program for tree planting. In my riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, the people who cleared that land are often still alive.

The government also announced \$333 million dollars over 10 years for the dairy innovation and investment fund to help producers reduce the amount of solids non-fat that is sold for animal feed or disposed of and to increase their revenues.

The Bloc Québécois welcomes that compensation but strongly maintains that no amount can compensate for the breakdown of the supply management system and that the government should pass Bill C-282 to protect the system during future negotiations. In that regard, I want to thank most of my colleagues for supporting this bill.

• (2035)

With regard to the higher prices for nitrogen fertilizers because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the government is currently proposing to add \$34.1 million over three years to the on-farm climate action fund to support the adoption of nitrogen management practices by eastern Canadian farmers. The Bloc Québécois finds this measure to be ineffective and even ridiculous and believes that the government should not be proposing such measures while imposing a 35% tax on fertilizer. Furthermore, it is important that the government make cash available to our farmers. Almost a year ago, I gave a speech calling on the government to set up an emergency account, similar to the one we had during the pandemic, to help our farmers, who have likely been the hardest hit by input and fuel costs.

According to a study by the Union des producteurs agricoles, or UPA, farmers are in such dire straits that one farm in 10 could go out of business within 12 months. That is serious. UPA's president for my region was quoted in the newspaper *Les Affaires*. I recommend that my colleagues read the article. It said that the increase in interest rates and in the cost of gas, inputs and fertilizer are taking a toll on farms' profit margins, which are already very narrow and, in some cases, non-existent. Furthermore, higher insurance premiums and stricter requirements imposed by insurance companies, which want changes made in very short time frames, are resulting in significant costs. For that reason, the government must create an emergency business account for our farmers.

I do want to point out that the budget does increase the interest-free portion of loans granted under the advance payments program from \$250,000 to \$300,000. However, once again, the government is focusing on producers' debt rather than their cash flow or the possibility of providing additional income.

There are measures for mining. One of the interesting measures in the budget is the tax credit for the development, extraction and recycling of critical and strategic minerals. The problem is that there is no mention of it in Bill C-47, the first budget implementation bill. Is this going to be a repeat of what happened with the mineral exploration credits? As far as I know, none of the measures presented in last year's budget were implemented. The money for mineral exploration is therefore impossible to access. Is the same thing going to happen when it comes to applying these credits for businesses that recycle minerals, for example?

Abitibi—Témiscamingue is home to the only copper smelter in Canada. The smelter is working to reduce its greenhouse gas and arsenic emissions, and the new 30% tax credit could help it speed up its work. Furthermore, I know from my study at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology that we need to figure out how to boost metal recycling in Quebec and Canada, given that only 10% of the electronic devices recycled in Rouyn-Noranda come from Canada.

In addition, our region currently has the only active lithium mine in Canada, in La Corne. Sayona Mining is an important player for the Abitibi—Témiscamingue region, and its willingness to process the resource close to the source is noteworthy.

Although the government is providing additional funding to the critical minerals centre of excellence, I still believe that it is essen-

Government Orders

tial that this centre have a presence in the mining regions. It needs to forge strong ties with our universities, such as the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, and our colleges, such as the Industrial Waste Technology Centre, or CTRI, and the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, especially considering the Abitibi-Témiscamingue mining innovation zone project that is being developed in our region.

This mining innovation zone project could play a cutting-edge role in the mining industry in Quebec and Canada. It is immensely important in the sector, which is located near very large Canadian mines such as Agnico Eagle.

When representatives of Glencore appeared before the committee, they also mentioned this point and how important it is to the Quebec, Canadian and global mining ecosystem. The entire battery industry would benefit from having part of the critical minerals centre of excellence in Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Finally, the budget mentions the government's efforts to advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples by providing \$4 billion over seven years for urban, rural and northern housing. I welcome this. However, there is no new funding for on-reserve housing despite the urgent need. Once again, in my region, Abitibi—Témiscamingue, housing is a very important issue.

We have had a housing shortage for quite some time. Even before the pandemic, we were having difficulty building enough housing to meet demand. Rising interest rates are hurting construction and hampering our economic development. It is increasingly difficult to attract workers. I really do not want to see my region become a fly-in, fly-out community.

• (2040)

In closing, where is the money for housing in this budget? It is likely in the same place as the money for the most vulnerable seniors aged 65 and over, which is to say, nowhere.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with regard to affordable housing, does my colleague want to see more housing co-ops? I know that there are many housing co-ops in Quebec. My colleague is from a rural riding. What would the solution be with respect to housing co-ops in a riding like Abitibi—Témiscamingue?

• (2045)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Milton for his interest. Yes, the co-op model is really great.

Government Orders

I am going to stray from the topic of the budget. We had an interesting problem with the Coopérative d'habitation Boréale. The reality of co-ops in rural areas is that we cannot have 200 or more units, as is the case with other co-ops. With roughly eight units, there is relatively the same proportion of units as there is in Montreal and Rouyn-Noranda, all things considered. However, CMHC has difficulty adapting budgets to the reality of regional co-ops. Changes are definitely required in that regard if we want to improve our rental capacity. Yes, the co-op model is part of the solution, but we must lower prices. The way to do that is to boost supply by building housing.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP obviously has a nuanced view of the budget. There are some good things in it, mainly because we forced the Liberals to include them. Take, for example, the dental care plan for seniors and teenagers and the doubling of the GST tax credit, which will help those most in need. There is also the anti-scab legislation that is coming. We are going to force the Liberals to introduce it, even though they have always voted against that type of legislation.

One of the points that my colleague raised and that the NDP is also raising is that there is nothing in the budget about an EI reform, which many groups and unions in Quebec have been waiting for for many years. What would my colleague like to see in an EI reform that would meet the needs of workers in his community?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, the matter of EI reform has been very important to me ever since I got into politics. A few months ago, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and I marched with the unions that were calling for EI reform. I went to see the picket lines in Rouyn-Noranda. I almost posted on Twitter that the member was not there, but I held back.

This issue is essential to me. I want to rise in the House to call for EI reform. It is unacceptable that so many workers who paid into the system all their lives so that they would have a social safety net are not eligible. That is completely outrageous. Things need to change. It is a matter of dignity.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, if a country fails to preserve its food security and to value and support the people who make that food security possible, then no one will. At the end of the day, that country is only hurting itself.

We need farmers three times a day. Can my colleague offer one or two solutions for alleviating the burden on our farmers, including when it comes to the fertilizer they ordered before the war between Russia and Ukraine and have paid dearly for?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, it is terribly shocking to see who are the real victims of the measures that had to be taken. These economic sanctions against Russia in the context of the invasion of Ukraine had economic repercussions that rippled all the way to our local farms.

The reality for farmers has changed, especially in Abitibi West, where fuel distribution networks do not reach naturally. With the massive increase in costs, one farmer told me that he used to pay \$30,000 for diesel fuel, but his budget this year is up to \$70,000. His bottom line and his survival are at stake. He had

200 head of livestock, which he will have to reduce to 125 because he can no longer afford to keep up an average-sized farm. He has to reduce the size of his farm.

All this is because the government's measures are not adapted to the reality of remote regions, and that is definitely a problem. Insurance costs will have to be adjusted to this reality. An emergency account will need to be created that will help our farmers access cash flow when they need it.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank all who will be listening and my husband at home, who I know stays up late. It means we are 52 years old, when it is 10 to nine and I am calling it "late".

I really want to start this speech off by looking at where we are, looking at an Auditor General's report that just came out a month ago, and looking at how we have to move forward. I want to start by reading into the record the report called "Global Affairs Canada is unable to show the value of Canada's international assistance in support of gender equality". I want to read a bit of this report into the record so that we can understand setting this up. Really what I am looking for is accountability, transparency and fiscal responsibility, some things we have not seen from the government.

It reads:

A report from Auditor General Karen Hogan tabled...in the House of Commons concludes that Global Affairs Canada was unable to show how its implementation of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy had contributed to improving gender equality in low- and middle-income countries. The department is unable to [see] the information contained in its files to report on the value derived from the approximately \$3.5 billion spent yearly on bilateral development assistance projects or to provide Parliament and Canadians with a complete picture of the outcomes achieved for women and girls.

I am going to go to another part where it also found that Global Affairs Canada did not meet two of its three spending commitments under the feminist international assistance policy:

The department fell short on funding projects that directly supported the empowerment of women and girls or that were located in sub-Saharan Africa, where the benefit in terms of reducing poverty and advancing gender equality is typically higher.

The reason I am bringing this forward is that it kind of sets the stage for where we are with the government. As we are looking at the budget, I put on the lens of the shadow minister for women and gender equality and youth, looking specifically at what the government is indicating in its budget. Knowing the Auditor General's report, I think we need to start looking at what is going on with the government.

Government Orders

As I look at the 2023 budget, this is something the government has indicated as part of its foreign aid feminist international assistance policy goal for 2030. We are talking about the government continuing to give out money, but we expect results, we expect accountability and we expect that when we ask how money has been spent, it would be able to show how the people in those areas have been impacted.

However, we have none of that information. I see a budget that says the government is going to go do all these wonderful things, but I do not see any of the tangible results, and that is why I absolutely oppose so many different things in the budget. I do not think the government understands fiscal responsibility, and that continues to be one my greatest challenges.

I have heard many people talk about the food bank. I think one of the saddest stories I heard was from a person from the food bank in our area who shared with me that another person who had gone to the food bank owned a home in our area that cost \$800,000. However, this man was not able to put food on the table. There are many reasons, but I look at the fact that this man, who had purchased this home for his family, unfortunately was not aware of the variable or fixed interest rates.

I have a real problem with the fact that there was no customer service to help this person, who came to Canada and purchased a house, understand those things. There are lots of concerns there, and I do not want to point the finger, but at the same time I am finding that when this man had purchased a house for \$800,000, he was able to do so because he came from a two-income family with a six-figure income. Subsequently, his family could not meet the goals of paying for their mortgage any longer.

Under the government, we have seen inflation go up so much. For example, a person had a mortgage that they paid biweekly. At one time, and I believe it was probably in April of last year, the principal, taxes and everything totalled \$753. After everything going on with inflation, when they went back to the bank to renew their mortgage, their new mortgage rate was at \$1,050. That is a substantial increase for anybody who is paying that type of money.

I want to also look at so many different things here. I submitted an OPQ a few weeks ago. I want to look at government accountability. I submitted an OPQ on March 2, and the question was, "With regard to the federal government's funding of Gymnastics Canada being frozen in July 2022: (a) what was the original reason the government froze this funding; and (b) despite allegations of abuse and maltreatment within the sport still being unsettled, has this funding been reinstated and, if so, (i) on what date, (ii) for what reason?"

● (2050)

I would like to let everyone know it has been reinstated, but I do not know for what reason.

I want to read the response from Canadian Heritage on this:

...as a result of safe sport issues in the sport of gymnastics, Sport Canada froze funding to Gymnastics Canada and imposed the condition that Gymnastics Canada become a program signatory to Abuse-Free Sport, including the services of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, to allow Canadian gymnasts to be able to access the independent safe sport mechanism and other support services offered.

Part two of this, though, is probably the most concerning thing that I have ever seen and, hopefully, I can have somebody share this with me. Part (b) says, "funding to Gymnastics Canada was reinstated on November 14, 2022, as the organization had met the condition of becoming a program signatory to Abuse-Free Sport on October 18, 2022." Why do I find this really crazy? It is because of the timeline. We are talking about a timeline where I know that on November 22, many parliamentarians were able to view something called "Broken". It was the story from Gymnastics Canada talking about the number of young athletes who had gone through issues. We have had over 600, closer to 700, signatories talking about Abuse-Free Sport.

The reason I am bringing this up, as I said, is the timeline. On November 14, the minister reinstated this funding. On November 22, we highlighted that abuse was still happening in Gymnastics Canada. At that same time, the status of women committee started to study the abuse in sport and started to see that there was a rampant issue that was happening across not just gymnastics but multiple sports here in Canada.

The government talks about OSIC and how it is going to work, and I wish I believed it. They said they signed on and they are all good. That just does not meet the mark for me because they signed on, but they are the same CEOs who allowed this abuse to continue. We know that over the last number of years, they have never reported the complaints properly and that these perpetrators remain in the sport, not just in gymnastics but other sports.

The government did not invest a single extra dollar in this after all of the allegations had been going on. The funding was put in in 2022. We know there needs to be a lot done. Why did the government not look at what we need to do next? Why is it looking at OSIC and saying it is all good, it is fine and as long as it signs this, it is not going to worry any further? Hopefully I can get some answers to that question.

I also want to talk about women and gender equality in the workplace. We know, according to statistics, the participation rate decreased by 28% during the pandemic. If we look at any mom, any sister, any daughter, any woman and many men as well, it was a very difficult time as women were wearing many hats: as daughters, trying to take care of their elderly and as parents, trying to teach their children the things they had missed at school because they were at home. These are huge concerns for me.

The government is not attacking some of the key issues. The government will talk about a \$10-a-day child care program. I am going to let everyone know how that is working out in St. Thomas, Ontario. Currently, one of the early learning centres, probably one of best places parents can find if they want great child care, cannot find employees. Although parents will be able to get approximately \$10-a-day child care, spaces are not available in our communities because there is no labour force for this.

Government Orders

We always see that the government really likes to put the cart before the horse. It should make sure that it has the young men and women who will be working in these programs going through the education process, ensuring that they will be able to take these jobs that the government is promising to parents and that their children will be cared for. These are some major issues.

I have talked about food bank usage. We have seen across this country, across the board, that middle-class families are walking into food banks needing their help right now. We know with the sports abuse that the government put money in, but it is actually doing nothing about it. We have seen with the foreign feminist policy that the government can throw \$3.5 billion out there and it does not matter where the money falls, no one is going to be accountable. I would really like the government to start being accountable.

• (2055)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first I have a couple of quick corrections. It is not business as usual at Gymnastics Canada. A lot has changed. It has committed to an independent cultural review road map, the CEO has resigned, contrary to what my colleague said, and it is now in fact a signatory to OSIC and Abuse-Free Sport. These are the changes that we demanded. These are the changes that MPs from all parties demanded to see at Gymnastics Canada, and we are grateful to see that those changes are under way and progress is being made. Also, contrary to what the member said, in the budget there was \$13 million for Sport Canada to develop a compliance unit so that we can continue to monitor the activities from that direction.

There was not a word about the \$13-billion announcement for Volkswagen from this government, which the member attended recently. It is about creating green jobs, it is about creating the green economy of the future and investing in decarbonization electrification. Why was there not one passing mention on this budget implementation act about a \$13-billion investment in—

• (2100)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I want to ensure that this member of Parliament who looks over the sports file realizes that this was signed on November 14, and I am referring to gymnastics. It was not until close to March 2023 that the CEO actually resigned, so perhaps those facts are really important because it was not because of OSIC that he resigned. It was nothing to do with that, so let us look at that.

I would like to say I am one of the biggest champions for our community and I will continue to fight for prosperity in my community. That is my job as a member of Parliament. Although the Prime Minister likes to come and try to use me as a pawn, I am sorry but he is not winning there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, whom I appreciate in particular for her excellent interventions, notably on safe sport issues. She is a woman of commitment and what she said about gymnastics is a great example of that.

I would like to draw a parallel with restoring funding to Hockey Canada. I get the impression that the minister gave a bit of a blank cheque, in opposition to what she wanted. In fact, maybe we were the ones giving her the blank cheque. When she establishes structures, when all the elements are ultimately her responsibility and need to be accountable to her, that does nothing to change the culture of out-of-court settlements. She might even say that she is comfortable with the measures announced by Hockey Canada. Although I salute the Cromwell report and the will to go there, after four months, it cannot be said that a board of directors truly changed anything.

Is it somewhat the same situation in the world of gymnastics and is she prepared to give the minister this blank cheque?

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, the member referred to Hockey Canada and we saw that with no accountability; not even after the London police reinvestigated. We have not seen anything. They have just once again signed over to Hockey Canada, saying that all is fine. We have seen the exact same thing with Gymnastics Canada. I would like to see accountability.

At the end of the day, when our children go to play sports, they must be safe. We need to ensure that coaches are well trained, that they have criminal record checks and that they have not abused a person in another province and then gone to coach the same sport in a different province. That is what we have seen happen here in this country. There has been zero accountability and these national sports organizations are continuing to let this go. I will continue to fight for athletes just as this member has done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, tonight we are hearing a lot about fiscal responsibility from the Conservatives. That is nothing new, and we are not surprised. However, they never seem to mention the fact that the Harper government ran deficits eight of the nine years it was in power, and it was not until the ninth year that it balanced the budget. Even then, it was because the government sold off the GM stock that it had bought during the auto crisis.

