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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 11, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the government's response to 12 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): moved that Bill S-205, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to another Act (interim release and domestic violence recognizance orders), be read the first time.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to move this bill, seconded by my hon. colleague, the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Ultimately, this bill would save lives, particularly those of women fleeing abuse and life-threatening situations. It would ensure that dangerous abusers of women wear ankle bracelets during important times throughout the criminal justice process. This would ensure that women at risk of abuse or murder by their abusers are immediately alerted if their abusers come near them. This is supported by the provincial governments of Quebec, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick, and it would align the federal government with the good work already accomplished by the Province of Quebec.

I want to give sincere thanks to the creator of this critically important bill, Conservative Senator Boisvenu, who has dedicated his life to protecting women. I am honoured to be on this journey with him for greater justice for women.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

RADIOCOMMUNICATION ACT

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): moved that Bill S-242, An Act to amend the Radiocommunication Act, be read the first time.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Senator Patterson for all his hard work in getting this bill passed through the other place, the Senate. I am looking forward to getting it passed through this chamber.

Canadians currently pay the highest cellphone rates in the world and some of the highest Internet rates. As it currently stands, with spectrum auctions, companies pay by spectrum for a “20 years with no conditions” policy. They actually have to use that spectrum to provide service. Many companies buy the spectrum with no current plans or intentions of using it. We have seen this across Canada multiple times, where a spectrum is held for real estate purposes and sold for millions of dollars.

Canadians, especially in rural and remote areas, suffer from poor or non-existent cellphone services because of spectrum speculation. The bill would correct this by introducing a “use it or lose it” provision to all wireless sold at auction. It would require the licence holder to provide service to at least 50% of the geographic area covered by the licence within three years of that licence being issued or lose the licence.

This is a great bill, and I am happy to sponsor it. I want to thank the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa for seconding it.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

• (1005)

PETITIONS

LET'S'EMOT REGIONAL AQUATIC CENTRE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, petitioners in my riding are calling on the Government of Canada to provide additional funds to support the construction of the Lets'emot regional aquatic centre in Agassiz, which has seen its projected costs skyrocket because of inflation. The name “Lets'emot” means “one heart, one mind” in the Halq'eméylem language.

Business of Supply

Last spring, the provincial and federal governments both announced funding for the project. The provincial government contribution totalled \$9.5 million, whereas the federal contribution was just \$454,000.

Residents of the District of Kent; Harrison Hot Springs; the Seabird Island, Cheam, Stó:lo, Sts'ailes, Sq'ewlets, Skawahlook, Popkum and Peters first nations; and the Fraser Valley Regional District electoral areas C and D all support this project. It is one of the first infrastructure projects in Canada where all local indigenous communities are collaborating with municipalities.

I humbly ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities and other members of the government to support this project, which all my constituents, particularly indigenous youth on reserve, are calling for. All they are asking for is a regional aquatic facility, a pool like every other Canadian has in their community.

[Translation]

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the petitioning Canadian citizens and residents, I am presenting a petition asking the House of Commons to pass human rights and environmental due diligence legislation.

The reasons for this are legion, since many Canadian companies contribute to human rights violations abroad, as well as to environmental damage. Furthermore, those who report these abuses often face retaliation, and Canada is not strict enough with companies that are based in Canada and their supply chains.

Therefore, the petitioners demand that the companies at fault stop violating human rights and stop destroying the environment; that the burden of proof rest on the companies in this regard; that the companies at fault face the consequences of their actions; that people who have been affected be able to apply to Canadian courts when harms occur and that a statutory right be established for them.

[English]

OPIOIDS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition on behalf of Canadians concerned about the opioid crisis. The overdose crisis, as it is often referred to, is probably better understood as a poisoning crisis. The petitioners note that it is a public health emergency, as has already been declared by British Columbia's provincial health officer. There is a disproportionate representation of indigenous people who have been impacted by this crisis.

The Canadian Public Health Association, the Global Commission on Drug Policy and the World Health Organization have all recommended drug decriminalization, as supported by these petitioners. It should also be noted that there is an increased need for funding for harm reduction strategies to beat and prevent the risk of hepatitis C cases; hepatitis C is particularly related to unsafe use of drug supply. The petitioners point out that this public health emergency results in thousands of deaths in Canada, and poisoning hospitalizations have been occurring. In fact, there have been over 17,000 opioid-related poisonings since 2016, as well as 14,000 deaths.

The citizens and residents of Canada call on the House of Commons to declare a public health emergency; to reframe this crisis as a health issue rather than a criminal issue; to listen to the recommendations made by social workers, frontline workers, nurses and doctors; and to decriminalize drugs in Canada.

• (1010)

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions here. First of all, the petitioners wish to convey their sorrow for the fellow officers, the friends and the families of those involved in the tragic event earlier this morning.