If the member really wants to eliminate the deficit, what is she going to do? Is she willing to go out and collect more revenue by stopping subsidies to oil companies or taxing billionaires? If not, what public programs and services does she intend to cut?

Government Orders

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, it is interesting because I do not think I have ever talked about cutting programs. We are talking about investing in things that are actually going to be accountable. I have talked about where the current government just continues to throw out money with band-aid approaches. When we are investing, we expect results, we expect fiscal responsibility and we expect there to be key indicators that are telling us how this money is spent and how it is actually improving the lives of Canadians. We are not talking about cutting. We are making sure that when we spend we actually spend wisely.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today, as always, here on the territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation. To them I say *meegwetch*.

We are here tonight to debate Bill C-47. Bill C-47 is not the budget. The budget is a different document. It is related, of course, but Bill C-47 contains those legislative changes that are necessary in order to have the measures in the budget, not all of them but some of them, move ahead.

The measures in the budget that are simply allocations of funds that do not require legislative changes will not be found in Bill C-47, and so I find myself strangely in the position, having studied Bill C-47, of thinking I might vote for it, even though I could not possibly vote for the government's budget. The budget has much in it that I could not support, such as increased subsidies for fossil fuels disguised as carbon capture and storage, and the use of fossil fuels to create hydrogen, thus taking what should be a green fuel and making it a fossil-fuel source again. However, the budget implementation act is not that. Let me go over what it is.

The budget implementation act is 429 pages in four parts. The longest part, part 4, has 39 different divisions. They are wide-ranging and cover many different things. In that, let me confirm that this is an omnibus bill, but it is not an illegitimate omnibus bill. It is nothing like Bill C-38 of spring 2012 when the previous administration under Stephen Harper destroyed 70 different acts in one bill with changes that had not been forecast in the budget. That was an illegitimate omnibus bill. This one is a reasonable omnibus bill, because in order to implement the budget, multiple things need to be changed.

For instance, part 1 of this very long bill deals with the Income Tax Act and such things as creating a deduction for tradesmen's tools and going on to divorce and that separated parents can open up a joint registered educational savings plan for their children. There are such things, as we have heard about, related to the new program to cover dental care and changing the tax rules so that CRA can disclose personal information about Canadians so that they can get their dental care. Part 3 deals with air traveller security changes. I could go on and on, because it is 429 pages. By division 39, at the end of the bill, we have changes to the Canada Elections Act to deal with the protection of personal information. This is a wide-ranging bill. It even touches on foreign policy. This next one is good, and I think Conservatives would want to vote for it too. At division 5 of part 4, we remove Russia and Belarus from the most favoured nation tariff treatment.

I want to devote the time I have remaining to talk about one of the longer sections, which relates to issues I have been working on for years and some of which I was ecstatic to see. This deals with division 21, the oceans protection plan.

The budget itself has two references to our oceans. They are both found on page 135, and they are remarkably brief. One says that we are going to protect Canada's whales. Now, this is basically a dressed up repackaging of new money to such departments as Fisheries and Oceans, Transport Canada, Environment Canada and Parks Canada for what the budget claims will be continuing to protect endangered whales and their habitats. That is just fine and dandy, but that is not in the budget implementation act, which is just as well, because I have rarely been as furious, disillusioned or angry.

● (2105)

[Translation]

I am absolutely distraught by the government's April 20 decision to approve this terrible project that goes against the interests of endangered species.

[English]

On April 20, what did the government do just in time for Earth Day? It approved a disastrous project that likely spells the extinction of the southern resident killer whale, our Fraser River chinook salmon and numerous other species, including the western sandpiper. It is a project called Roberts Bank on the Fraser River estuary. It will result in basically covering in concrete over 70% of that flood plain habitat. It is an outrage. It is not in the budget implementation act, but it puts the lie to the budget is going to have a section that protects whales. Right. It is hypocrisy writ large. I see other friends from British Columbia nodding. We know. This is an outrage.

The next part of the budget that deals with oceans is, I think, where we see most of the over 60 pages in the budget implementation act, for what is called the division that deals with the oceans protection plan. That probably relates to this one line item of cleaner and healthier ports. Budget 2023 proposes to provide \$165.4 million over seven years to establish a green shipping corridor program to reduce the impact of marine shipping on surrounding ecosystems, and there is more to it.

Government Orders

What do we find in the budget implementation act and how is it relevant to what I just read? I have to say there is a lot in here that is just playing catch up with time passing. This bill deals with things such as oil-sourced pollution. Where there is pollution caused by a vessel, we are increasing how much the shipper, the owner of the ship, might have to pay. I do not think it is enough, by the way. It has changed from what was said in the Marine Liability Act, which is already on the books. Believe it or not, in respect of claims for loss of life or personal injury, it was a \$1-million limit. This budget implementation act moves it to a \$1.5-million limit and so on. That is one specific area.

There is another specific area that I want to mention briefly because I really think it is important. At page 241 of the budget implementation act is a section which says that under the Marine Liability Act, in terms of costs that the vessel owner and company must be responsible for, under the Hazardous and Noxious Substances Convention, they will now be required to compensate indigenous peoples for economic loss in relation to hunting, fishing, trapping or harvesting rights under section 35 of the Constitution. It is a better recognition of indigenous rights.

There is much here but I do want to concentrate on what was, for me, what I have been hoping for, for some years. Ironically, about a week before the budget implementation act came out, I wrote to the Minister of Finance, Minister of Transport, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister of Environment to ask if we are ever going to see any measures to implement the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act. Are we ever going to see the promised vessel remediation fund? Is it going to be in the budget implementation act? Surprise, it is. It is found at section 430, page 277 for anyone reading the budget implementation act at home. I have to wonder about their lives if they are reading the budget implementation act at home, especially if they are reading it out loud to their children. It will certainly put anyone to sleep.

It is very exciting because we passed the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act four years ago, in March 2019. We were excited on that day that we got it done. Most people here who do not live in coastal areas would not know what a hazard it is to have an abandoned vessel, somebody's old sailboat. They are fibreglass. If somebody owns them and they are moored in the harbour, moored in navigational lanes, getting rid of them is really hard.

In Atlantic Canada, it is not so hard, because over the course of the winter any abandoned boat will be smashed to bits and gone by spring, but if someone lives along the coast of the Salish Sea or along British Columbia's coast, the boats are there almost forever. In a time when we have the horror of people who are inadequately housed, many people who are homeless will move onto these vessels and live there. They are unsafe.

Once we got the act passed, we thought we had solved the problem, but then the government refused to act. I have constituents who say there is an abandoned vessel and ask if we will do something. The Coast Guard, DFO and Transport Canada all pass the buck and do not move the vessel. The problem is they do not have the money, they say.

Now we have this new fund. Details will come out on how it is going to work in regulations, but I could not be more pleased that

we now have a vessel remediation fund and additional powers for the Minister of Transport. There are other related measures in Bill C-33 which we have not yet debated in this place but maybe, just maybe, the budget implementation act, at long last, will allow us to implement the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act.

• (2110)

With that I will close.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, with respect to the speech of the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I did not get that far into the budget implementation act. I may be 25% of the way through.

The member and I had a conversation earlier about the funding for the Great Lakes and Lake Simcoe, Lake Winnipeg and the Fraser Valley. For freshwater resources, \$650 million over 10 years is only \$65 million a year.

The Deputy Prime Minister promised \$40 million for Lake Simcoe four years ago. Again this is inaction on behalf of the government.

I wonder if she could comment on the insignificant funds for freshwater resources across Canada.

• (2115)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. On page 134 of the budget, there is the heading "Protecting Our Freshwater". The waters mentioned include the Great Lakes. My goodness, the Great Lakes alone require an enormous investment.

Lake Winnipeg right now is one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world and it is dying. It will take much more than the total amount for all these bodies of water to figure out how to protect Lake Winnipeg, which is now dealing with runoff of nitrates and phosphates causing really toxic algae blooms. Lake of the Woods, St. Lawrence River, Fraser River, Saint John River, Mackenzie River and Lake Simcoe are also listed. The Mackenzie River is now a recipient of toxic tailings from the oil sands going downstream into the Northwest Territories.

The \$650 million over 10 years is a wish and a prayer.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for particularly mentioning the wrecked and abandoned boats program measures. As a coastal MP in B.C., I really appreciate the importance of those measures. It is really frustrating to see the scourge of some of those ships and what those do to coastal communities.

Government Orders

I want to ask her about a different part of the budget implementation act. In B.C., the issue of money laundering has been put in the spotlight through the Cullen commission. There are major vulnerabilities within our federal regulations and legislation that have been enabling this.

This budget implementation act, in addition to the new legislation we introduced on beneficial ownership, takes some really important steps forward that were actually mentioned in the Cullen commission. I was hoping my hon. colleague could speak to the importance of that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, hearing my hon. colleague from West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country speak reminds me that when I speak of the Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels Act, I really should give a shout-out to a colleague who worked in this place, the former MP for St. Margarets, Bernadette Jordan. She went on to be minister of fisheries, but when she was a private member and a backbencher, she brought forward a motion that was unanimously supported and which led to the act.

On money laundering, this is one of the things that is actually in the budget implementation act. It is found at division 3 of part 4. I completely support these measures. It is long overdue to bring in measures that allow beneficial owners to be completely transparent and allow us to get at money laundering. We have been a haven. We are a hot spot for money laundering. This is not what we want to be famous for in Canada. We are the best of the best if one is a crook who has dirty money. That is not what we want, and I hope this will work in Bill C-47.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, this budget is interesting in some respects. On the environment, however, I think my colleague and I agree. There are serious shortcomings.

Let us talk about one of the investments being made, specifically in carbon capture facilities, which are currently not at all efficient. They send more GHGs into the atmosphere than they are able to capture.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the effectiveness of these facilities and what other means could be used, such as tree planting and plant filtration, to address these challenges.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou.

It is true that the budget does not contain sufficient effective measures to fight climate change. Instead, it includes measures that will actually undermine our efforts to protect our climate.

Time is running out. It is not too late, but time is running out. We need to do more.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House and, today, to speak on behalf of the hard-working people of Flamborough—Glanbrook, whom I serve. This time, I am speaking about Bill C-47, the budget implementation act.

I would like to focus on three areas in my speech today. First, there is the out-of-control inflationary spending and deficits that are driving up the cost of living and interest rates for people in my riding and across Canada. Second, there are the tax increases that are being piled on at a time when Canadians can least afford it. Third, there is the desperate need in this country to have homes people can afford.

First, the \$46-billion bonanza of new spending in the budget is on top of the billions in wasteful spending that we have seen in the last few years from the government. Certainly, it makes for great photo ops for government ministers and MPs, but all this spending is adding inflationary fuel to the already raging affordability fire. Gone are the fiscal anchors and guardrails.

What does this mean for people in my riding and across Canada? I will paint a picture for us of what is happening at kitchen tables in suburban communities in my constituency like Waterdown, Binbrook or Mount Hope. For context, this is a five- or six-hour drive from this place, both literally and figuratively removed from the Ottawa bubble that the out-of-touch Liberals live in here.

I know this from the hundreds of conversations I have had with constituents in the past few months, particularly the last couple of constituency weeks, when I had a number of meetings across the riding. These are typically young families, often new Canadians, who have moved to fast-growing suburbs of the Hamilton area at the western end of the GTA. They have done so, over the last five to seven years in particular, in search of a home in which to raise their children. A detached family home is attainable for these couples, who often have two incomes, in these communities.

Certainly, the prices in Toronto or Mississauga, where these people have come from, are far more out of reach. They have come here in search of more affordable living. They feel fortunate because at least they got into the market before the prices skyrocketed.

There are others they speak to in their peer groups who have good jobs but cannot even contemplate saving up enough for a down payment, particularly when that has doubled since the Liberals took office. Moreover, they do not have the means to qualify for the million-dollar-plus mortgage that would be required, given the average cost of housing in the area.

These families and individuals are really worried right now. A lot of them are at the point where their five-year mortgages are coming up for renewal. Interest rates, of course, have gone up. Some of these people have seen their renewals cause their mortgages to double or be hundreds of dollars, maybe even a thousand dollars, more of their monthly budget. That is a real punch to the gut.

Government Orders

This comes at a time when they are also dealing with credit card bills that are mounting. This is because, far too often, there is more month left at the end of the money. They have also just gotten their natural gas and home heating bills and noticed a significant increase not just in the cost of natural gas but also in the line items, with the carbon tax and then the tax on top of the carbon tax, the HST, on their bill. There was an article in the local weekly paper about this recently. This has been another hit to their budgets.

They are also often commuting to work. Filling up their tank is now taking a bigger bite of their household budget. Of course they are feeling squeezed.

We know that groceries are up almost \$1,100 for the average household in Canada. Often, it is more. The carbon tax has been added and increased for home heating, groceries and, of course, driving a vehicle. That is all expensive. There are no savings for these individuals to dip into.

This is the reality at the kitchen tables across the GTHA and across the country. There is worry. There is concern. We have also heard, from recent polling, that six in 10 people are looking at cancelling their summer vacation plans because of this.

That is why this Liberal budget is so disappointing. It really makes matters worse. It has more inflationary spending, more deficits, more money wasted and billions of dollars in contracts to high-priced consultants. Certainly, the Auditor General found billions in COVID supports that were sent to people like prisoners and dead people.

• (2120)

All this inflation means more dollars chasing fewer goods. It is driving up interest rates, which are really the cruellest tax of all. The budget makes matters worse by not getting this inflationary and wasteful spending under control. When we are on track to spend almost as much or more on interest on the national debt than on transfers to the provinces for health care, as we are now, we know something is very wrong.

As my hon. colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets pointed out in his speech on this bill last Friday, every prime minister since former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, who was responsible for the original debt-and-deficit binge of the 1970s and 1980s, ran operating surpluses. That includes Mulroney, Chrétien, Martin and Harper.

We are now back to operating deficits. Canadians are paying the price, with 40-year high inflation and now eight interest rate hikes over the past year. It is no wonder young families, seniors on a fixed income and new Canadians trying to make a fresh start in our blessed country are sitting worried at their kitchen tables.

If inflation and interest rate hikes were not enough to handle in this cost of living crisis, taxes are also up in this budget. This is an incredible thing during the worst cost of living crisis that Canadians have seen in a generation.

We know the carbon tax went up on April 1. That is increasing the cost of three essentials: home heating, gas for vehicles and groceries. It is also increasing an unmanageable tax burden on our farmers, the ones who produce our food.

Fortunately, members on this side of the House supported Bill C-234 from my hon. colleague from Huron—Bruce to remove the carbon tax from farm fuels, the heating and cooling of barns, and farm production. We hope the Senate passes it quickly.

Farmers feed our cities. Canada feeds the world. It is especially important now in the time of Putin's illegal war against Ukraine that Canada be there to feed the world. We should be encouraging this world-class and world-leading agriculture in our country and the agri-food industry in every way possible, not taxing it to death.

The excise tax also went up on April 1, despite a motion from this side of the House to pause that increase this year. Canada already has among the highest excise taxes in the world on wine, beer and spirits. We certainly have some outstanding wineries. There is one in my riding. There are many just down the road in Niagara. There are some cideries and craft breweries. They are being punished by this escalator tax. In fact, this is hampering their competitiveness. That is a shame.

I am running out of time, so I want to touch very briefly on the third area where I think the budget is failing, which is bringing in homes that people can afford. For new Canadians and young people, the dream of working hard, staying focused on goals and achieving home ownership is fading. It is really sad to me that nine out of 10 people who do not have a home today have given up on the dream of home ownership.

We have seen under the Liberal government that down payments and mortgage payments have doubled. How is it possible to get into the market? I am the grandson of Dutch immigrants who came to Canada with nothing from war-torn Europe after World War II. They built a better life for their families by doing exactly that. They worked hard. They built a modest, middle-class life through hard work and sacrifice.

After eight years of the Liberal government, the dream that Canada is the land of hope and opportunity is no more. We know the CMHC said that Canada needs to build 3.5 million more homes to reach the projected number to restore affordability.

We are in a time when the cost of living crisis is ravaging many Canadian households. They need better than what is in the budget implementation act. Families are struggling, and 1.5 million or more are going to food banks. They need better. Our economy needs better.

Conservatives stand ready to deliver and unleash Canada's great potential for everyone.

Government Orders

• (2125)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I may be mistaken, but I believe I heard the member say that Conservatives ran surpluses under Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper. That statement could be no further from the truth. As a matter of fact, between Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper, there were only two surpluses in the entire time both prime ministers were around. The first was on the heels of Paul Martin and the surplus he left for Brian Mulroney. The second came in 2015 at the expense of slashing veterans services and selling shares of GM at bargain prices.

Once again I am learning a new revisionist history given to us by the Conservatives. No Conservative prime minister in the last three decades ran a surplus, with the exception of the two I just mentioned. Perhaps the member can inform the House as to where he is getting his data from. It is clearly not based on the reality of what actually happened.

• (2130)

Mr. Dan Muys: Madam Speaker, I think the member for Kingston and the Islands was not listening closely, as often happens. I said operating surpluses, not a surplus overall, which is true. That was articulated last Friday by my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets.

I would further note that the current government inherited a balanced budget from the previous government and has squandered it extraordinarily. We are all paying the price for that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about the fact that Canadian households have difficulty finding housing. That is a huge problem. He quoted the excellent study by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation showing that Canada needs to build 3.5 million units of all kinds in the next 10 years.

The Conservatives speak of fiscal virtue and reducing the deficit, but investments will have to be made in some areas. For example, Quebec needs 1.1 million housing units in the next 10 years. The private sector will build 500,000, but, one way or another, the government will have to participate in the construction of 600,000 more units in the next 10 years. We will have to spend on programs that work, which is not the case for the Liberals' programs at this time. The big national housing strategy provides \$78 billion over 10 years. A little over 100,000 housing units have been built in five years. That is a disaster.

How will the Conservatives solve this problem?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, of course housing is a huge need. As I cited, the fact that nine out of 10 young people and new Canadians in particular have given up on the dream of home ownership is incredibly sad in a country as rich as Canada, where for the entirety of our history, people have come to build a better life.

My friend referenced statistics from the CMHC, particularly with respect to his province. I would note that our approach is to remove

gatekeepers and red tape, which are adding hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cost of building homes. Thus, we can get those homes built to top up the supply for people and, obviously, increase the affordability of housing in Canada.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the question about housing. The member for Flamborough—Glanbrook just squeaked in the word “affordability” at the end. The real problem with building more houses is that we are not building more affordable houses.

I just had a housing round table in Penticton, and the city representative talked about how the city is building more housing units every day than it has ever built in history, but it has fewer affordable houses every day. That is because, naturally, the housing units that are being built are bought up by the people who can afford them. That will not bring prices down; it will make prices go up. Therefore, I would echo what the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert said, which is that we need to get the government involved in building hundreds of thousands of units of affordable housing.

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, when there is a shortage of 3.5 million houses, we need every type and size of house, whether a single, a semi-detached, a quad or the like. I know there have been investments into affordable housing under the previous government in my home community. My predecessor announced many of those in conjunction with the members of his party in their respective ridings. Obviously, that is something we will continue.

• (2135)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to a bill that is nothing less than miraculous, because it resurrects the woolly mammoth. This is not about an elephant, but about a woolly mammoth.

Like the mammoth, Bill C-47 is gigantic. Like the woolly mammoth, whose wool hides the dust, pollen and flowers to the great pleasure of scientists, Bill C-47 hides many surprises within its lines, and they are not the best surprises.

There are a few interesting measures, especially for tourism. However, a few of these measures have serious flaws that create some unfairness. Exceptionally, I am going to let the government boast about what its budget accomplishes. I am going to focus my speech on the major omissions.

Government Orders

The list of the omissions is quite long. There are no new investments in housing—even though it is more than just necessary, it is urgent. There is no increase to old age security for seniors aged 65 to 74. There is complete silence on the tax injustice affecting surviving spouses whose children receive an orphan benefit. There is nothing about improving the EI program. There is nothing about implementing anti-scab legislation. There is nothing about health transfers to make up for the federal disinvestment over the last 30 years, despite Quebec and the Canadian provinces having made that demand.

Certain elements are included in the budget, but good luck combing through the mammoth's wool to figure out who they will really impact or benefit. For example, I am thinking about greenwashing, the fiscal imbalance and the confirmation of King Charles III as Canada's head of state.

I will focus on only some of the points. Each of the points I will raise has a connection to the slogan “Investing in People”.

Very few people know about the reality I am about to describe, but it is heartbreaking. When a couple has children and one of the spouses unfortunately dies, the surviving spouse loses not only a life partner, but also the father or mother of the children and the person who helped financially. There were two people paying the bills, and now there is only one. What few people know is that the orphan's benefit that the children receive, if any, is considered income. If they are minors, this income is added to the surviving spouse's income. Thus, the surviving parent has to pay more taxes and receive fewer benefits because the government considers that the income of the orphans should be taxed to the surviving parents, which puts these people in a more financially difficult situation than they were already facing.

This is an injustice that has been known for years, and yet no federal government, Liberal or Conservative, has provided a concrete solution. The Liberal slogan about investing in people seems to imply, in this case, that the government has figured out how to take more money from people who are already in one of the most difficult situations life can throw at them.

Speaking of difficult situations, let us talk about lockouts imposed on workers by certain employers. This is the case for longshoremen at the Quebec City port. For the past six months, in Quebec City, longshoremen see scabs pass under their noses and do their jobs in their stead. It is frustrating and appalling for these workers for different reasons.

First, in Quebec, legislation prohibiting the use of scabs by companies dates back to 1977, the year of my birth. That was 46 years ago. We say that Quebec is visionary, progressive and ahead of Canada in many respects and our anti-scab legislation is one such example.

Currently, two bills have been tabled and we are waiting for them to be added to the agenda. The first was introduced by my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville and the second by the member from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who will have to make a choice sooner or later between all the bills he has introduced, since he will only be able to debate one of them.

Despite repeated requests from unions and workers, the government is not budging. There is nothing in the budget to address this, not even cross-country consultations to ensure that everyone agrees. There is nothing.

What does this mean for the people of Beauport—Limoilou, for those who live in proximity to ports in Quebec and Canada and what does this have to do with the budget?

● (2140)

It is important to note that the scabs do not have the same training as the longshoremen. Because they do not have the appropriate training, they are sometimes putting their lives at risk. There are more dangers to their health and safety but also to the health and safety of the other port employees. Does someone need to die crushed between the dock and a boat before the government will take action?

That does not make any sense. We need to recognize our longshoremen's expertise. The fact that these scabs do not have the same training increases the risk of handling errors. Such errors could lead to the release of volatile products, such as nickel or the red dust that made the headlines for years in Beauport—Limoilou, during transhipment.

In short, the environment and air quality are at risk in this situation because the federal government is 46 years behind the Quebec government in banning companies from using scabs. We have a government that claims to be proactive on environmental issues and to be investing in people, but the reality is that it is doing nothing on either of those fronts. Once again, the Liberals' slogan of “investing in people” actually seems to mean that the government is refusing to invest in workers and their rights or in environmental protection for the people in my riding.

I want to come back to the mammoth I mentioned at the beginning of my speech. I was saying that there were things hidden in its wool, and one of them is the fiscal imbalance. The government has announced a \$41-billion deficit, but what it is not saying is that it is making big announcements without being able to spend the money it announces. As a result, \$38 billion went unspent in 2020-21, and roughly the same amount went unspent in 2021-22. These two amounts combined not only erase the current deficit, but result in a surplus of tens of billions of dollars.

Some will say that is good news, but it is not, because while the government is squirrelling away taxpayers' money into its coffers, taxpayers are not receiving the services they are entitled to. Seniors 65 to 74 are not seeing their pension go up so that they can afford decent housing, food, drugs and so on. Keeping these tens of billions of dollars in the coffers is preventing desperately needed social housing from being built. Keeping these tens of billions of dollars in the coffers is preventing Quebec and the Canadian provinces from getting the health transfers they have been calling for for decades.

Government Orders

This is what we call the fiscal imbalance. The federal government fills up its coffers with tax money from Quebecers and Canadians, yet services that fall under Quebec and provincial jurisdiction suffer because their taxpayers' money is not being handed over. This imbalance is so great that Canada will have paid off all of the debt it has accumulated since 1867 in less than 30 years, while most Canadian provinces will be unable to balance their budgets. Canadian federalism is cannibalizing the very foundation of the country created in 1867.

In this case, the Liberal slogan “investing in people” actually seems to mean that the government is forgetting about workers who lose their jobs, seniors, people who need decent, affordable housing, and people who need health care.

Speaking of the Constitution, the mammoth budget bill is hiding something else under its woolly coat. It confirms that Charles III, King of England, is the head of state of Canada. There was not a word about that in the speech. Have the Liberals considered the fact that 56% want to abolish the monarchy? No, they have not. Is this what they mean by meeting needs and investing in people? I am not sure.

This budget will not go down in history as being the most effective for the people, particularly the people of Quebec. This budget once again opens the door for the federal government to interfere in areas that are not under its jurisdiction, while failing to properly look after those areas that are. It is like a neighbour who comes over to tell me how to clean my house, but who suffers from a compulsive hoarding disorder.

To sum up, there is an elephant behind this mammoth budget. The elephant in the room is that only Quebec independence will allow Quebecers to manage their own taxes in order to truly meet their needs.

• (2145)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I am sorry, but I will be asking my question in English.

[*English*]

It is late, and I am a little tired. The member spoke eloquently about issues facing workers and the need for anti-scab legislation. I know that our government is committed to delivering on that promise.

Will the member work with us to achieve those goals and vote for that legislation when it comes to fruition?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House since 2019. Since then, we have been saying that we will work together and collaborate on anything that is good for Quebec. If it is not good, it is not good; we will improve it, if possible.

That said, there is another mammoth in the room for workers. It is a blue whale. It is EI reform, which we are still waiting on, even though the program is over 50 years old.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for her thoughtful intervention.

I do agree with some points about the budget. One part, where the budget does not spend enough, or early enough, is on indigenous housing. It allocates \$4 billion, starting in 2024, but it would be over four years and spread across Canada.

Could the member share her thoughts on how we need to prioritize indigenous housing in Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, for years we have known that the first nations housing situation is extremely difficult and that nothing is being done. Almost nothing is being done about clean drinking water. In northern Quebec and Canada, the permafrost is melting, but nothing is being done to stop homes from sinking into the ground, although we know how to prevent this. The saddest thing is that first nations cannot even decide to build their own homes. The Indian Act requires that they receive authorization from the patriarchal federal government.

There are some things that must be changed in the budget concerning the consideration that first nations and Inuit people deserve.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the budget, the debt-to-GDP ratio continues to increase because of the current government's choices. Part of the debt consists of a credit for Quebecers' pensions. It is included in the calculation of the debt. It is a credit accruing to the government.

Does my colleague believe that it is fair to include Quebecers' pensions in the calculation of the national debt?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, people in Quebec pay taxes just like those in the rest of Canada do. They also pay for the Canada pension plan. Why is that considered a debt? That is an excellent question, because the money adds up.

As I was saying in my speech, there is a difference of tens of billions of dollars between the announcements that are made and the money that is actually spent. It all adds up. In less than 30 years, the fiscal imbalance will have cannibalized the budgets of the provinces, especially that of Quebec, but also those of the nine others, while Canada will have paid off all of the debts it has accumulated since 1867. That is rather outrageous.

Everyone should be aware of that, and something should be done about it.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for speaking at length about the importance of anti-scab legislation. Yes, Quebec was a leader in that regard. Thanks to an NDP government, British Columbia also has this type of legislation. We are pleased to force the Liberals to introduce a bill in that regard. They said that they would do it in 2023. I know that, in the past, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP have both introduced federal anti-scab bills.

Government Orders

I am wondering why my colleague thinks the government is dragging its feet on this and why it has not already introduced such a bill. We have been waiting and waiting, but the longshoremen in her riding cannot wait any longer.

• (2150)

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, a bill has already been introduced by the Bloc Québécois. My colleague will have to make a choice, since there are two bills on this subject. That said, I have a single phrase to offer, and it is in English, unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately for my colleagues: follow the money.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I were to give any advice to a Canadian who wanted to understand where our country is financially right now, and perhaps understand the credibility of the performance of the current Liberal government, I would tell them to not read the most recent budget. Instead, what I would encourage them to do, would be to just read the one from last year and perhaps some of the independent audits that have been done on the government's financial performance.

It was just last year that the Liberals said they were finally getting tough on spending and on the country's budget. They said they were going to balance the budget in five years. They said the deficit would go down, and they used some pretty big firm words about fiscal anchors and red lines. Here we are a year later, and they broke every single one of those metrics.

After eight years of Liberal government, and after all those years of budgets, Canadians are fed up with the broken promises, and they are fed up with the doubling down by the Liberals and the NDP on the same failed approach that created the mess we are currently facing in this country with government spending, the cost of living and the inflationary pressures Canadians in every part of this country are facing in every aspect of their lives.

It is important that, when we talk about a budget, we understand and define why we are here in the first place. With many of the measures the government would try to take credit for, the reality is that they are forced to introduce them because of the problems they created. We have a 40-year high in inflation, and we still have food costs that are at double-digit increases year by year. Housing prices have doubled. What is absolutely painful for millions of Canadians on top of that is the fact that rent has doubled. Now, as interest rates have skyrocketed at a near unprecedented level, we are seeing mortgage payments doubled in this country.

If we add up the Liberals' budgets, their strategies and their plans, there is one clear conclusion: Every time the Liberals and NDP touch something, they spend record amounts, and they make the problem worse.

The interesting thing is that in the lead-up to the budget, there was a tiny part of me that was a little naive and thought maybe the Liberals finally and truly got it. It was the finance minister who went out in the days leading up to it, after years of our leader saying that, when the government drives up debt and deficits and prints half a trillion dollars over the course of a few years, it adds to and creates inflation. The Liberals denied it, and finally in the lead-up

to the budget, they admitted it. They said they needed to rein in their spending and get their fiscal house in order to make sure they were not inflaming inflation further. This was a little ironic after two years of them denying it.

However, when the Liberals tabled the budget, the finance minister did not even listen to what she had said the week before while out on a tour previewing the budget. The deficit went up. There is over \$40 billion in new spending, debt and deficit this year alone. It was supposed to go down, but it went up. There is new spending of \$4,200 per family.

The Auditor General has said several times that the government will try to claim it had to add and double. The Prime Minister and the Liberals had to add more to our national debt in eight years than every other previous prime minister combined because of COVID, yet it was the independent Auditor General who called them out and said there were billions upon billions of dollars in increased spending because the Liberals cannot control their budgets. There was \$15 billion found that was deemed fraudulent. The response from the government was that it was not worth going after.

If someone got a bill from CRA for \$79.82, they had better make that payment by the end of the month, or the CRA is going to start coming after them and mailing them repeatedly until they pay, yet the Liberals let \$15 billion out the door and tell Canadians that it is not even worth it. That is the reason the financial mess is happening here in Ottawa. After eight years, Canadians believe there is not a shred of fiscal responsibility left on that side of the aisle.

• (2155)

I want to talk tonight about interest rates. They are going up after the government, the finance minister, the Prime Minister and the governor of the Bank of Canada all said that they would not. They actually worried that, because they were spending so much, they were going to have deflation and not inflation. Not only were they wrong, but we have 40-year highs in inflation and some of the fastest increases in modern times.

Here is the thing that I want to let Canadians know when they understand what this budget is all about and how it is painful to our economy and to households in multiple ways. When interest rates go up, what many Canadians see is the pain of mortgage payments.

When the Liberals came into power in 2015, the average mortgage payment in this country was about \$1,400 per month. Now, because of the mess they have created, interest rates have gone up and mortgage rates have gone up. The average right now for a mortgage in this country for a Canadian family or individual is \$3,100 a month. Rent for a one-bedroom unit only a few years ago, when the Liberals came into power, was \$973. Now, the average for a one-bedroom unit in this country is over \$1,700 per month. At the same time, when the price of gas, the price of food and every other metric of a family budget is going up, families are now forced to find hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of dollars more per month to keep a roof over their heads.

However, the double whammy of interest rates that I want to highlight is that there is another part. The government has a mortgage debt of sorts, which is our national debt. It has now bloomed to \$1.2 trillion. That is \$81,000 in debt for every Canadian household in this country. Our debt, as I mentioned, has doubled in the last five years, but there is a problem where interest rates are a gut punch to taxpayers in two ways. I talked about people's family budget and how it is impacting them, but as a taxpayer, the cost to service our national debt is skyrocketing as well.

Just two years ago, the payments for the interest on the national debt were \$24.5 billion dollars. That is just the interest payments and not paying it down in any way. It is a serious, major payment. This year, in the Liberals' own budget, because they have added so much to our debt and because they have allowed and caused interest rates to go through the roof with their inflationary spending, we will spend nearly \$44 billion this year on just servicing the interest on our national debt. That is a major step in the wrong direction.

I will say this tonight, and not only to the government but, shamefully, to the NDP: Not only are they going along with the budget, but they are also adding more deficit and more debt. They are increasing taxes. The carbon tax is going up. There is more money coming off of people's paycheques at the end of every month. They are making the problem worse, not better. The NDP continues to prop the Liberals up every single step of the way, and not just in financial policy that is bad for this country, but also in the cover-ups of the numerous ethical scandals the government is facing.