These petitioners want Bill C-21 stopped in its tracks. It would do nothing to stop the real problem of gun-running and leaves a gaping hole that would remain as long as it is in force. The petitioners therefore call to either end the bill now or revoke the law if it gets that far.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—IMMIGRATION LEVELS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) the Century Initiative aims to increase Canada's population to 100 million by 2100,
- (ii) the federal government's new intake targets are consistent with the Century Initiative objectives,
- (iii) tripling Canada's population has real impacts on the future of the French language, Quebec's political weight, the place of First Peoples, access to housing, and health and education infrastructure,
- (iv) these impacts were not taken into account in the development of the Century Initiative and that Quebec was not considered,

the House reject the Century Initiative objectives and ask the government not to use them as a basis for developing its future immigration levels.

He said: Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, there was a company called McKinsey and a scheme known as the Century Initiative. I am deeply averse to speaking English in the course of my official duties, but I believe in calling a thing by its right name. An initiative that will sabotage French in Quebec and Canada over the long term cannot be called by a French name or by a name that can even be translated to French. I feel it is only right to continue to use the name Century Initiative when speaking French, not its amorphous French name, "Initiative du Siècle".

It outlines a vision of an economy serving capitalism, a vision of people's labour serving the economy. The Bloc Québécois, however, thinks it should be the other way around, that the economy should serve the people.

The idea is to increase the population of Canada, should it survive in its present form until then, to 100 million inhabitants by the end of the century. Truth be told, that is rabble-rousing lunacy. It is a delusional vision of the future whose true purpose is more immediate.

They say they want Canada to be a global superpower. What are Canada's greatest resources? They are: brains, institutions and democracy, of course, but also natural resources, such as oil, which some of us are still mulishly dependent on, forestry, ever the poor cousin, mines, which could be Quebec's ticket to leading the transportation electrification charge, a role some would rather see Ontario take on using polluting western Canadian natural gas, and water, which will be on the table sooner or later.

Add to that cheap labour, the labour market imbalance, and the struggle for collective representation that is increasingly coming under fire, the struggle for unions and the labour movement that are so readily demonized. Backed by the NDP, which claims close ties to unions, this pro-scab government rejects the importance of prohibiting strikebreakers, proof positive that it is not a pro-worker government.

I find it hard to understand, moreover, how the labour movement can still identify with a Prime Minister who repeatedly said yesterday that he had spoken to businesses or with an NDP that supports big business against workers. It is like trusting this government to protect jobs in the forestry sector. We have no such trust.

McKinsey has a terrible reputation in human resources. One does not have to get to the end of the book *When McKinsey Comes to Town* to realize that the same story keeps repeating itself. We see the same manoeuvres: breaking workers, degrading working conditions.

The Century Initiative is a vision that has blindly, or complacently, been adopted by Ottawa with, moreover, an outsourcing of certain immigration services. Ottawa either has a hostile bias or is indifferent to a normal Quebec desire to make, at least in some respects, its own way in Canada, or not.

Mr. Barton acknowledged in committee, in response to a question I put to him, that he had not considered Quebec at all in the development of the Century Initiative. For them, passively or actively, Quebec was simply a community created by earlier immigration and it had to fit in the anglicized mosaic of Canada.

Business of Supply

At least Mr. Barton admitted in his testimony that they were making recommendations and that the Prime Minister was the one responsible for deciding on the implementation of a policy whose known effect—which we can assume was at least partly intended—was a direct threat to the continued existence of a Quebec people.

• (1015)

There are many benefits to immigration. Are labour issues part of that? Certainly, subject to how we treat people who choose to come to make their life in Canada or in Quebec. Is it the solution to the labour shortage? It is certainly one of the possible solutions, but it is not the solution. Here again, it falls under the slogan that a former colleague called the kinglets of chambers of commerce.

Immigration comes with humanitarian and intake responsibilities. It comes with the responsibility of an unavoidable fact: With climate change, in which Canada is a central player with its insistence on toxically exploiting hydrocarbons that directly heat the climate, tens of millions of people around the world will need to move. Those are climate migrations. It would be very irresponsible to not welcome at least some of them, but on what terms? That is another part of the debate, but they will have to be welcomed. Accepting responsibility in sharing the weight of the misery inflicted on those who are less fortunate than us is itself fundamental to a sound immigration policy.

There is also the inevitable desire of people to immigrate and make a better life for themselves. That comes with uncertainties. It has been said and repeated. Without protecting a political lever, those who said it were not heard, here in Ottawa.

There will be an enormous impact on the costs of an educational system, which increase much faster than the economic or fiscal contribution of newcomers. The same reasoning applies to a health system that is severely underfunded due to willful ignorance, an ignorance some might argue the Prime Minister cultivates. So there are issues and demands for health transfers.

There will also be pressure on child care services. The housing crisis will not be addressed by welcoming 500,000 people a year in Canada, 110,000 of which would be destined for Quebec. The same is true for income support for these people who are arriving and who are sometimes helpless and, of course, for francization and the development of a sense of belonging to this people, this nation that is welcoming them. There is a risk of different kinds of social problems. There is the issue of the coherence of a cultural body that allows everyone to function within the same society, with a big neighbour trying to ensure its dislocation. There is also the appearance or increase of pockets of poverty for those that the system will be unable to integrate harmoniously and the appearance of cultural-linguistic ghettos of people who will not integrate and for whom it will quickly become too late, because the correct action was not taken or action was not taken at the right time or, in Ottawa's case, action was not taken with the right intention.