I am proud that, on this side of the aisle, we have a leader and a party proposing ideas about capping spending with dollar-for-dollar savings. For every dollar of proposed new spending, we would find a dollar of savings. When the number of housing starts in this country is the lowest of the G7, when it is costing so much and we are getting further behind, we need to remove gatekeepers and tie federal money to infrastructure funding and the amount of housing units being built. We need to scrap the carbon tax, which would make life more affordable and lower the cost of living in every part of this country for every Canadian.

Enough is enough. After eight years, it is time for a change, and I am anxious to get out there and let Canadians know what that alternative is.

S. O. 52

EMERGENCY DEBATE

• (2200)

[English]

CRISIS IN SUDAN

The Deputy Speaker: It being 10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the crisis in Sudan.

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

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank your office for granting us the opportunity to have this emergency debate on the tragic situation unfolding in Sudan.

I also want to thank all the members who are here tonight. I know the hour is late and there are many issues competing for our attention, but I think we all understand how important it is to be engaged with global events in general and to recognize the nature of the crisis in Sudan in particular. Indifference to global events undermines our own security. Indeed, the best security for our freedom here at home is our investment in the cause of freedom everywhere and our willingness to stand in solidarity with those who are struggling, while also learning the lessons that we can from their experience.

I want to start my remarks this evening with a brief summary of the situation in Sudan, as well as share some reflections on key lessons that we can learn and the actions that we should be taking in response.

In December 2018, I connected with members of Edmonton's Sudanese community who wanted more support from parliamentarians for a nascent democratic revolution in their country of origin. Honestly, when I first heard from them I was surprised at the idea of a democratic revolution in Sudan. At the time, Sudan had been ruled for 30 years by the same dictator, Omar al-Bashir.

Notably, al-Bashir was indicted for genocide by the International Criminal Court while he was still in office. Indeed, he was a terrible leader. Instead of helping Sudan realize its incredible potential, he divided the country, committed numerous unspeakable atrocities and sought to redirect any of the country's wealth towards himself and his family. The country is still dealing with the legacy of his horrific, divisive and violent rule.

However, in late 2018 and early 2019, the people of Sudan boldly took to the streets to demand change. The heroes of this revolution risked everything to demand the recognition of their inherent human dignity and human rights. Human rights do not come from government. They are inherent in human beings, which is why we call them "human" rights.

S. O. 52

In many countries around the world, we have seen these kinds of heroic, civilian-led democratic revolutions where, incredibly, under conditions of unspeakable terror, a critical mass of people take to the streets in protest and succeed in overthrowing a dictator.

Many members are today following the “Women, Life, Freedom” movement in Iran, and I think there are many similarities between that movement in Iran today and what happened in Sudan in 2018 and 2019. There are many other parallels that we could speak about.

During the revolution in Sudan, I also had a chance to meet with members of the Sudanese community in St. Catharines, along with then Conservative candidate Krystina Waler. Krystina is Ukrainian and was involved in supporting the revolution of dignity, which ousted Yanukovich in Ukraine. I recall how we discussed the similarities between those democratic revolutions and how diaspora communities here in Canada can support those fighting for democracy in their countries of origin.

This kind of comparative political discussion that can happen in Canada among diaspora communities who are working to support justice and freedom in their countries of origin are indeed some of my favourite conversations to be a part of, with Canadians from different cultural backgrounds sharing insight about how to support these kinds of freedom movements in their countries of origin.

There are often other connections, speaking of the revolution in Sudan and efforts in Iran. One of the grievances that was involved in the revolution of Sudan was the fact that people from Sudan, child soldiers, were being sent to fight in the conflict in Yemen, which is the result of the negative influence in the region associated with Iranian regime.

We can learn so much, and we can learn from listening to and working with diaspora communities. Those communities also engage and learn from each other's experience. In Ukraine, Iran, Georgia and Sudan, we have seen citizen-led democratic movements that have led to dramatic, earth-shattering change. These movements have happened because unarmed women and men have been willing to stand in front of tanks and say no.

Of course, the success of such movements is not inevitable, and there are often setbacks, such as the brutal massacre of civilians in Tiananmen Square and the failure of the Syrian revolution to deliver democratic change. These and other examples show that those who take to the streets for democratic change cannot know what the outcome will be. There was no inevitability in the course of history. People can only do their part to try to steer the future of their country towards freedom and justice.

• (2205)

These movements show us that, while there is no inevitable trajectory to history, there is a universal aspiration for justice and freedom that reflects the universal nature of the human creature. We as human beings are meaning-seeking, justice-seeking and freedom-seeking creatures, whether in Canada, Sudan or anywhere else.

I was inspired by the stories I heard in 2018 and 2019. I was inspired by the interim success achieved by Sudan's democracy movement at ousting Omar al-Bashir. However, the struggle has

continued. Following his removal, the people have not yet been able to realize their desire for truly civilian-led government, justice for past atrocities and effective democratic rule-of-law-oriented institutions.

The challenges Sudan continues to face demonstrate two universal truths. One is that people, regardless of history or cultural context, aspire to live in genuine freedom. The second is that history matters and that a people cannot make a perfect, complete break with their past. There is no good way to wipe the slate completely clear. There will always be transitional struggles to build new institutions out of the shells of old.

In this case, one of the defining challenges is that the Sudanese military had created a kind of parallel military force during the period of al-Bashir's rule, called the RSF. The RSF was a kind of organizational successor to the Janjaweed militia, associated with horrific atrocities in Darfur and elsewhere. Both the Sudanese military and the RSF have been responsible for horrific violence. There are no so-called good guys between these two military factions, but the legacy of the creation of this parallel military structure is that rivalry has grown up between them and between those who lead them.

At the hands of both the RSF and the Sudanese military, the people of Sudan have been the victims. At times these violent groups have joined forces to suppress the Sudanese people, but today they are violently opposing each other, and the people of Sudan are caught in the crossfire. Either way, the Sudanese people are the heroes of this story, and they have also been the victims as a result of violence from both of these competing rival military factions.

Just to back up a bit again, in 2019, the Sudanese community that I met with here in Canada wanted us to be more actively engaged with events in Sudan by expressing our support for their movement, calling for freedom and democracy and indeed emphasizing the universality of those ideas, or at least the aspiration for them. I have found universally that those involved in these movements feel that expressions of support from parliamentarians and governments make a real difference. Of course, there are other tools we can use, such as the use of sanctions to punish human rights abusers and deter future abuses. However, at a minimum, paying attention to and expressing support for these movements matters. It matters to the people who are involved in them, and it matters to their supporters throughout the country and around the world. Our governments and those of us here in Parliament must always be willing to have the courage to express our support for these democratic movements.

S. O. 52

In the spring of 2019, in the midst of protests, al-Bashir was ousted from power and a transitional military council was created. When protesters demanded a complete transition to civilian rule, the military, along with the RSF, undertook a horrific massacre known as the “Khartoum massacre”, during which over 100 protesters were killed. This was followed by a renewed negotiation between the democracy movement and the military, which eventually led to a temporary power-sharing agreement.

I think the challenge has always been, though, that it is hard to have a functioning power-sharing transitional mechanism when the military refuses to change and refuses to be accountable for its crimes and to recognize the inherent right of people to choose their own leaders. The military seized power again in 2021 and has not stopped refusing accountability or hurting the Sudanese people. Sudanese democratic leaders want to see the creation of one normal military under civilian direction and accountable for its actions, not two militaries that are accountable to no one and that are fighting each other.

Sudan's civilian leaders need to continue the work of transition, but they need our support. We need to respond to the current crisis of seeming civil war between the country's two militaries, but in the long run we need to support the Sudanese people in every way we can as they seek to finish the work they started in December 2018. I am calling on the government, as it responds to the current crisis, to not forget about the long term and to engage with the Sudanese people and the Sudanese diaspora here in Canada to find and use the tools available to indeed help the people of this country complete the work they have started.

● (2210)

As I said earlier, there are a number of key lessons. We can see that there is a universal aspiration for freedom and democracy that exists regardless of place, time and cultural context. We also see that history matters, because the past shapes the kinds of interests and institutions that have to be managed as part of any transition. It will be up to the people of Sudan to figure out how to walk that road, how to struggle forward in the midst of all these challenges, to try to realize their just and right aspirations. However, those of us here in Canada have both an interest in that and a moral obligation to do what we can to help them along that path.

In the current situation, as violence has broken out between these two rival military organizations and as civilians are caught in the crossfire, Canada has taken steps to evacuate Canadian diplomatic staff and other Canadians who are present in this country. I look forward to hearing updates from the government during tonight's emergency debate about those efforts. This debate is important because it gives parliamentarians the opportunity to speak about these issues, but it also provides the government with the opportunity to give a necessary update to the House about the efforts that are under way. We will expect continuing updates from the government as these efforts unfold. We must continue to be engaged with the events in Sudan, but our staff obviously must be able to do so from a place of safety.

I want to clearly highlight for the government as well that we believe it has an obligation to support any locally engaged staff, to the greatest extent possible. Media reports last summer suggested that

the Government of Canada did not properly inform locally engaged staff in Ukraine about the risks to them, even though those staff were likely at a much greater risk because of their work for Canada. In Afghanistan, Canada failed to effectively assist all of those who worked with Canadian troops, even though we should have had enough time to plan and prepare. In this case, of course, we acknowledge that Canada has had much less in the way of lead time, but we want to clearly underline that from our perspective, there is a critical importance for Canada to live up to its obligations to support and assist locally engaged staff.

In the time I have left, I want to highlight a number of related issues that I think are important for the attention of the House as well.

The first is the role of the Wagner Group. The Wagner Group is officially a Russian private military organization, but in effect, it is a tool of foreign policy for the Putin regime. We have seen how the Wagner Group has been used and involved in horrific atrocities in Ukraine, but perhaps less known is the Wagner Group's role in various contexts in Africa. The Wagner Group has been hired by various states in Africa to be involved in internal conflicts or suppression of militant groups or terrorist groups in those countries. However, in the process, the Wagner Group has itself been complicit in horrific atrocities in various African countries. This has, at the same time, involved the extension of the Russian government's influence in those contexts.

I am deeply concerned about the Wagner Group and the way it is responsible for not only horrific violence but also extending the geostrategic influence of the Russian government and broadening its reach in certain contexts.

It is important to note, therefore, that while the rest of the world is talking about how to support the Sudanese people and address the violence that is undermining the democratic aspirations of the Sudanese people, the Russian foreign minister is effectively trying to sell the services of the Wagner Group to various interests in these conflicts. He has come out with a statement saying that authorities have a right to use the services of the Wagner Group. This underlines, again, the horrific mentality we see from the Russian regime, but it should also underline for us the risks of the Wagner Group and the way it is both responsible for atrocities and involved in the potential extension of the Putin regime's influence in Africa and elsewhere.

S. O. 52

• (2215)

Recognizing some of these risks, I am glad the foreign affairs committee is proceeding with a study on the actions of the Wagner Group. I also think it is important for the government to act on a unanimous motion that was passed in this House calling for the listing of the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization. All parties supported that. It was unanimous. Our party has also, directly in statements, called for the listing of the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization, recognizing its involvement in the genocide in Ukraine and the role it is playing in various other contexts. We should be firm about recognizing that this is a terrorist group involved in terrorist activity. Part of what we can do to contribute to the movement toward peace and security not only in Sudan but also in other troubled contexts in the region is to list the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization.

Therefore, I want to use this opportunity as well, recognizing the statement of the Russian foreign minister, to say that the government should act swiftly to list the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization. These will certainly be questions we will be emphasizing during the foreign affairs committee's study on the role of the Wagner Group.

I also want to say that, as the government thinks about various aspects of our foreign policy, I am hopeful to see the swift passage of Bill C-281, which is currently being debated at the foreign affairs committee. This bill would significantly strengthen the Government of Canada's obligations around responding to human rights issues. It would create, for instance, a parliamentary trigger whereby a committee could recommend that certain individuals be sanctioned, and the government would be obliged to respond to those recommendations. It also requires the government to provide an annual report to Parliament on its work advancing human rights. Tools like these, which strengthen accountability to Parliament around human rights issues, would be very useful for us as parliamentarians, as we would be able to drive the government to make a stronger response to human rights challenges around the world, in Sudan and elsewhere.

Finally, I want to use this opportunity to make the point that Canada should be strengthening its engagement with Africa. I see Africa, in general, as being critical to our future. If we look at this demographically, there is dramatic population growth in Africa while we are seeing population declines in other parts of the world. Africa has immense potential and a young population, and we should be engaging the various peoples of Africa to a greater extent. It seems to me that sometimes when we see these kinds of freedom and democracy movements happening in one continent versus another, they get less or more attention. I want to see all of us, not only parliamentarians but Canadian society in general, recognize the importance and potential of Africa and the universality of its aspirations to live in peace, freedom and democracy. We should strengthen our engagement with it.

The government recently released an Indo-Pacific strategy, and shortly thereafter a colleague and I wrote an op-ed emphasizing the need for the government to develop a strong Africa strategy that responds to its potential, recognizes the need for greater engagement and recognizes the efforts of hostile regimes to strengthen their en-

agement and influence in Africa, which underlines the importance of our engagement and presence there.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to thank you again for granting this emergency debate and for giving us the opportunity to talk about this important situation in Sudan and underline the fact that all of us should be deeply inspired by the heroic courage we have seen from people in countries like Sudan who are standing up and risking their lives to fight for their fundamental human rights, things that we in Canada often take for granted. The people in Sudan, Iran and other such contexts are risking their lives to fight for the recognition of their basic human dignity, their fundamental human rights. The least we can do is pay attention, engage and support them, in the short and long term, in that journey.

We need to hear from the government on what it is doing to respond to the immediate crisis and assist Canadians and others with connections to Canada, like locally engaged staff, in the midst of this crisis, and also, in a more long-term way, what it is doing to support the democratic aspirations, freedom movement and realization of the full aims of the revolution that was started in 2018. It may be a long road ahead, but we need to be there to stand with and support the people of Sudan.

• (2220)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a keen scholar of human rights and geopolitics, and I always enjoy his speeches on those issues. I am also quite interested in progress in Africa and, like the member and all Canadians, am very dismayed by the crisis in Sudan and the great setbacks that country and the people of Sudan are experiencing right now.

I am proud our government has taken a keen interest in the economy, peace and humanitarian efforts in Africa. Our Prime Minister has been to Africa more times than any previous prime minister, I believe. I have been to Africa a number of times as well, on humanitarian trips, and it really does put a keen focus on why we do international development in this country. The main reason is that we can.

I ask the member what it is that is unique about the crisis in Sudan. We have seen crises similar to this one in other geopolitically unstable nations over the years. How is this one different? What are experts saying and what, from his perspective, is Canada's role in the coming days and weeks?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, in a way, the member's question could open many different avenues for me to go down in response.

We need to think about what is particular to Sudan and we also need to think about the geopolitical context. We need to think about both of those things at the same time. What is particular to Sudan is, of course, the specific circumstances I outlined. There is the fact that there are two rival military organizations fighting each other at the same time as there are the aspirations of the democracy movement in Sudan wanting peace, freedom and democracy. The particular dynamic of the two militaries is particular to that context.

The wider situation is that there is Lavrov, and there are other hostile actors, looking at Sudan and trying to take advantage of the situation instead of trying to help and stand with the Sudanese people.

The great advantage we have as free democracies, when we are prepared to use it, is that we can always be on the side of the people. That is what we should be focused on, not fomenting conflicts or picking sides between leaders. What does it mean to be on the side of people whose aspirations are the same? They want to live in peace. They want to live in freedom. They want to see their fundamental dignity recognized.

Canada needs to be a player with a full spectrum of foreign policy tools: international development, human rights advocacy and a strong military as well. All these things are part of our capacity to be ready to respond when crises emerge.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Sudan is certainly of great concern. What adds to the concern is that, right now, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security needs additional funds precisely so he can help people not only in Sudan, but in other parts of the world as well.

A decade or so ago, there were about 15 countries that were problematic and where the situation was dangerous for the people. Now there are approximately 40. However, so far, Canada has been mum about supporting the Secretary General's actions around the world, and that is making the situation worse in Sudan in particular.

Does my colleague have a comment on that?

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about instability in many countries around the world. I agree; we are living through a time when the world feels, and in many ways is, more unstable. There is a proliferation of conflicts. There is also a proliferation of humanitarian crises. In the midst of those challenges, we need a strong and confident Canada on the world stage. We also need to have confidence in our system and in the universal aspiration for freedom and democracy. We need to recognize that Canada can be a voice for those principles, those core ideas, those universal ideas on the world stage, and we need to work with like-minded countries to try to expand the space for those values. The best security for our freedom is the expansion of freedom. We need a foreign policy that is rooted in commitment to fundamental principles.