Business of Supply

There is also the issue of the indigenous peoples. I cannot speak for them, but the numbers speak for themselves. The natural growth of the indigenous populations cannot keep up with the immigration of 500,000 people per year, which, hypothetically, would mean 100 million people in Canada by the end of the year. This great scam requires associating, integrating and amalgamating first nations as if they were immigrant populations. In the eyes of the first nations, I am an immigrant. We are the immigrants. Unlike this potentially infinite influx of people who are welcomed through immigration, no one can immigrate and say they are indigenous. One is indigenous or one is not. A person is born indigenous or is not born indigenous.

• (1020)

There is a threat strictly in terms of demographic weight. Maybe this is an opportunity for the first peoples to realize that Ottawa is not working for them.

There is a risk, as a nation, of losing part of our soul, most of our weight, and of failing to bring forward a different and unique culture in which and to which the contribution of immigrant communities is essential; it transforms who we are. Do we want to say in a very healthy way that we have a common language, that we have common values, that all equalities are eminently valid, that the state, to be progressive, must be secular? These are fundamental elements that define us. Besides that, there will always be a cultural and artistic contribution that enriches us, as long as it is done harmoniously. We must not fail.

We therefore have three choices. The first is to shrug our shoulders, increase immigration levels and lose our language. The second would be to obtain a guaranteed percentage of seats in the House, which we were refused outright. The government knew very well what they were doing. They knew very well that, by refusing a predetermined percentage of seats for Quebec and by implementing an immigration policy involving an extremely large number, they were condemning Quebec to being reduced and diminished within the federation.

However, there is a third way: The appropriation of all attributes of sovereignty for the Quebec people. Sovereignty is not a fictional intellectual concept or a bargain-basement anglophone bogeyman. It is the normal appropriation of all the means we have to choose, even if some are then freely and consensually shared.

Let us not fool ourselves, the NDP and the Conservatives agree with this idea of 100 million Canadians and 500,000 immigrants per year. Maybe the means could be debated? Maybe this issue could be reviewed? Maybe there is an opening, particularly among the Conservatives, that I would welcome with great enthusiasm? However, care must be taken to not create consensus that will isolate Quebec. I will come back to that.

There is a concept that exists in the intelligence community, that of useful idiots. That is the second English term in my speech. When someone, without realizing it, serves the interests of someone else, such as systematically supporting policies that benefit big money and disadvantage Quebec, while imagining that they are doing good, they may be a useful idiot. They are people who do not realize that, if they conducted themselves differently, Canada and Quebec would be better off.

Immigration is not simply good or bad. We need to make sure that integration is effective and that the people who choose us have the tools they need for a new successful life. First, there is language and then adjusting to employment, where language is the primary factor. There is also the recognition of diplomas and full training or supplementary training for a diploma to be recognized. There are many issues.

Is immigration really a numbers issue? I would say that anything is possible. I have always been very resistant to debates about numbers. A number like 110,000 looks high for Quebec, anyway. I would say that if Quebec chose to increase the number of immigrants it receives, the levels should be increased gradually. We would need tools to measure the success of everything put in place to promote sound and successful integration. There needs to be a common melting pot of a changing national culture.

• (1025)

We are told that sovereignty would change nothing. That is also what I heard yesterday on television. In fact, sovereignty would allow for clear integration policies, a clear message about places where people would arrive and full political weight to make decisions on our soil. Above all, sovereignty would end Ottawa's usual practice of undoing what Quebec has done through heavy-handed legislation, gobs of money and court decisions.

Because of the fiscal imbalance, and according to the government's own figures, in 30 to 40 years the total debt of the federal government would be eliminated, while at the same time, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, most provinces would technically be bankrupt. This is known as the fiscal imbalance. This is essentially Ottawa grabbing fiscal resources that it does not need at the expense of the provinces and Quebec, which do not have what they need. This is how to dismantle the provinces and the Quebec nation.

The naive, high up in their ivory tower in Toronto, believe that the fiscal imbalance, the Supreme Court biases, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—designed against the Quebec nation—and the activism that replaces collective rights with individual privileges will save Canada. *God Save The King*. Some of these naive people are francophones from Quebec, but I am not looking at anyone. They are wrong. Quebecers are patient, generous and welcoming, but there are many who realize that the immigration policy advised by McKinsey, which is laughing all the way to the bank, threatens the very existence of the Quebec people. They will want to act.

Sooner or later, this will be known as Quebec's sovereignty. In the meantime, someone here has to stand up and denounce this vision that is harming Quebec, and that someone is the Bloc Québécois. We will not wait long. We will get ourselves a country.

Business of Supply

• (1030)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, immigration is essential to grow the economy and meet the demographic challenge posed by the aging population. I completely agree with the principle that it is important to make the necessary investments to ensure a good quality of life for newcomers. It is up to Quebec to decide how many newcomers will settle in Quebec under the Canada-Quebec accord.