• (2225)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for walking us through many of his opinions and facts related to what is happening in Sudan.

Today, someone in my community in Edmonton Griesbach came into my office asking for help. They commented on the fact that their relative was in Sudan now and they had no answers to share with them, other than the short answers that were given by the government.

In particular, if we were to find a collective solution among us today, what would be, in the member's mind, the top solution in or-

der to ensure that folks like this person's relatives can actually find safety and security elsewhere, particularly here in Canada?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to hear from the government tonight. That is one of the critically important aspects of this emergency debate. We do not have a lot of time, but we have time to hear from every party, including the government. We are going to hear, I hope, more detailed updates on the work the government is trying to do to assist those who are in a very challenging situation, those with connections to Canada, as well as to support the Sudanese people in general. However, certainly for those who are Canadian citizens and those with connections to Canada, we have an obligation to facilitate evacuation, where it is necessary, for the security of those people.

We all agree that the government needs to take action. I want to be fair to the government in terms of saying this is probably not one of those situations where there was a long-running expectation of something happening, but, at the same time, we need to hold the government accountable to ensure that it follows through and is able to deliver quickly on the need to assist people.

As I said in my comments, there is that short-term need and there are also the long-term issues.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to your office for granting this emergency debate and to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his role in making sure that this happened.

I would like to follow up on the question with respect to the short-term implications. Estimates from Global Affairs Canada are that there are about 1,600 Canadians in Sudan right now. Can the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan share more about what he has been doing? In my view, we should be working across party lines at times like these to find solutions together. What have he and the Conservative Party been doing to work with the governing party to find constructive solutions to get Canadians out?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I definitely agree that we need to work across party lines in cases like this and other such crises.

I will say that in the opposition, we do not have the levers of government at our disposal, so it is up to the government to use the tools that are available to it in terms of eyes and ears on the ground, diplomatic staff and so forth. We are keen to play the role that we can in supporting those efforts and, indeed, in hearing updates from the government and challenging them.

I look forward to hearing that update from the minister. We will certainly be asking questions of the minister about what efforts are being undertaken and what more can be done.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents who have friends and family in Sudan right now, I want to thank my hon. colleague for requesting this important debate.

S. O. 52

With food and water dwindling, I am really curious to hear the member's thoughts on some proactive actions the government could be taking in Sudan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for raising this issue in question period yesterday and also for highlighting the water crisis. I know that an urgent part of the crisis is access to essential supplies, including water. That has been a major challenge in light of the situation. I do think the government needs to look urgently at how it can support civil society organizations that are working to provide that urgent humanitarian assistance.

Of course, there is no glossing over the fact that any such humanitarian support would have to be delivered in an extremely challenging security context. In fact, the justice committee right now is debating a bill precisely on this issue, on how we can work to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance in contexts where there are either terrorist organizations involved or the security situation makes the dynamics very difficult.

The government needs to be working to provide that support that is urgently required. Water is a critical part of it. There is a very challenging context here, but we need to be doing all we can to support the people of Sudan.

• (2230)

[Translation]

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, on this wonderful evening and at this late hour, to rise to speak to this issue and answer my colleagues' questions. I will be sharing my time.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his work and his interest in this issue. I thank him for having initiated this debate on the very serious and difficult situation in Sudan. It has been just a few days since the crisis began. We have been working hard since last week to support Canadians on the ground and to find a diplomatic solution with several countries. I encourage every member from every party in the House to recognize the important efforts of our diplomats to respond to this crisis. I encourage them to ensure that we can support them in the coming days and weeks.

Canadians are closely following what is happening in Sudan and, of course, Canada is concerned about the armed clashes that continue despite the ceasefire that was negotiated a little earlier yesterday.

The Sudanese people deserve to be safe and live in peace. As a friend and partner, Canada has long supported the Sudanese. That is why we are calling for an end to the violence and we are standing by the people of Sudan in their quest for peace.

That is also why we remain determined to support the Sudanese people in their desire to build a democratic future and start a transition to a government led by civilians.

[English]

Earlier this month, we still saw signs of incremental progress towards an agreement on a transition to a civilian-led democracy. We were hopeful that the framework political agreement of December 2022 would be finalized, establishing a brighter path forward. Unfortunately, this progress was interrupted by violence, against the

wishes of the Sudanese people, who deserve to live in peace, security and democracy.

Canada unreservedly condemns the current violence and its impact on civilians, medical facilities and civilian infrastructure. We call for accountability of those who spread violence, including sexual violence. We are also greatly concerned about the safety of more than 1,700 Canadians currently on the ground in Sudan.

[Translation]

When the violence erupted, our Global Affairs Canada team was proactive. We called on the two warring factions to accept a ceasefire. We were greatly concerned to see the escalation of violence, which resulted in hundreds of casualties and thousands of injured people. I am also very concerned by the fact that this conflict risks creating insecurity in the entire region and could have devastating humanitarian consequences.

The Sudanese people deserve civilian political leaders who will be able to get the country back on its feet and meet the aspirations of its citizens. Canada already supports these efforts, especially as a member of Friends of Sudan, a group that supports the transition to democracy. It also supports women working for peace.

In addition, we have supported the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for a very long time. These two institutions ensure the development and implementation of solutions by and for Africa in order to face the challenges on the continent.

[English]

When the violence began, Canada responded immediately. At that very moment, I was in Japan with my G7 counterparts and we immediately began coordinating our response. This continued to a broadened level and eventually evolved, forming an international coordination group. Over the past several days, I have also been in contact with my counterparts in Kenya, Egypt and the U.A.E. I have also been in contact with Germany and the U.S.

Earlier today, the Prime Minister spoke with the chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Faki. He had also spoken to Prime Minister Abiy, from Ethiopia, two days ago. I was in touch with the executive secretary of IGAD. I will continue these important conversations tomorrow and in the days to come.

• (2235)

[Translation]

All partners share the same concerns about the regional impact and the increased instability this situation is creating. Rogue actors cannot be tolerated, and Canada stands in solidarity with civilians committed to a democratic future for Sudan.

Yesterday, I welcomed the announcement of a 72-hour ceasefire and urged that it be implemented and respected. Unfortunately, reports of violence throughout Sudan continued today. Neither side seems willing to negotiate, despite numerous offers to mediate by regional leaders, the African Union and the IGAD.

[English]

We have all seen how quickly the situation has deteriorated with fighting increasingly catching civilians in crosshairs, and with limited or no access to basic necessities and medical care. This crisis is an important one and I want to make sure that Canadians know that we are on it.

Along with my cabinet colleagues, Global Affairs Canada officials and our diplomats stationed in embassies around the world, we are working with the Sudanese government, allies, like-minded partners and neighbouring countries to coordinate a response to this crisis. To all those Canadians in Sudan, please register online on the Global Affairs website. To all those with family, friends or loved ones on the ground, please encourage them to do likewise.

While we had to temporarily suspend operations of our embassy in Khartoum, our Canadian diplomats and their families are continuing to work from a safe location. We are also taking care of our locally engaged staff still on the ground. They are all accounted for. They will be receiving their pay and benefits and we are checking on them on a daily basis. We are also planning to support the evacuation of those locally engaged staff who are interested in going to a safe, nearby country.

We are also continuing to provide around-the-clock consular services to Canadians in need in Sudan through the emergency watch and response centre, which is staffed 24-7. I know some of them must be watching us right now. I thank them for their work. We are there to help them and it is my job to support them as well.

I am getting briefings multiple times a day and I want to make sure that Canadians know that this is definitely my priority. In fact, we have contacted every single Canadian who has registered with Global Affairs.

[Translation]

Consular officials have contacted all registered Canadians to inform them of their travel options. We continue to proactively provide information and advice. Any Canadian in need of consular support should register on the Global Affairs Canada website. Of course, we continue to advise Canadians to avoid all travel to Sudan.

At this time, our consular officials are actively coordinating our efforts with several countries to secure seats on flights from Sudan to neighbouring countries.

S. O. 52

We are grateful to our partners such as Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Sweden and the United Kingdom for their assistance.

[English]

Given the exceptional circumstances of the situation on the ground, we are providing emergency assistance for those who wish to leave Sudan for a safer location nearby as well. We are also helping not only Canadian citizens, including dual nationals, but also permanent residents and their family members. That is very important.

As of today, we have 1,700 people registered. Roughly 550 have requested assistance and more than 100 Canadians have already left. Thanks to our work with allies and neighbouring countries, evacuation efforts of Canadians have begun and will continue as long as the situation permits. This is all done in close collaboration with members of the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as the hard-working staff at IRCC and CBSA.

Our missions in the region also continue to provide support to these efforts. This is truly an all-hands-on-deck effort, and I encourage all members in this House to recognize the significant work being done. As the situation evolves, our government will continue working tirelessly to support Canadians in need.

Once we can ensure the proper provision of services, and the safety and security of our diplomats, we hope to resume the embassy operations in Khartoum. Canada will also continue to stand in solidarity with the people of Sudan as they strive for peace, justice and a democratic future. I am ready to take all questions.

• (2240)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke about Canadians who are in Sudan right now who require assistance. There are also permanent residents in Canada, in my riding in particular, who have family waiting to get into Canada. They have already applied. It is a 40-month wait list for a permanent resident to get their family to join them in Canada.

Would she consider expediting some of those applications so people who have family in Sudan can make sure their loved ones are safe and they have a path forward to come to Canada?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question.

First and foremost, yesterday my colleague, the Minister of Immigration also announced very important measures regarding the Sudanese people in Canada who, of course, would not have to go back to Sudan because of what is going on right now. Of course we can provide the specifics of these measures to our colleagues. This is public information.

S. O. 52

Second, we are making sure to look at what we could do to support the Sudanese people who are affected, not only through further immigration measures that would be announced but also through humanitarian help. We will have more to say on this in the coming days.

I know that my colleague, the Minister of Immigration is proactively looking at this question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, emergency debates like tonight's are important because they reassure people that the government is doing its job when a crisis arises like the one we are discussing tonight.

We talked about the long term. We know that Canada is not a military or economic power. However, it can play a humanitarian role and provide international development assistance. The UN asks countries like Canada to allocate 0.7% of their GDP to international development. This government is not even at 0.3%. It is doing less than Stephen Harper's government, which was at 0.33%. I am not kidding. When it comes to international development, we are falling short of what the Conservative government did from 2011 to 2015. There is a humanitarian crisis on the horizon in Sudan, and it will be very serious. Despite that, Canada is not doing its part. Will we eventually make the monetary contribution to international development that the UN is asking for?

OECD countries are sitting at 0.42%. Canada is at 0.27%. How can we be worse than Stephen Harper's government when it comes to international development?

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, regarding what is happening in Sudan, it goes without saying that we will continue to support the Sudanese people. We have done so for years. We have invested in humanitarian assistance in Sudan, but of course the situation is such that we need to step up and provide additional assistance, not only to the Sudanese people, but also to the neighbouring countries that are going to be affected.

We already know, for example, that hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees are currently on the borders of Chad. It is the same in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Egypt. We know that every time there is a conflict, a civil war as is the case in Sudan, that has repercussions in other countries.

In short, my colleague can rest assured that, yes, we will respond to this crisis, as we have done many times before, whether it is to help people in Afghanistan or Ukraine or to help people dealing with climate change issues.

We will always step up.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her comments and some of the updates that I think many Canadians want to hear.

On the issue around immigration, there are many Canadians who have loved ones who are Sudanese. Some of them may have an application in to sponsor them to come to Canada for permanent resident status, and others may have an application for a temporary res-

ident visa. However, there are many others who have not had an application initiated.

The announcement from the Minister of Immigration has been completely silent about supporting Canadians who have loved ones in Sudan who have not had any process initiated to try to bring them to safety.

Would the minister support an immigration measure that would allow for Canadians with loved ones in Sudan to sponsor them to come to Canada?

• (2245)

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague is referring to the fact that the Minister of Immigration announced that Sudanese nationals could apply for an extension of their status in Canada, and move between temporary streams, allowing them to continue to study, work or visit family, free of charge.

I know that there is more to be done, to the member's point. In that sense, of course we are looking at different scenarios. I know my colleague, the Minister of Immigration is working on this and he has my full support.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Sudan is obviously extremely worrying to all of us. I must say that my heart goes out to the people of Sudan. What they are going through is truly tragic. It is hard to watch and hear the reports coming in. The conflict that has erupted is causing untold suffering in addition to a humanitarian crisis throughout the country, particularly in the capital of Khartoum where residents have reported being trapped in their homes for days due to the violence that is raging throughout the city.

Since the outbreak of fighting on April 15, there have been over 450 deaths and at least 4,000 who have been injured in Sudan, and the final figure is expected to be even higher. Compounding these challenges, at least 55 hospitals across the country have closed, which is deeply concerning to all of us as well.

Humanitarian and development partners who are usually at the forefront of supporting vulnerable populations are not unaffected. UN staff have been killed, and many UN and NGO staff and their families have been evacuated. Their operations and warehouses have been looted, and their mobility has been restricted. This has led partner organizations to suspend activities in multiple areas, which means partners like the World Food Programme will not be able to deliver their planned support to 7.6 million people.

This new pressure is coming on top of historically high levels of need, and conflict, political instability, natural disasters and poor economic conditions are all contributing to Sudan's complex humanitarian crisis with 15.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2023. Humanitarian needs are only expected to rise and displacement will grow if humanitarian organizations are not able to access populations in need.

We are seeing over 20,000 internally displaced people within Sudan already, with reports of previously displaced persons having to move to other camps to find refuge. We are also seeing people flee across borders. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other UN agencies are already reporting flows of refugees crossing the border into Chad and South Sudan, some of whom are returning to countries that they previously left as refugees. Chad alone is reporting more than 42,000 new arrivals in addition to the 407,000 existing refugees.

While a full assessment of needs resulting from the conflict remains impossible given ongoing hostilities, we know that the needs will be significant not only in Sudan but in the whole region. Global Affairs Canada remains in contact with international partners, and I know the minister has spoken to her counterparts at the G7 and is working with countries like Egypt, Ethiopia, the African Union and the Netherlands to assess the full impact on their operations and the scenarios that they need to be planning for. We are actively engaging and working with humanitarian partners and like-minded stakeholders to support a coordinated response when the situation permits.

In addition, Canada has allocated over \$30 million in humanitarian assistance to Sudan this year. This flexible funding will allow UN, the Red Cross and NGO partners to respond to the evolving needs. We are confident that our flexible humanitarian funding will also allow partners to respond to needs in the region. In 2023, we have allocated over \$100 million to support the humanitarian response in neighbouring countries, including the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

This afternoon, the Minister of International Development spoke with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and later this week, he will be speaking with other humanitarian leaders to ascertain how Canada can better respond to the conditions on the ground. This is part of a wide range of engagement undertaken by the Government of Canada, including the Prime Minister, with partners who have the same objective, which is, of course, a peaceful Sudan.

● (2250)

In addition to humanitarian assistance, Canada also provides development assistance, which helps to improve access to education, strengthen sexual and reproductive health and rights, support women's economic empowerment and reinforce the resilience of the poorest and most marginalized. In 2021 and 2022, Canada's development assistance to Sudan totalled approximately \$16 million.

Furthermore, yesterday the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced the Government of Canada will introduce new immigration measures to support Sudanese temporary residents who are currently in Canada and may be unable to return home due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in their country. This includes an extension of their status in Canada and the ability to move within the temporary streams. This means they can continue studying, working and visiting family, and it allows them the flexibility to stay in Canada. Canada will also waive passport and permanent resident travel document fees for citizens and permanent residents of Canada in Sudan who wish to leave. We are also prioritizing the processing of completed permanent residency applica-

S. O. 52

tions and temporary resident visas, including visitor visas for eligible immediate family members.

A real truce is needed to allow innocent people to evacuate from areas where fighting is taking place. We took note of the 72-hour ceasefire announced by Secretary Blinken, call for it to be fully respected and hope that calm can be extended further. Under challenging conditions, our teams and Canada's partners are preparing for various scenarios. Canada is working with these partners and like-minded stakeholders to support a coordinated and effective response.

Our flexible humanitarian funding is fit for purpose, as it will allow partners to respond to changing needs in Sudan and the region. Our partners are well positioned to support a rapid scale-up of operations, if and when needed. Together, we will continue to act.

I thank everyone for their attention, and I look forward to any questions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are here this evening, and it is indeed a rather sad evening. We certainly did not need another conflict in the world at this time. We just left the Tigray region and we are not yet sure that the conflict has ended. There is Haiti, where there is widespread violence. There is obviously Ukraine, Afghanistan and many other countries around the world.