However, if the member thinks that Canada should reduce the number of newcomers for the entire country because Quebec wants to make sure that it is able to integrate newcomers in its province, then that is another story. Does the member think that Canada should reduce the number of newcomers for the entire country?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure we talked about reducing that number.

I will jump right to the logical conclusion. In my opinion, Canada will do whatever it wants. If Canada wants to divest itself of an entity that is already weakened by its proximity to a cultural giant that swallows up all its differences, then that is Canada's business. If Canada wants to give up anything else that is Canadian, such as the Crown, the flag, the name of the country and a multiculturalism that dilutes everything, then that is Canada's business. The question has an easy answer. Canada can do its own thing and Quebec will too.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Bloc leader a question about his motion.

He spoke a bit about the workers we need. I would like him to think on the following question. In Quebec and across Canada, we need skilled trades workers. The government's most recent numbers show that in 2019, we had to wait 12 months to bring in a skilled trade worker to work in Canada and Quebec.

In March 2023, the wait time for a worker to come to Canada was 73 months. We have desperate business owners who need these workers to be able to keep their businesses going. I would like the member to address this question about the number of workers we need in Canada. After eight years, the government is still completely incapable of providing our businesses with the skilled workers they need.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, that is a completely different but extremely interesting question.

The Bloc Québécois believes in generous immigration, which is not to be confused with opportunistic immigration. We are not here to provide cheap labour to businesses, but rather quality jobs to people who choose to come live in Quebec or Canada.

In order to have a significant economic impact, this must be done with a certain degree of efficiency. Few governments remember the meaning of the word “efficiency” after seven or eight years in office. Frankly, I think that the people opposite never knew it. The process right now is long and costly, involving a great deal of paperwork, and often has to be started over. We made suggestions for streamlining the process that were completely non-partisan and that the government could have claimed as its own, such as extending the length of permits, eliminating the requirement to renew them,

and making it easier for workers to come work here, some of them on a seasonal basis, to ease the path for people who want to come live in Quebec or Canada. The issue is not how many, but how. Our suggestions would have had a huge impact on our economy.

The government says that it is the nicest and most generous government in the world, but in practice, it is the most bureaucratic and least efficient in the world.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing we both agree on, and that is that Quebecers are generous and welcoming. I know that first-hand, having lived there for two years. We do agree on that.

The NDP is not taking any lessons from the Bloc Québécois when it comes to strikebreakers. Pierre Karl Péladeau is the biggest strikebreaker in Quebec and in Canada, as we well know.

As the Bloc Québécois knows very well, the NDP has forced the government to table anti-scab legislation, which it will do in the coming months. We will see if the Bloc Québécois is willing to accept this legislation.

My colleague talked about risks and ghettos. Sadly, this is an echo of the discourse used by the French far right. However, he did not mention the increase in the global francophone population.

A generation from now, the global francophone population will reach 500 million, or half a billion. We need these people here, too. They are nurses and doctors. They are people from the Senegalese, Cameroonian, Congolese, Algerian and Moroccan communities. These are people we want to welcome here.

The problem is not what the leader of the Bloc Québécois says it is. The problem is that we have a federal government that has failed at meeting the francophone immigration targets. An NDP government will do that. It is important.

Can we at least agree on the fact that the francophone immigration targets should be met?

• (1035)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, that was a wild speech with a lot of hot air, to put it as politely as I can.

Anyone who goes to the trouble of the putting the words “French”, “extreme right”, “Bloc Québécois” and “Pierre Karl Péladeau” in the same sentence deserves nothing short of my contempt.

As for taking lessons from the Bloc Québécois, the NDP did not take them from the Bloc Québécois. It took them from Quebec. There is one lesson left.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my leader for that excellent speech.

This week in the House, when we questioned the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship he said that he was not using the Century Initiative targets but was choosing his own targets for Canada, without relying on what was established by that same Century Initiative.

Business of Supply

However, from 2023 to 2025, the federal government's targets are directly in line with the targets set by Century Initiative in that detailed 88-page plan for 2023 to 2025.

My question for my leader is simple: Does he really think that the federal government is not using the targets set by Century Initiative? Is it using its own targets?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, the same federal government has outsourced core government responsibilities to that same McKinsey, which is the intellectual soul behind the Century Initiative. The basic idea is to put things off until long after our kids have retired and imagine how wonderful it will be. In the meantime, starting tomorrow, we need to bring in plenty of cheap labour. It is very efficient.

For starters, the subcontracting is questionable. Consider the burden of proof. They say they did not take their numbers from the Century Initiative, but they used the same numbers. What a coincidence. The fact is, it is the same malarkey, and Quebeckers will know how to deal with it.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it saddens me that the leader of the Bloc party is manipulating the immigration issue, which has built this country from coast to coast to coast, as a way to advance his cause.

Does the leader of the Bloc party not recognize that we have seen population growth in the province of Manitoba? Without immigration, our population would have decreased.

If we look at the French factor in the province of Quebec and in the country, there are more people speaking the French language today in Manitoba than there ever have been. The French factor in the province of Manitoba has been enhanced through immigration. For example, we see people of Filipino heritage and Punjabi heritage also speaking the French language. I believe that Manitoba is a strong advocate for the French language.

Why is the Bloc trying to use immigration in a mischievous way in order to achieve its own personal political objectives?

• (1040)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, I have always had a soft spot for people who know it all.

Our political agenda is not exactly a secret. All we have to do is explain it, and the rest kind of takes care of itself.

I feel like asking my relatively esteemed colleague this question: Why is he using immigration as a tool to entirely wipe out Quebec's desire to assert itself as a people, as a nation and as a country?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my dear colleagues for giving me the opportunity to take part in the important debate we are having here in the House of Commons today.

I would also like to thank my colleagues for their support as I attempt to improve the quality of my French. Members from every party have helped me learn this new language. When I arrived in

Ottawa after the 2015 election, I did not speak French. In fact, all I could say was, “bonjour, je m'appelle Sean”. Before, when my colleagues asked how I was doing, I sometimes forgot how to answer that question in French. Thanks to my colleagues' support, I am now able to convey simple ideas in French.

Today, I would like to share an idea that is simple, yet important for Canada's future. It is the idea that we can welcome newcomers to areas across the country and still protect the French language and francophone culture. Not only can we do it, we actually are doing it.

During the debate, I will make several points.

First, immigration is essential for growing our economy and offsetting the demographic decline caused by population aging. It is very important to continue to welcome new immigrants, while protecting the demographic weight of francophone individuals and communities.

Before getting to the crux of my speech, let me be very clear: The Century Initiative does not dictate federal government policy. I am the one who tabled the immigration levels in the House, I am the one who made a commitment to organizations that represent francophone communities, and I am the one who signed the agreements.

I will now address the importance of immigration for Canada's economy.

It is essential that Canada welcome new immigrants, and the current situation in this country is very interesting. To understand why Canada needs to favour people with skills that are useful to the economy, it is essential to understand the current economic context.

Like other countries, after the COVID-19 pandemic, that is, following the reopening of the borders and the economic recovery, Canada entered a major recovery period. There have never been as many workers in Canada as there are now. Many people have good jobs. The GDP is higher today than it was before the pandemic. Despite this success, there are currently more than 700,000 vacant positions in our economy. Employers are seeking workers to help them grow their businesses.

Without immigration, Canada cannot maximize its economic potential. Immigration is extremely important because there are not enough Canadian workers to fill the vacant positions, either today or in the future. It is important not only for the economy, but for society as a whole. It is especially important that Canada offset the demographic decline caused by population aging.

Fifty years ago in Canada, there were seven workers for every retiree. Today, that number is close to three workers, and when I am ready to retire, I think it will be only two.

• (1045)

Immigration is essential for us to welcome people who have the skills we need and face demographic challenges. If we do not change our approach to immigration, it will not be possible to make the investments needed to ensure the delivery of public services.

Business of Supply

Immigration is very important, as it allows us to welcome the people who have the skills we need. The people who are currently participating in our economy have skills, and it is essential that we find other people who have the same skills. Given our aging population, we need more employees to ensure the delivery of health care. There are many reasons for welcoming new immigrants. They make an enormous and essential contribution to the vitality of our communities.

I can give an example of a situation that happened in my riding. Right after the 2015 elections, we lost a school because many families were leaving the community.

Mr. Speaker, I think you know what I am talking about, because you are from Nova Scotia. Young people were leaving Nova Scotia to find work in other provinces and countries. I am familiar with the situation. I myself worked in Alberta for five years because I was looking for a good job.

Right after the 2015 elections, my community also lost a mental health professional. My community lost mental health services. It was very difficult for the community to lose the school and health care services. However, the people in my community can find another school and another doctor. It will not be easy, but it is possible.

That said, consider the consequences for francophone communities facing the same problems. When I visited with francophone communities, I saw that finding a doctor who speaks French is not just difficult; it is impossible. When schools close, people cannot simply decide to attend school in a neighbouring community. If the neighbouring community is anglophone, it is impossible for these families to live in French or have access to day cares where people speak French. Students cannot study in French. Customers cannot be served in French at the store. For these communities, this is a matter of identity.

It is extremely important to continue ensuring that people who live in francophone communities can live their lives in French. We know that the French language is in decline in North America. It is very important that we continue to ensure the sustainability of francophone communities and to put in place conditions conducive for these people to speak and live in French.

It is not just a matter of ensuring the sustainability of francophone communities. It is a reality now. I am very proud to be the minister who welcomed the greatest number of newcomers to Canada, in general, but I am also very proud to be the minister who achieved the 4.4% target for the first time in 20 years.

We are working closely with stakeholders to ensure that francophone communities have the capacity to accommodate people who have essential skills and language skills. The fact that we have achieved these targets is not an accident or a coincidence. It is the clear result of the decisions our government made last year. Our government put in place a plan to welcome francophones. We introduced an action plan for official languages with the necessary investments to ensure its success. We also continue to make investments in organizations that provide settlement services. We are making sure that these people not only come to Canada, but also integrate into their communities.