We are talking about helping people. The first thing that comes to my mind is that in war-torn countries women and children are the first to suffer. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and my colleague just spoke about the flow of refugees to the border with Chad. We know that rape often occurs in refugee camps. There are these types of dangers.

My colleague spoke a bit about it, but what measures is Canada taking to prevent this type of crime, which is often committed in refugee camps in countries where there are conflicts like this?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I think obviously the situational awareness of what is happening on the ground is quite challenging, when we are dealing with a country that is experiencing such hostilities, so I think Canada has to continue to work on a coordinated response through its various partners on the ground. Obviously, communication channels can be challenged, but I know there are quite a few stories I am aware of with people fleeing the country. I have a personal story and relationship with three members of an international development organization that contacted me just a couple of days ago. They were trying to flee the country, so I know of their journey. There are three of them from an organization called Inter Pares that was stuck in Khartoum in a hotel, and they were really looking to get out of Sudan, and they were fearful for their lives. I found the consular services, despite the fact of the changing situation, have been quite good about helping those folks get out of Sudan, so I—

● (2255)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan

S. O. 52

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask if the government is considering using the tool of sanctions in the present context to hold accountable those who are involved in this violence and those who are involved in atrocities against civilians. Is the government contemplating the use of that tool at the present time to try to deter further violence against civilians?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's remarks and his commitment to advocating on this issue and looking to do whatever we can. I think we share that commitment in common, to ensure that the Sudanese people are supported.

Our government, as members heard from the minister this evening, is looking at every possible measure that may be a tool to help the Sudanese people in this situation. I cannot speak for the minister, obviously, but I think they are looking at all measures.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my previous comments, I spoke specifically about the requirement of ensuring that folks here in Canada and their loved ones in Sudan get the support they need and, in particular, about a constituent of mine who came to my office today, pleading for help for his family in Sudan right now. They need emergency support. They need to find safety.

What does the member from the Liberal bench have to say to constituents of mine and right across this country? When it comes to them and their families, how will they get to safety and when?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's passion, obviously advocating for his constituents. I know I feel the same about my constituents.

What I can say is that my experience working with the minister's office is that they have been quite responsive, including the parliamentary secretary. The consular services for people I have been helping to get out of Sudan have been quite good. In this case, the case that I know about, the individuals had to take a 34-hour bus ride to get to the port of Sudan and are now taking a ferry out, hopefully, sometime this evening to Saudi Arabia across the Red Sea, from where they will hopefully be able to fly home.

I would encourage people to use ROCA and make sure they are registered. I know that Global Affairs Canada has been reaching out. It has reached out to over 1,700 people who registered, with 573 who requested assistance. Over 100 people have gotten out so far. Obviously it is an ongoing effort. It is a difficult situation.

I feel my colleague's passion and fire for helping his constituents. I appreciate that very much.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, Waterloo region is home to over 700 Sudanese people and their families, with many more with connections in Sudan right now. People like Suha Osman, a Wilfrid Laurier alum, and 18 family members of hers are in Sennar right now fleeing air strikes. At a time when six diplomats were evacuated on Sunday, while Suha and her family are still in Sudan with no way out, it is hard not to have the sense that some lives seem more important than others.

Can the member for Whitby share more about what we all can do to ensure that every Canadian, all 1,700 who are in Sudan right now, gets to safety as soon as possible?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, again, I feel for every single person who may be stuck and wanting to get out of Sudan. I think the minister's office has been very good about setting up the coordinated response to get people out. We have to recognize that the situation is evolving. It is challenging; it is dangerous. We really have to work through our international partners and find people ways out that are safe.

I agree with the member that it is challenging. Certainly from different people's perceptions we can see things happening slower or faster, but I think we have to understand that it is a difficult situation and the minister's office is working through the partnerships that it has to do its very best.

● (2300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Spadina—Fort York.

I thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who called for an emergency debate today on the current crisis in Sudan.

As sad as these words are to say and hear, we have to know that civilians are always the first victims of armed conflicts. As I rise to speak in the House, the Sudanese people are being held hostage by two warring factions. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, announced yesterday that the army and the paramilitary groups warring in Sudan had agreed to a three-day ceasefire at the end of 10 days of deadly combat. Shortly afterward, they confirmed a truce to open humanitarian corridors and facilitate the movement of civilians.

Despite a slight lull, the situation for civilians remains unchanged on the 11th day of fighting. The streets are still deserted, military planes are flying over the capital, food shortages continue in the stores, the power is still out in some places, and access to water is becoming increasingly difficult.

Since Sudan became independent in 1956, this country's history has been nothing but a succession of military coups. The current conflict that opposes the two generals is yet another example of that. Foreign interventions have done little but fan the flames of this reciprocal mistrust, actually sparking clashes between the two camps. Over two million Sudanese refugees and displaced persons have already fled to neighbouring countries and hundreds of thousands more will follow. The escalating violence will only make the already dire humanitarian crisis even worse.

The conflict in Sudan began on April 15 following an attack by a branch of the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Rapid Support Forces or RSF. I will give a brief overview. Their objective is to take control of the country, following a political disagreement between the government and the RSF commander.

S. O. 52

This branch was created in 2013 by bringing together a number of militias to fight against rebel groups. A 2014 constitutional amendment gave the RSF the status of a regular force. Human Rights Watch was already targeting the RSF in 2014 and 2015 for its abuses against civilians, including murder and numerous acts of torture. RSF militia were particularly cruel to women and their families. They were often given orders to commit acts of unspeakable violence, as we often see in this type of situation.

Sudan is a country that has seen several conflicts, including two recent civil wars and an ongoing conflict in Darfur, which took place primarily between 2003 and 2020. The United Nations estimates that the conflict in Darfur has killed more than 300,000 people, and those massacres have been classified as genocide.

After Omar al-Bashir's regime was overthrown in 2019, General al-Burhan, the head of the armed forces who is currently facing off against General Hemedti, promised a democratic transition, but, of course, that never happened.

In December 2022, the two generals and 40 civilian groups signed an agreement detailing the democratic transition. However, disagreements persisted over this transition, and we know what happened next. On April 15, the RSF carried out a massive attack on strategic sites in order to take over Sudan's capital, sparking a humanitarian crisis and forcing thousands of civilians, including foreign nationals, to flee. For Khartoum residents, the lull observed in recent hours is not exactly a good sign.

According to several experts, both armies are reportedly taking advantage of the situation to move troops, stock up on weapons and reorganize in preparation to resume fighting after the announced truce. The fighting is likely to be much more deadly and difficult. Once again, civilians will be the first victims.

This is very bad news, and the death toll is already very high. According to a rough assessment, 420 people have been killed, including at least 273 civilians, and more than 3,700 people have been wounded in just a few days of fighting. Furthermore, it is believed that both armies are preparing for even bigger offensives.

Those who cannot escape now are trying to survive without water and electricity. They are facing food shortages as well as Internet and phone outages. These are men, women and children who have every reason to fear what lies ahead. Because of the fighting, many families are trapped with little or no access to the basic services that are essential to survival.

Humanitarian aid is essential, despite the obstacles that prevent NGOs from working safely on the ground. It must be said that Sudan already had one of the highest rates of child malnutrition in the world before the recent fighting broke out.

● (2305)

According to UNICEF, there are 600,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Even before the escalation of violence in Sudan, the humanitarian needs of children were very high. Three-quarters of them were living and continue to live in extreme poverty. Seven million children do not go to school. That is almost equal to the population of Quebec.

I have no qualms about recognizing the good deeds of the other parties in the House of Commons. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced yesterday that Sudanese nationals currently in Canada will be able to temporarily extend their stay here rather than returning home. It was the right thing to do, and it was done. Once these measures are in effect, Sudanese nationals will be able to apply for an extension of their status in Canada and switch permit streams free of charge. That is good news.

I am not shy about pointing out good deeds, but I am also not shy about asking questions. When will these measures come into force? It is not clear. We know what happens when we say it is time to act quickly. It took more than a year for Afghan nationals to get here. Why? It took more than a year to draft Bill C-41, which is currently being studied at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. We all agreed, and we are all aware of the requests the NGOs have been making for the past 18 months, but Canada still has not resolved the problem.

For those watching us, if any, I think it is important to reiterate what is set out in Bill C-41. Bill C-41 would amend the Criminal Code to create a regime for authorizing eligible persons to carry out, in a region that is controlled by a terrorist group, activities that otherwise would be prohibited under the Criminal Code. The bill assumes that the organizations have to seek authorization from Global Affairs Canada before conducting specific humanitarian activities or providing development aid in a region where that aid might directly or indirectly benefit terrorist groups in some way.

For example, right now, the Taliban, as the current de facto authority in Afghanistan, is likely to receive revenue from any payments such as taxes, import tariffs, airport fees and administrative fees. Such fees may be necessary to support international aid and conduct immigration and other activities. Any Canadian or person in Canada who makes or authorizes such payments may be contravening the Criminal Code. That means that, right now, it is impossible for Canadian NGOs to do their job and to help people the way they would like to. The crisis in Afghanistan has been going on since 2021, but we still have not figured this out. I get a bit scared sometimes when this government says that it is going to act quickly.

Just yesterday, the Minister of International Development tweeted, "Canada is ready to help the people of Sudan, and to provide aid to those in desperate need as conditions allow".

Am I to understand that the reason it took the government more than 15 months to draft the 82 pages of Bill C-41, which would allow NGOs to provide humanitarian aid in a crisis, is that conditions were not deemed favourable in Afghanistan? Conditions are not favourable in Sudan at this time. I will not delve any deeper into Bill C-41 because I would have too much to say about it. Everyone knows me; I will come back to it at some point.

S. O. 52

The government also announced that it would prioritize processing temporary and permanent residence applications from Sudan. This would also include visitor visa applications for eligible immediate family members of Canadian citizens and permanent residents. I will not lie: I am concerned about how long this will take. Again, the government needs to walk the talk.

Speaking of walking the talk, unsurprisingly, the federal government may not have chosen the best communication method for staying in touch with Canadians in Sudan. A Canadian woman in Sudan's capital said she received an email from the Canadian government at 2:45 a.m. local time on Monday night, telling her to reserve a seat on an evacuation flight scheduled for noon that day. The problem is that the country's Internet and phone services are largely down. She did not receive the email until the afternoon, so she could not get on that flight. These are the kind of situations that are happening. She said, and I quote, "We're already frustrated, we already don't know what's happening and what's going to happen. And the communication is basically poor". This is someone who is trapped in Khartoum telling us this. Maybe we should listen to her. She is seriously affected, believe me.

Am I the only one who thinks that communication problems in federal departments have become the norm? I would have a lot to say about that as well.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, and I want to say it again, the primary victims right now are the civilians. As I stand here in the House, the people of Sudan are being held hostage. Men, women and children are without water, food and electricity. Time is running out. I hope that, for once, the federal government will act quickly, like a G7 country.

• (2310)

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad this important debate is able to take place.

This House has indicated in the past that it would support sanctions for the Wagner Group. There are some possibilities it may be looking at, I believe, according to comments made today. Would the member from the Bloc support ensuring sanctions are applied, and applied quickly, if in fact it does become the case that the Russians endeavour to influence or start to pick sides and increase the violence in Sudan, which would risk greater peace and stability in the region?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. We will definitely support every initiative on sanctions, especially for the Wagner Group.

Today, Ukraine's ambassador to Canada appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to answer our questions. She said that, first, there are not enough sanctions and that, second, they are being poorly applied. It is great to impose sanctions, but they should at least be effective and produce results.

The government is bragging about bringing in several sanctions in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. From what I under-

stand, however, after more than a year of war, these sanctions do not seem to have done anything to improve the situation in Ukraine.

It is one thing to impose sanctions, but they need to be effective and there needs to be enough of them to truly change things.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's comments on the sanctions are important for us to keep in mind today, because it would be very difficult for Canada to find an adequate way to sanction in this particular situation.

The question I have for him is about one of the things I am quite seized with. In 2014, under Stephen Harper, a law was repealed and took away the duty to protect local embassy staff. What happened in Ukraine and Afghanistan is that the staff who supported the Canadian embassy were left behind, and we are seeing that again. That has not been changed. I have raised this with the minister multiple times. This has not been changed.

I wonder if the member could talk about the fact that right now while we have been able to evacuate the Canadians from the Canadian embassy we have not been able to help our local staff.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, it is really sad. I thank my colleague for that important question. It seems as though this government and the previous governments never learned from the past.

Where is the sense in making sure that we are able to evacuate Canadians who are working in embassies in places where there is a crisis or armed conflict, when we are leaving behind the people who work with those Canadians, who helped them day after day and who likely became their friends over time?

They are Canada's friends. They are friends of the people working in the embassy, and we are leaving them behind. Is that fitting of a G7 country?

I completely agree with my colleague. That is unacceptable. It is sad, and it makes us angry to see this kind of thing happening. It is unacceptable for a country like Canada to do this kind of thing.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague for his speech on this issue that is very important not only to Sudanese Canadians, but also to our communities.

Large Sudanese communities have contacted me since the conflict began. They had a lot to say about the women and children caught up in this conflict.

S. O. 52

In the past, the Bloc Québécois has not always voted in favour of measures that target immigration to Canada and help bring people from all over the world to Canada. Will my colleague now seize the opportunity to state before everyone that it is important to support people who get caught in the middle of conflicts and, above all, to support immigration throughout Canada and Quebec?

• (2315)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like the member to name the bills that the Bloc Québécois voted against. What I just heard is not true.

Second, the members of the Bloc Québécois were among the most vocal supporters of bringing Ukrainians to Canada, because the government was not doing its job. That also applies to the Afghan refugees.

Whenever there is a humanitarian crisis anywhere in the world, the Bloc Québécois is always the first to stand up and to tell the government that it must do its job and bring those people here. We should not be hearing such nonsense. That is appalling. It is disgraceful to bring up such nonsense during an emergency debate like this one.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my Bloc colleague for splitting his time with me. What is happening in Sudan goes beyond partisanship. It is a critical issue and, for some, literally a matter of life and death. I am grateful to my hon. colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean. I want to thank him for the opportunity to rise and contribute to this emergency debate on an issue that directly impacts not just the Sudanese but also many Canadians, including constituents from my riding of Spadina—Fort York.

As we all know, there is a brutal conflict that is evolving, two autocratic sides in Sudan, each trying to obtain control of the country. Many Canadians have roots in Sudan and have family members still living there who are deeply affected by the conflict. Over the past week, the people of Khartoum have spent their time in cover. They can hear the heavy artillery. They can hear the air strikes. Some are low on food and water and are contemplating a dangerous attempt to flee their city and somehow get to a neighbouring country.

Aside from the 1,700 registered Canadians who are in this human tragedy, one wonders how Canada was not better prepared to extract our citizens and to assist other nations in relocating refugees to safer countries.

Canada once held dear the 2005 UN principle of the responsibility to protect. The responsibility arose out of the 2005 UN World Summit, and it was heavily supported by the Canadian government of Paul Martin.

R2P embodied a global political commitment to end the worst forms of violence and persecution. It sought to narrow the gap between member states' pre-existing obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and the reality faced by populations at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Canada seems to have also forgotten the debacle it faced in evacuating some 30,000 Canadians from the wharves of Beirut in 2006. Back then our government scrambled around for days struggling to find and rent ships to take our citizens to safe countries like Cyprus and Turkey and then back to Canada.

Why then is Canada showing up a bit late again?

When the fighting intensified, Canada was quick to close our embassy and suspend consular operations, as did other embassies, but now what? Is Canada taking a lead role in talks with other governments on evacuating its citizens or is it just adopting a wait-and-see strategy to see what develops?

Many people do not have the luxury of time to wait and see what the government comes up with. Food and water scarcity drives home this point.

Additionally, has the Government of Canada considered granting urgent refugee status to non-citizen Sudanese people who have ties with Canadian relatives so that they can escape the fighting? Although, on that front, history has not been kind to our country's ability to rescue people in serious danger. Ask the Afghans who put their lives on the line to assist our Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan and who are now still waiting to leave while the Taliban hunts them down.

What then? What about the Sudanese? What more could or should Canada be doing? Well, some of my constituents have a few ideas.

They are seeking immediate and tangible support for the Sudanese people in their quest to prevent military conflict in their homes. In just a few days of fighting, hundreds of people have died and thousands more have been wounded and displaced. The suffering of innocents will only continue to rise if the fighting continues unchecked.

My constituents also rightly point out that the Sudanese people have played no part in this conflict. We have two forces fighting over their ability to rule a country when neither was elected by the people. The Sudanese people's peaceful protests for democracy go ignored and they continue to suffer for it unjustly.