We continue to hold events to recruit and promote Canada as a destination to people who are looking for opportunities in another country.

• (1050)

We continue to propose essential solutions for protecting the demographic weight of francophones across Canada. We are making changes to the express entry program so that francophone and bilingual applicants get more points.

The next changes include new paths in the express entry program exclusively for francophones. This initiative is very important to me because, if we want to increase the number of workers in this country, we absolutely need to support French speakers to protect their demographic weight as well. It is essential for the future of francophone communities in Canada. All this is possible thanks to our government's immigration policies and decisions. We are already seeing the results.

Of course, the situation in Quebec is different. The federal government has an agreement with the province of Quebec. Under this immigration agreement, Quebec is responsible for establishing immigration thresholds and the number of new immigrants arriving in the province each year. It is also up to Quebec to choose the immigrants it welcomes for economic reasons. That decision is not under the federal government's jurisdiction. All this is set out in the agreement with the Quebec government.

The federal government's role is to process applications, verify admissibility and ensure safety, but it is up to the province of Quebec to determine the number of immigrants, assess their language skills and choose which immigrants will be welcomed based on their skills and how they impact the economy. These decisions are made by Quebec.

In order to support the integration and francization of new immigrants to Quebec, the federal government gives Quebec almost \$700 million a year. That is a good thing. When I meet with Quebec entrepreneurs, they ask me to continue welcoming workers. It is essential to protect jobs in their companies.

There is currently a labour shortage within and outside of Quebec. One does not have to listen to me or look up what Statistics Canada has to say to understand that there is a labour shortage. One only has to walk down main street in every community in Canada to see the extent of the situation. Employers need workers to help the economy recover after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is very beneficial for Canada to welcome people into our communities.

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I have spoken with my international counterparts. It is not right that Canada is the only country that is having such a hard time processing applications more quickly to meet the needs of communities. It would be a good idea to seize this opportunity and to have the courage to welcome people with essential skills so we can ensure a bright future for Canada's economy and communities.

It is important for me to explain the many reasons why I will be voting against this motion. First, I am being accused of following the Century Initiative. Once again, I want to be very clear. The Century Initiative did not establish the Government of Canada's plan. My plan includes many other policies like the Century Initiative. For example, there is a whole chapter on francophone immigration, which is very important. There is a plan to welcome the most vulnerable people. I also think that it is very important to ensure that the smaller provinces are able to welcome newcomers. Normally, newcomers prefer to settle in Canada's bigger cities.

• (1055)

Whoever looks at the details of my plan, including its immigration thresholds, can see that we are protecting the accommodation capacity of the Atlantic and northern regions, and that we are allowing the francophone community to benefit from immigration while also protecting its accommodation capacity.

It is not right for the Bloc Québécois to hide behind the Century Initiative and say that Canada needs to reduce the number of new immigrants. In my opinion, that is not right. If they think that Canada should reduce the number of immigrants, let them just say so. The House is the best place to hold that debate, but today's debate is a red herring, because the plan is the government's, not the Century Initiative's. The signature on the dotted line is mine.

I began learning French after the 2015 elections. I learned a lot of things. I am not perfectly bilingual, but I can hold a conversation. It turns out that I did not only learn a new language. I also learned the importance of protecting the francophone community's continued ability to exist. I learned the importance of protecting francophones' ability to live their lives in French, to live with their children in their francophone communities.

People who vote in favour of the motion are voting against Canada's ability to welcome the most vulnerable and the people with essential skills for our economy.

I have a message for Acadians, Quebeckers, Franco-Ontarians, people who live in francophone communities in western and northern Canada: I work every day to protect their ability to speak French, to ensure the sustainability of their communities and to protect their ability to live their lives in French. I worked on it today, I will work on it tomorrow, and I will continue to work on it in the future.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague. I will never be able to congratulate him enough on the fact that his French is improving every day. It is a praiseworthy achievement. I think that it is the first time my colleague has spoken in French for 20 minutes, and I congratulate him.

My leader took the floor earlier and explained that there were three options before us. One of them is that they have their thresh-

olds in Canada, we have ours in Quebec, and they are different. Looking at the thresholds as they are now, there is a difference between the demographics of Quebec and the demographics of the rest of Canada.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, the hon. member for Drummond tabled Bill C-246, in which we asked the government to guarantee that Quebec's number of seats in the House never drop below 25%. The bill was rejected, however.

Prince Edward Island, for example, has four members, and apparently the rest of Canada is fine with that. When Quebec asks for 25% of the seats in the House because it believes it deserves them, the government says no.

Would that not have been a solution? We might not be having the same debate today.

• (1100)

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify something. There is a reason why Prince Edward Island has four seats in the House of Commons. We have an obligation, under the Constitution, to maintain that number of seats in the House, and so does the other place.

Any immigration policy will have more profound implications than that. The policy affects more than just the number of seats in the House of Commons. There are consequences for the people who settle in our communities. In smaller communities, they might have to deal with schools and businesses closing. In that case, people who want to go about their lives in a francophone or anglophone community might have to leave that community forever.