Moreover, for the many Canadians stuck in Sudan, they remain in constant fear and live in tremendous peril. Most have been without electricity and water for over a week and are caught in the middle of a violent battleground. Those who have found shelter have run out of essentials such as water, food and medicine.

The Canadian government must act immediately to evacuate our citizens. Aside from that, Canada should work with the UN special representative, Volker Perthes, to ensure that the ceasefire is respected by both parties.

S. O. 52

Canada should commit to delivering food and medical aid through organizations such as the Red Crescent and the UN World Food Programme, which had paused its work in Sudan after two days of fighting.

• (2320)

Finally, Canada should also provide emergency immigration measures and support for the Sudanese people who have been caught in the crossfire of the conflict, similar to what the Canadian government endeavoured to provide Ukrainians impacted by war.

As a concerned constituent eloquently expressed, the “Sudanese people believe in freedom, peace and justice and peacefully fought for it through non-violent demonstrations. Sudan seemed on the brink of ushering in a democratically elected civilian government. However, those hopes have been dashed by a coup and, more recently, the violence by the army and the RSF.”

In conclusion, the Government of Canada must provide aid to Canadians and Sudanese people on the ground. It is not enough to tell people to shelter in place or look to the route of sponsorship, which could take almost a decade. Delaying further action will be disastrous and deadly, and time is running out.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for making very important comments on this important debate we are having tonight on supporting Sudanese people in this conflict, as well as bringing Sudanese communities home.

I lived in war, so I know how war affects people. It directly affects women and children. Can the member opposite talk about some of the important measures that we need to continue to support in the House, all measures, to make sure we are supporting every single person who is vulnerable, including women and children?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot that the government points to in the work it has done, as it cites its feminist policy, and that is great. What I really want to zero in on right now, as I am sure my colleague knows, is women and children, who are probably the most vulnerable and most at risk right now in Sudan.

However, it is not just those who are attempting those desperate trips to try to escape the violence, it is also Sudan's neighbours, the people of Eritrea, South Sudan, Ethiopia and so on, who themselves do not necessarily have the resources, which is why I focused a lot of my comments on the importance of Canada stepping up, as we are a G7 country and better endowed with the resources to help those who are truly in need, particularly women and children.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his work on this important subject. I know he previously served in the military and spoke about the responsibility to protect.

I wonder if he can share with the House some more thoughts on how we can give life to this idea of responsibility to protect, because it seems to me that, as we develop these doctrines, we make these promises, these bold ideas about international crimes, responsibility to protect, outlawing genocide and so forth, and we continually see cases of failure to respond to it. It seems that the more doctrines are created, the more we back away as an international com-

munity from recognizing crimes when they are happening because they would create an obligation to act.

How do we really give life and meaning to the responsibility to protect? What can we concretely do to strengthen its effect?

• (2325)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague had previously raised the topic of targeted sanctions, from the Wagner Group to, frankly, the individuals who are leading on both sides of the conflict, the people of the Sudanese army and folks in the Rapid Support Forces. Targeting those sanctions is important to ensure that we are really tackling and focusing on the individuals who are driving this violence and not catching any innocents in the crossfire.

I know that in Washington, for example, the Americans have already levied sanctions, but this really needs to be a whole of the western world approach, where it is consistent and coherent across all those countries that share our values of democracy.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like the member, I am extremely concerned about the deteriorating situation in Sudan and the increasing likelihood of civil war.

I was in northern Uganda working for the UNHCR in 2010 when a lot was happening with Sudan and South Sudan. UNHCR officials are now preparing for the exodus of around 270,000 people. I am extremely concerned about the lack of communication from the Government of Canada to Canadians on the ground. Canadians are worried about their family members. While Canadian diplomatic staff have been evacuated, many Canadians remain with no safe route out of the country.

There seems to be a recurring theme with the government abandoning local staff, first in Ukraine, and now in Sudan. It also abandoned some of the people in Afghanistan who helped our Canadian military. Canada says that it is an international leader, but now we are relying on other countries to evacuate citizens. Could the member speak to how the government needs to explain why this is a recurring issue and how to stop it?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that we have a duty to protect embassy staff. They are individuals who, frankly, have put themselves at risk working alongside our officials in their countries, from Afghanistan to Sudan. To abandon them is wrong. I obviously cannot speak for the government, but I would strongly advocate that it really look at reinstating that duty to protect embassy staff.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us look at this government's track record in dealing with international crises.

The government let down the people of Afghanistan and those who helped the Canadian army, such as Afghan interpreters. It let down Ukrainians because it took three months to set up a program. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada did not have the proper computer system to implement the program.

What is it doing in Haiti right now? The government talks like it is some kind of human rights superhero, but when it comes time to act, it turns into Tom Thumb. That is the government's track record. I would like my colleague to show that the government is all about image and is not taking any action.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I have to agree with my colleague. The track record is not great. There are people who have served side by side with my colleagues in the Canadian Armed Forces and are now being hunted by the Taliban. Leaving them behind is tragic. It reflects extremely poorly on our country and our ability to honour our international commitments. It is my hope that with respect to Sudan, the current government can change that. I am going to use this opportunity to reiterate some things.

We should offer emergency immigration measures and support to Sudanese people caught in the crossfire, as was offered to Ukrainians. As well, we should not wait to grant urgent refugee status to non-citizen Sudanese who have Canadian relatives. We can do that now and quickly.

• (2330)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while it is always a privilege to stand in this place and to represent the people of Edmonton Strathcona, it is a very sad debate that we are engaging in today.

Many members have said this before me, but we are witnessing what looks like the beginning of a civil war in Sudan, a country that has been rocked by violence for many years, a country that is already home to a number of refugees who have tried to flee violence within the region. This is a devastating turn of events. It is extremely concerning to think that this civil war could escalate. It is extremely concerning to think that it could spread outside of the borders of Sudan, that we could be looking at a regional war that would impact more people, that would hurt more people and that would kill more people.

I am quite concerned that this could become a proxy war. What we are seeing in Sudan is the Wagner Group playing a key role in arming one of the sides. I have to say the NDP brought forward a motion and asked for this group to be named a terrorist entity. That was accepted unanimously across the House and it has not been done by the Liberal government to this day.

What we are seeing is incredibly heartbreaking, and I think all members of this House see that. We are seeing incredible shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel. We know this is becoming more and more acute. We know that at least 450 people have been killed, according to the World Health Organization figures. We know that hospitals and essential services have been paralyzed. We know that there are potentially 270,000 people who are preparing to leave Sudan as refugees. That, on top of the fact that Sudan already has more than one million refugees who have been fleeing conflict.

S. O. 52

We know there are power outages. We know those power outages have destroyed vaccines, medicines and the coal chains. Canada, in this situation, must do everything we can to help. We must work with allies like the United States to urge a ceasefire, to urge a stop to the violence immediately.

We must defend humanitarian law and urge both sides of this conflict to not attack civilians, to ensure that they are not targeting those people who are most vulnerable right now. If we are a country that believes in a feminist foreign policy, that believes in a feminist international assistance policy, we have to step up right now and do what we can to help. We have to do what we can to get Canadians out, to get them to safety. Many members in this place have spoken about this.

I will be splitting my time today with the member for Vancouver East, who is a tireless champion for immigration issues and a tireless champion who will be speaking about the ways Canada could help to make sure that Canadians in Sudan could get out.

I have spoken already tonight about some of my challenges with that. In 2014, very quietly, something was taken away from our laws, and that was the duty to protect. Prior to 2014, Canada had a duty to protect those staff who worked in our embassies. We had a duty to protect those people who worked with us, that supported us in countries around the world. That was repealed in 2014 by Stephen Harper, but I do not just blame the Conservatives for that. I have raised this multiple times with the minister and the minister has not fixed that.

We have a duty to these people, whether we admit it or not, whether the Liberal government admits it or not. I am appalled that we actually left people in Ukraine and left the national staff there, behind and in danger. I am appalled that we left Afghans behind. We left them in danger. I am appalled that we have left Sudanese behind in Sudan. We have left them in danger, because we have not done our duty to protect those individuals.

This is one of the things I wanted to speak about most today. What is happening in Sudan is horrendous and there are many things that we need to be able to do, but Canada is not in a good situation to do that work right now.

• (2335)

In the budget that we just had recently, there was a 15% decrease in our official development assistance. This was done at a time when the world needs Canada to step up and play a larger role on the world stage, when the world is suffering from a food crisis unlike any we have seen before and when the challenges caused by conflict in Ukraine are rippling around the world. At this moment in time, when Canada should have stepped up and said, "We will be there. We are a wealthy country, and we can do that", we cut international official development assistance by 15%. It is absolutely shameful.

S. O. 52

Another thing that we have done is to turn our focus to Ukraine and forget others. Members should not get me wrong: Canada must do everything it can to help the people of Ukraine. However, we have forgotten whole swaths of this planet that we have responsibilities to. We have abdicated our responsibilities to the people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Since 2008, the Government of Canada has reduced its impact and its ability to help with conflicts just like this. Therefore, what we are seeing in Sudan is terrible, but we are not equipped to help. We no longer have peacekeepers in the field who can deal with this one. Canada, the country where we used to take such pride in punching above our weight and being the peacekeepers that countries could count on to be there when they needed us, does not even have 100 peacekeepers in the field. Despite the promises the government has made, we are no longer playing that role.

We used to have a role that was so important. We were conveners. We were peacekeepers. We engaged in international development. We had the Canadian International Development Agency; it was respected around the world. Now, we do not have that. We have Global Affairs Canada. For those who do not know, that was taking development, diplomacy and trade and putting it all into one place because it was supposed to harmonize it and make it better. However, what happened is that trade trumped all. All of a sudden, trade was the only thing that mattered to the current government rather than any of our moral obligations, the value of diplomacy, playing a role on the world stage or playing a role in a multilateral fashion.

I have said this before: When we look at our foreign policy and at the way that Canada interacts with the world, diplomacy and being part of those conversations, development, and trade are all so important. However, do members know what trade is? Trade is the dessert they get when they do the hard work of diplomacy and development. As with any dessert, if all they eat is dessert, they are going to get sick. They are not going to do well. That is where our foreign policy is right now.

We focus on trade. We fail to realize that building the relationships that we need to build with people around the world is vital. It is vital because it is the morally right thing to do and we have an obligation to do that. However, it is good for Canadians too. It allows us to develop trade relationships and have relationships with people around the world.

I look at what is happening in Sudan, and I am heartbroken because we know how the Sudanese people have suffered already. Women and children in Sudan are going to lose their lives. I am also angry because Canada, which should be able to be there to help, is not. Canada, which should be one of these countries that invest in the world and in making the world a better place, is absent. That makes me very angry.

• (2340)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech, because she seems to have hit the nail on the head. She told us that, in terms of international relations, this government only seems to care about trade these days.

In a fantastical, completely insane and almost schizophrenic turn of events, this government sent the Minister of International Development on a diplomatic mission to Qatar, a dictatorship that tramples on human rights, in order to sell arms there. This is the latest star on the report card of this government, which is reaching new heights of hypocrisy in international relations and international development.

The only question that comes to mind is the following: Does my colleague have any confidence whatsoever that this government is doing a good job, considering its record since 2015?

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest challenges I have is that in 2015, when the government was elected, we had a Prime Minister who said very clearly that Canada is back; it was sunny ways, with the whole tapping of the chest thing. I believed him because I was not a member of Parliament. I was a member of civil society, and all the things the Prime Minister said I wanted to believe.

I wanted to believe the cuts and damage that had been done during the Harper decade were over, that Canada was back and that Canada was going to re-engage in the world and take back our place. I prefer the Conservatives because, frankly, they tell us they are not going to do anything. They tell us they are going to be useless, and that is better than a government that tells us it is going to do something and then does not.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure working with the member on certain issues. I think she would agree that we agree sometimes and disagree other times.

This is an important topic we are debating tonight. I want to come back to something she raised at the beginning of her speech, which is the Wagner Group and the motion she put before the House regarding it being listed as a terrorist organization.

I wonder if she can share a bit more about how she sees the agenda of the Russian government, in Africa with the Wagner Group and in other ways, contributing to destabilization and conflict, and why it is so important that the government follow through on the motion of the House and list the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization, a point we agree on.

S. O. 52

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I think this is a massive problem we are not addressing. We are seeing the Wagner Group and Russia infiltrate a whole bunch of countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. We are seeing China, with its belt and road initiative and other initiatives, doing the exact same thing.

While they are making inroads in some of these countries, we are pulling back. I think that dynamic is very dangerous when we look at global dynamics in this multipolar world we are in. If Canada wants to be part of major discussions happening around the world, we cannot turn our backs. There is a reason we did not win the Security Council seat. It is because we made choices about which countries to ignore. We prioritized.

How do people think it feels to be someone in a country in sub-Saharan Africa watching millions and millions of dollars of support go to Ukraine, when in their country people are starving to death and do not have access to clean drinking water and there are no vaccines? How do we think people feel when we hoard vaccines to the point that we have to throw them away and they cannot vaccinate people in their countries?

We are backing up at the wrong time. We are backing up when we should be moving forward.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have not had many opportunities to work with the member, but I have seen her show up on the international issues in a very strong way, and I appreciate the way she has shown up.

Today, a group of Sudanese women released a statement. They said a couple of things that they want to see the international community do and support because of the impact this is having on children and women. As I have said in the House before, I myself am a product of war. I came out of a conflict, and I know the impact this has on children and women.

Can the member opposite comment on whether she is going to support this statement?

• (2345)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, first of all, one thing that is key, which I meant to mention in my speech and am really grateful to the member for bringing up, is that women need to be at all of the tables when we are talking about resolution and peacekeeping. That is fundamental. We know that peacekeeping only happens when women are at the table. That is a fundamental thing. If we have a feminist foreign policy and a feminist international assistance policy, women's voices need to be at the forefront.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad we are all here tonight talking about the emergency situation in Sudan and the horrific violence that is taking place on the cusp of, as my colleague and many other members have already indicated in the House, a civil war.

The violence and harm that is taking place right now is devastating. As indicated, it is women, civilians, who are getting caught in the crossfire and are suffering beyond all measure, getting injured and losing their lives.

As I was listening to the debate, I thought to myself, "What is the Canadian government doing?" We heard from the Minister of For-

eign Affairs who indicated the efforts of the government in addressing the crisis and helping to bring Canadians and others to safety. In reality, what we are seeing is something very different on the ground. The government says one thing, but in practice it does something very different.

I just heard on the news before this emergency debate that Canadians who are connected to people in Sudan on the ground are saying that on the process of bringing Canadians to safety, they are mostly left to their own devices. They have to find commercial flights to get out, and there is no assistance really from the Canadian government in that regard. However, when we look at other countries, they are doing much better with their evacuation efforts.

This is reminiscent of other situations. I will use Afghanistan as an example. Just now we talked about the duty of care and the responsibility to locals who helped Canadians do their jobs while they are abroad, but every time there is a crisis like this, what happens? They get left behind. That is what happened in Afghanistan.

In fact, in my office I have a growing spreadsheet of Afghans who put their lives at risk in support of the Canadian military to complete their mission, and their loved ones have been left behind. The government brought in an immigration measure and then patted itself on the back and said what a great job it was doing, yet it brought in an arbitrary number for those who helped Canada and who are in a humanitarian crisis come to safety. In fact, there are files that have been lost. Somehow GAC does not know where these people are, and their applications have gone missing. That is what is happening to the point where people have to take the government to court to see if it can bring them to safety. It is the same thing with Sudan. Locals have been left behind.

I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs if the Canadian government will undertake special immigration measures to bring them to safety, including those who are not Canadians, including Canadians who have family and loved ones who are Sudanese who will need a special immigration measure to bring them to safety. Will the government commit to that? I did not hear an answer from the minister. She sidetracked. She talked about something else. Then she deflected and said that the Minister of Immigration is doing a great job. Well, not so much, I am sorry to say, because the government abandons people time and again.

When we say that we have a duty to care, it is, in my view, a responsibility of government as well as a moral duty to bring them to safety. They served Canada in their capacity in helping Canadians to do their job. We cannot just turn our backs on them, but we are doing exactly that. This is why I am here tonight engaging in this debate.

I appreciate some of the immigration measures the Canadian government brought in. For example, the Sudanese who are here in Canada on a temporary visit, whether it be a work permit, a study permit or whatever the case may be, will be able to extend their visit. I absolutely appreciate that, but I will say that the government needs to do more.

S. O. 52

• (2350)

The Liberals say they will expedite the processing of those who already have a temporary resident visa or permanent resident application that has been completed. That is great; they should have been doing that already anyway. For those who do not have an application in, like Canadians who have family members in Sudan, the Canadian government needs to extend a special immigration measure to them, so they can sponsor their extended family members to come to Canada.