The solution, in my view, is to continue to adjust the immigration plan and take the living conditions in our communities into account. I will continue welcoming more immigrants because right now it is a good thing. The plan can be revised if and when conditions change in our communities. For now, this is a good plan for Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by stating that, as a resident of British Columbia, a province that is under-represented in this federation, it pains me to see the government has removed Terry Fox's image from Canadian passports.

To the motion and the debate today, I would like to point out that in 2019, it took nine months to get a federally skilled worker in Canada. In 2023, that increased threefold to 27 months. Businesses across Canada are wondering when the minister will take concrete steps to lower the number of months it takes to approve a federally skilled worker to come and work for a small business in Canada. Can the minister provide us with a timeline for how he is going to reduce that critical number?

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Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I have a clear answer because, today, a new applicant coming through the federal express entry system is expected to take six months. The posted timelines reflect applications that may have been approved recently but that may have been in the system for a significant period of time.

There is presently an anomaly because we have gotten through the majority of the cases that have been in our inventory, having now processed the cases for people who were seeking to come to Canada when the borders were closed. There is, if not quite a false statistic on the website, a statistic that does not necessarily do a good job of explaining the anomaly. We are going to be moving toward projecting forward-looking processing times so people will better understand how long it will take for an applicant to get here.

I am pleased to share that our family reunification system, our family economic streams, our study permits and work permits are more or less all back to the standard of service that we enjoyed before the pandemic. I would be pleased to continue this conversation, should the member wish to understand the timelines under different immigration streams, after we finish the debate today.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many people may not know this, but prior to doing this job, I spent over eight years working with newcomers to Canada in the region I represent. I remember being very overwhelmed by their generosity, kindness and gratitude, and what it meant to be Canadian. I went to a lot of citizenship ceremonies, and I have to say that those were some of the most amazing parts of my life. They also really made me appreciate in a new way how important it is to be a Canadian.

I am sad that we are having this discussion today. I think immigration brings a richness and a profound deepness to our communities. I do not believe we have to lose our identities while we welcome other identities. They create a much more diverse and dynamic community. I am wondering if the minister could talk about why it is important to bring more French-speaking immigrants to Canada and how that would add to the beauty of our country.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her service before politics to support newcomers in the community that she calls home.

There are a number of different reasons why I think we need to embrace immigration if we are going to benefit from what diversity can offer our communities. In particular, there is a reason we need to continue to bring more French-speaking newcomers to communities across Canada.

In general terms, I reflect on the experience of my own community. Thankfully, though things have changed since 2015, we still have not seen the schools return, and we still have not seen mental health services return, but we have seen more people move into communities, including newcomers, as a lot more people have moved home. We are not talking about more schools closing. We are talking about building houses to welcome all the people who would like to come join our communities.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

For francophone communities, supporting people who speak French is critically important. Without immigration, when businesses shut down, when schools are closed, it will be impossible for francophones to continue living their lives in French. They will be forced to leave the community to seek employment in other communities.

[*English*]

It is extremely important that we take into account the impact on different communities, including linguistic minority communities. If we continue to support the ability for francophone communities to attract newcomers, it will allow them to raise their families in French, in the language of their choice, in their community. This is the kind of thing that will keep people on board with our immigration policy if they see a future for themselves in it. By living in a community that embraces newcomers and diversity, I can say from personal experience that it has made my community a more vibrant and dynamic place to call home.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my questions are about the economic benefits of welcoming immigrants.

At the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food we discussed the closing of the Olymel plant in Vallée-Jonction, Quebec. One reason for the closure is the shortage of workers. I think that is also a big problem for Quebec.

Could the minister explain the importance of immigrants to Quebec's economy?

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for her question.

This is a challenge not just for Quebec businesses, but also for francophone communities across the country, where it is a big problem. When touring the community of Saint-Quentin in northern New Brunswick, we introduced a new pilot program for essential workers. When I visited the plants that were using this immigration program, I saw with my own eyes how much the arrival of these newcomers benefited both the businesses and the community.

That is just as true in Quebec. When people arrive in a community, especially in a rural area, the community can continue to have positive experiences, to live in French and to give children the opportunity to do so as well.

It is very hard when a plant closes for good, because families leave the community. Often, immigrants are then forced to go to an anglophone community and thus lose the possibility of having the next generation continue speaking French.

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud and, especially, very grateful for having been born here in Canada. It is a major victory to be born here in Canada, because it is a country full of opportunity. I was born to a single mother and adopted by two teachers who always taught me that here in Canada, no matter where you come from, you can achieve whatever you want as long as you work hard. This is the same country where my wife arrived as a refugee and it is the country we want for our children.

Unfortunately, it is not the country we are seeing today. Everything is broken in Canada, after eight years under this Prime Minister. He does not like it when I say that, so I will say it again: everything is broken after eight years under this Prime Minister. This includes the immigration system. Our country had a reputation for its immigration system, which is one of the best in the world. It was based on common sense. People were invited to come work here, people like the Italians who built our infrastructure. Workers from around the world have come here to build hospitals, houses and our economy, and to enrich everyone's lives.