We also have the duty to care for those who worked and served Canada as local staff. They need to be brought to safety. We cannot do this over and over again, because when we do, the message the Canadian government is telling the world is that if someone steps up to help Canadians to do a job while we are abroad, when a crisis hits, we will abandon them. That is the message we should not reinforce. We must take a course correction, and we must do everything we can to live up to that duty of care.

We talked about the humanitarian crisis. People in Sudan are in a situation where they are running out of food, supplies and water. I just saw the WHO in the news again with the latest update saying there is a warning of a biological risk, as one of the Sudanese labs has been seized. The UN officials are calling the development extremely dangerous, and that is the reality they are faced with right now. I question the government on what we are doing to work in collaboration with allies to address this crisis. We are just coming out of a pandemic, although there are still remnants of the pandemic going on, as countries face these kinds of crises. Inevitably I think they would spread across the globe, and not just in those regions, but it would have greater consequences as well.

What is the plan the government is going to embark on to work with the international community to address this crisis? Equally important, and not just at this moment in time in Sudan, what is the Canadian government planning going forward, as we know these kinds of situations keep repeating themselves? At the special Afghan committee, we talked about this. We talked about lessons learned and what we need to do to get ahead of them, anticipating that crises will continue to emerge in the global community.

As such, my questions to the government are these: What are we doing? What planning has been in place? What assurances can it give to Canadians and to the international community that Canada is on top of its game, that we will be there, that we will show up and that we will actually have plans in place in the face of these crises?

Right now, I do not see any evidence of that. Time and again, situations emerge and then it feels like the Canadian government is caught flat-footed. It is not good enough. We have to do better. My colleague talked about Canada's role historically, about us being a middle power and about our ability to broker peace and have the trust and confidence of the international community to do that work. We have lost so much of that credibility, and we continue to slip deeper into a hole. We have to find the light, and we have to step up. We have to do better, because humanity depends on it.

• (2355)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is such an important issue that is being debated into the late hours of this evening.

The question has been asked a number of times specifically about the listing of the Wagner Group as a terrorist entity. I know it is something that was brought forward and that this House passed, and it speaks to some of the challenging political circumstances and specifically how the Russians and the dictatorship there could be exercising influence that would destabilize not only Sudan but the region as well.

Could the member comment on the importance of taking that strong stand, listing the Wagner Group as a terrorist entity and making sure sanctions are applied to the greatest extent possible to help address this?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, absolutely we should list the Wagner Group as a terrorist entity, which is something that my colleague moved a motion on in the House. It is something we should all be moving forward on, but listing a group as a terrorist group and sanctioning against it is only as good as the actions taken to enforce the sanctions.

Again, I will say that we have seen this over and over again. In the situation in Ukraine, we saw sanctions being put in place against the perpetrators in Russia. However, they are not being enforced. The government is not taking the full actions necessary to wield the power of those sanctions. While we talk about this, and motions are being passed, what we need is for the government to step up and follow through with actions on the sanctions to yield the kinds of results we want to see.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her passionate and rousing speech.

She spoke about the supports that Canada must provide to regain its former standing on the international scene. It so happens that Gilles Michaud, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, asked Canada a few months ago to support his work, the work of the UN, to ensure the security of the most fragile populations on the planet by providing \$10 million and thus setting an example for other countries.

Does my colleague agree that this vital funding must be provided to support Mr. Michaud and his team in their humanitarian efforts to keep people safe, particularly in Sudan? In other words, did Canada simply decide to stay at the back of the pack rather than leading the way?

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, we have seen that the federal Liberal government has not stepped up to do what is necessary. We just saw it in budget 2023, where the government has cut humanitarian aid at a time when crises are erupting across the globe, and at a time when we need Canada to do more to support these kinds of measures. We are not there. We are not showing up.

I make this plea to the government in the name of humanity, for the sake of connecting with each other and lifting each other up. Canada has to do its part. We can do better. Let us show up when the international community needs us.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my first opportunity at almost midnight to get in on the debate tonight. I want to thank my colleagues, particularly from Edmonton Strathcona and Vancouver East, for being so clear. We have abandoned Sudan. We have been busy with other things. We have given it lip service.

When those two war-lords seized power in a military coup, we should have denounced them, and we should have sanctioned them. We should have shifted our attention to how we build up civilian civil society and protect any hope of democracy in Sudan.

Now that we are at this place, we have to recognize that, of course, we want to get Canadians out of Sudan, but we cannot be satisfied with only that. We have to help the people of Sudan. They do not want these war-lords. The war-lords are not popular. They are dangerous.

I ask my hon. colleague to concentrate for the last moments on what we do to help the people of Sudan in the long term.

S. O. 52

• (2400)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, yes, we need to help people to get to safety. Yes, we need to get Canadians to safety. Equally important, we also need to build up the region where they are having those struggles

We need to do what we can to broker a ceasefire. I think that at this time Canada can do better. The United States is doing that work. Allied countries are doing that work. We need to get in there as well.

In terms of humanitarian aid, which has already been spoken about, we need to make every effort to support that. More than that, we need to work toward building support of the Sudanese—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being midnight, I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, April 25, 2023

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Foreign Affairs	
Ms. Joly.....	13341
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Sidhu (Brampton East).....	13341
Committees of the House	
Transport, Infrastructure and Communities	
Mr. Schiefke.....	13341
Petitions	
Justice	
Mr. Cooper.....	13341
Mr. Motz.....	13341
Mr. Brassard.....	13341
Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Johns.....	13342
Post-Secondary Education	
Ms. Zarrillo.....	13342
Corporate Social Responsibility	
Mrs. Brière.....	13342
Oil and Gas Industry	
Mr. Genuis.....	13342
Human Rights	
Mr. Genuis.....	13342
Hong Kong	
Mr. Genuis.....	13342
Medical Assistance in Dying	
Mr. Genuis.....	13343
Charitable Organizations	
Mr. Genuis.....	13343
Military Chaplaincy	
Mr. Genuis.....	13343
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13343
Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13345
Request for Emergency Debate	
Crisis in Sudan	
Mr. Genuis.....	13346
Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker.....	13346

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Budget Implementation Act, 2023, No. 1	
Bill C-47. Second reading.....	13346
Mr. Schiefke.....	13346
Mr. Champoux.....	13348
Mr. Melillo.....	13348
Mr. Angus.....	13348
Mr. Morrice.....	13349
Mr. Motz.....	13349
Mr. Arya.....	13350
Mrs. Vignola.....	13350
Mr. Angus.....	13350
Mrs. Kusie.....	13351
Mr. Arya.....	13352
Ms. Chabot.....	13352
Ms. Gazan.....	13352
Mrs. Shanahan.....	13353
Mrs. DeBellefeuille.....	13354
Mr. Johns.....	13354
Mrs. Brière.....	13354
Ms. Mathysen.....	13354
Mr. Arya.....	13356
Mr. Brassard.....	13357
Ms. Chabot.....	13357
Mrs. DeBellefeuille.....	13357
Mrs. Brière.....	13358
Mr. Brassard.....	13359
Ms. Gazan.....	13359
Ms. Chabot.....	13359
Mrs. Brière.....	13360
Mr. Gourde.....	13361
Ms. Zarrillo.....	13361
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13361
Ms. Dhillon.....	13361
Ms. Larouche.....	13363
Mr. Brassard.....	13363
Mr. Angus.....	13363
Mrs. Zahid.....	13363
Mr. Albas.....	13365
Mr. Lemire.....	13365
Ms. Zarrillo.....	13365
Mr. Coteau.....	13366
Mr. Seeback.....	13366
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13367
Mrs. Vignola.....	13367
Mr. Johns.....	13368
Mr. Chong.....	13368
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13369
Mr. Lemire.....	13370
Mr. Johns.....	13370
Mr. Coteau.....	13370
Mr. Brassard.....	13372

Mrs. Vignola.....	13372
Mr. Angus.....	13372
Mr. Noormohamed.....	13373
Mr. Morrice.....	13374
Mr. Fast.....	13374
Mrs. Vignola.....	13375
Ms. Blaney.....	13375
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13376
Mr. Morrison.....	13377
Mr. Barsalou-Duval.....	13377

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Toronto District School Board	
Mr. Chen.....	13379
Hutterian Emergency Aquatic Response Team	
Mr. Falk (Provencher).....	13379
National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week	
Ms. Diab.....	13379
Jean Duceppe Theatre Company	
Mr. Champoux.....	13379
Egg Farmers of Canada	
Mr. Drouin.....	13380
Health Care Professionals and First Responders	
Mr. Doherty.....	13380
Angus Hamilton	
Mrs. Atwin.....	13380
Great Lakes Watershed Cleanup	
Mr. Turnbull.....	13380
National Tourism Week	
Mr. Baldinelli.....	13381
2018 Tragedy in Willowdale	
Mr. Ehsassi.....	13381
Yom Ha'atzmaut	
Mr. Morantz.....	13381
Public Service Strike	
Mr. Lehoux.....	13381
Rémi Brousseau	
Ms. Martinez Ferrada.....	13381
Armenian Genocide	
Mr. Boulerice.....	13382
The Monarchy	
Mr. Fortin.....	13382
Public Service Strike	
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster).....	13382
Artemis II	
Ms. Khalid.....	13382

ORAL QUESTIONS

Labour	
Mr. Poilievre.....	13383
Mr. Trudeau.....	13383
Mr. Poilievre.....	13383
Mr. Trudeau.....	13383
Ethics	
Mr. Poilievre.....	13383
Mr. Trudeau.....	13383
Mr. Poilievre.....	13383
Mr. Trudeau.....	13383
Mr. Poilievre.....	13383
Mr. Trudeau.....	13383
Mr. Blanchet.....	13384
Mr. Trudeau.....	13384
Mr. Blanchet.....	13384
Mr. Trudeau.....	13384
Labour	
Mr. Singh.....	13384
Mr. Trudeau.....	13384
Mr. Singh.....	13384
Mr. Trudeau.....	13384
Ms. Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk).....	13384
Mrs. Fortier.....	13385
Ms. Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk).....	13385
Mrs. Lebouthillier.....	13385
Mrs. Kusie.....	13385
Mrs. Fortier.....	13385
Mrs. Kusie.....	13385
Ms. Gould.....	13385
Mr. Gourde.....	13385
Mrs. Lebouthillier.....	13385
Mr. Gourde.....	13386
Mrs. Lebouthillier.....	13386
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Villemure.....	13386
Mr. Holland.....	13386
Mr. Villemure.....	13386
Mr. Rodriguez.....	13386
Ms. Gaudreau.....	13386
Mr. Holland.....	13387
Labour	
Mr. Paul-Hus.....	13387
Ms. Gould.....	13387
Mr. Waugh.....	13387
Ms. Gould.....	13387
Mr. Doherty.....	13387
Mr. O'Regan.....	13387
Mr. Ruff.....	13387
Ms. Freeland.....	13388
Ms. Kwan.....	13388
Ms. Joly.....	13388
Gender-Based Violence	
Ms. Gazan.....	13388

Ms. Ien.....	13388
Transportation	
Mr. Miao.....	13388
Mr. Alghabra.....	13388
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. McCauley.....	13388
Mr. Holland.....	13389
Mr. Genuis.....	13389
Mr. Holland.....	13389
Mr. Berthold.....	13389
Mr. Holland.....	13389
Mr. Berthold.....	13389
Mr. Holland.....	13389
The Environment	
Ms. Michaud.....	13389
Mr. Guilbeault.....	13390
Ms. Michaud.....	13390
Mr. Guilbeault.....	13390
Carbon Pricing	
Mr. Shields.....	13390
Ms. Gould.....	13390
Mr. Steinley.....	13390
Mr. Wilkinson.....	13390
Mr. Morrison.....	13390
Ms. Freeland.....	13391
Youth	
Ms. Hepfner.....	13391
Ms. Ien.....	13391
Telecommunications	
Mr. Williams.....	13391
Mr. Champagne.....	13391
Official Languages	
Mr. Godin.....	13391
Mr. Champagne.....	13391
International Trade	
Mr. Small.....	13392
Ms. Ng.....	13392
The Environment	
Mr. Schiefke.....	13392
Mr. Guilbeault.....	13392
Air Transportation	
Mr. Bachrach.....	13392
Mr. Alghabra.....	13392
Health	
Mr. Davies.....	13392
Mr. Duclos.....	13392
Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker.....	13392

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

Citizenship and Immigration

Motion for concurrence.....	13393
Motion agreed to.....	13394

Points of Order

Applicability of Standing Order 18 to Statement by Member

Mr. Genuis.....	13394
-----------------	-------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Budget Implementation Act, 2023, No. 1

Bill C-47. Second reading.....	13394
Mr. Morrison.....	13394
Mr. Gerretsen.....	13396
Ms. Larouche.....	13396
Mr. Cannings.....	13396
Mr. Hanley.....	13396
Mr. Desilets.....	13398
Ms. Barron.....	13399
Mr. Kitchen.....	13399
Mr. Martel.....	13399
Mr. Gerretsen.....	13401
Mrs. Desbiens.....	13401
Mr. Desjarlais.....	13401
Mrs. Valdez.....	13401
Mr. Trudel.....	13403
Mr. Melillo.....	13403
Ms. Barron.....	13404
Mr. Bachrach.....	13404
Mr. van Koeverden.....	13405
Mr. Albas.....	13405
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.....	13406
Mr. Gerretsen.....	13406
Mr. Melillo.....	13407
Mr. Trudel.....	13407
Mr. Desjarlais.....	13408
Mr. Brock.....	13408
Mr. van Koeverden.....	13409
Mr. Trudel.....	13410
Ms. Barron.....	13410
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	13410
Mr. Samson.....	13411

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Excise Tax Act

Mr. Ellis.....	13412
Bill C-323. Second reading.....	13412
Mrs. Brière.....	13414
Mrs. DeBellefeuille.....	13414
Mr. Johns.....	13414
Mrs. Brière.....	13415
Mrs. DeBellefeuille.....	13417

Mr. Johns	13418
Ms. Ferreri	13419

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Budget Implementation Act, 2023, No. 1

Bill C-47. Second reading	13421
Mr. van Koeverden	13421
Mr. Kitchen	13423
Ms. Larouche	13423
Mrs. Desbiens	13424
Mr. Lamoureux	13426
Ms. Idlout	13426
Ms. Larouche	13426
Mr. Bezan	13426
Mr. Lamoureux	13428
Mr. Garon	13428
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	13429
Mr. Fast	13429
Ms. Vandenbeld	13430
Mr. Garon	13430
Mr. Boulerice	13430
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	13431
Mr. Lamoureux	13432
Mr. Garon	13432
Ms. Idlout	13432
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	13432
Mr. Kurek	13433
Mr. Gerretsen	13434
Mr. Garon	13434
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	13435
Mr. Waugh	13435
Mr. Schiefke	13436
Mr. Lemire	13437
Mr. Davidson	13437
Mr. Cannings	13437
Mr. Weiler	13439
Mr. McLean	13439
Mr. Trudel	13439
Mr. Lemire	13440
Mr. van Koeverden	13441
Mr. Boulerice	13442
Mrs. Vignola	13442
Mrs. Vecchio	13442
Mr. van Koeverden	13444
Mr. Lemire	13444
Mr. Boulerice	13444
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	13445
Mr. Davidson	13446
Mr. Weiler	13446

Mrs. Vignola	13447
Mr. Muys	13447
Mr. Gerretsen	13449
Mr. Trudel	13449
Mr. Cannings	13449
Mrs. Vignola	13449
Mrs. Atwin	13451
Ms. Idlout	13451
Mr. McLean	13451
Mr. Boulerice	13451
Mr. Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	13452

EMERGENCY DEBATE

Crisis in Sudan

Mr. Genuis	13453
Motion	13453
Mr. van Koeverden	13456
Mrs. Vignola	13457
Mr. Desjarlais	13457
Mr. Morrice	13457
Mr. Vuong	13457
Ms. Joly	13458
Mr. McLean	13459
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	13460
Ms. Kwan	13460
Mr. Turnbull	13460
Mr. Trudel	13461
Mr. Genuis	13462
Mr. Desjarlais	13462
Mr. Morrice	13462
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	13462
Mr. Kurek	13464
Ms. McPherson	13464
Ms. Kayabaga	13464
Mr. Vuong	13465
Ms. Kayabaga	13466
Mr. Genuis	13466
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	13466
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	13466
Ms. McPherson	13467
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	13468
Mr. Genuis	13468
Ms. Kayabaga	13469
Ms. Kwan	13469
Mr. Kurek	13470
Mrs. Vignola	13470
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	13471
Motion agreed to	13471

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