What do people see when they come here now? They see no houses. Nine out of 10 young Canadians are convinced they will never be able to buy a house. We lack health care services. Why? It is because our immigrants are being blocked from working as doctors and nurses. Over a million immigrants who are interested in coming here, to Canada, have had to wait longer than the government's prescribed waiting period.

Even when they do manage to get here, immigrants have a hard time getting work permits. People want to work, but this Prime Minister and his utterly incompetent government stand in their way. Not only that, but the strike that the Prime Minister caused led to even longer wait times for families living apart, potential workers who cannot start their jobs, and refugees seeking safety and security here in Canada. The Prime Minister's utter incompetence is the cause of these problems.

Instead of focusing on the job, which can be boring, and repairing the damage he has done, the Prime Minister and his multinational executive friends, like Dominic Barton, want to create grand utopias for us. Instead of building our country on the basis of common sense, which has worked for over 100 years, the Prime Minister wants to create a great revolution and paint a utopia that will never exist. He should focus on the backbone of our system, in other words, reduce the time it takes for a small or medium-sized business or a farmer to hire a foreign worker when no Canadian is available to do the job. He should unite families, especially in the case of grandparents, so that they can take care of their grandchildren when the parents are at work. Finally, he should allow more non-profit organizations to sponsor refugees and provide them with care, opportunities to learn English or French, and access to a job and housing.

He should do the common-sense work. Instead, the Prime Minister wants to focus on the priorities of large multinationals, such as McKinsey, and its former CEO, Dominic Barton. That company has received over \$100 million in contracts from this government and dreams of turning the country into a utopia.

• (1110)

I will never listen to those people. I am going to listen to the common sense of ordinary Canadians, the people who do the work. That is how the common-sense Conservative government I will be leading will repair the damage.

That is why I will be voting for this motion. Because I want to reject Dominic Barton and the Century Initiative and to base our immigration system once again on the common sense of ordinary Canadians.

[*English*]

Speaking of common sense, I will be splitting my time with the common-sense Conservative member of Parliament for Calgary Shepard, Mr. Speaker.

I am so proud and grateful that I won the lottery of life to be born here in Canada. I was born of a teenage unwed mother, who put me up for adoption to two school teachers. They taught me that it did not matter where I came from; it mattered where I was going. It did not matter who I knew; it mattered what I could do.

That is the country my wife came to as a refugee. That is the country that a lot of her family, her brother to be a soldier, her other brother to be a carpenter, her sister to be a nurse and for her family to work hard and achieve great things. That is the country I want all our kids to inherit, but that is not the country we see today.

Canada, after eight years of the Prime Minister, the out-of-touch Prime Minister, is broken. What is especially broken is the immigration system that leaves a million immigrants waiting longer than the acceptable wait time to get into Canada.

We see international students abused and exploited by human traffickers, shady consultants, some of them losing their lives and being sent back to places like India in body bags because the Prime Minister and his government have failed to protect them from the predators and the scam artists who are destroying their lives.

We see 20,000 brilliant immigrant doctors blocked from working in their professions by government gatekeepers. We see 32,000 immigrant nurses blocked from their jobs. It boils my blood to sit in a hospital waiting room for five hours with my daughter who has a migraine headache because there are not enough doctors and nurses, while gatekeepers block brilliant immigrant doctors and nurses from doing their jobs.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister gleefully tells us about all the wonderful meetings he is having with mayors about housing and infrastructure. I do not really care about their meetings, because the gatekeepers at municipal governments, the governments that the Prime Minister is funding with billions of dollars, are blocking housing construction, so our immigrants, working class and youth cannot get homes.

After eight years of the Prime Minister everything is broken. However, instead of fixing the basics, he is focused on another grand utopian project, that of his friend, Dominic Barton, the multinational CEO, former ambassador to Communist China, who helped bring about the opioid crisis that is savaging our working-class families. He has come up with a bright, new idea that he is going to triple our national population to 100 million. We do not need anymore utopian schemes from globe-trotting millionaires and multinational insiders. We need common sense for a change.

Here is our common-sense plan to get back to the basics. The first is to clear the backlog so immigrant families can be reunited, so our farmers and small businesses can fill jobs for which there is no Canadian available; allow our churches, mosques, synagogues and other non-profit organizations to sponsor more legitimate refugees; get them language training so they can learn how to speak French or English, get a job, get working and get contributing; speed up work permits for those people who already here waiting for their cases to be heard. They might as well be out earning a wage, contributing to the economy. They want to work. Let them work. It is common sense, for God's sake.

Speaking of work, let us bring in a blue seal national standard for all our professions. We have a Red Seal standard that allows tradespeople to take a test, prove they are qualified, get to work and move across the country to fill needed vacancies in the job market. Why do we not have a blue seal standard that would allow foreign-trained nurses, doctors, engineers and other professionals to prove they are qualified and within 60 days of applying to work in their field, get a yes or no based on their tested ability, not based on where they come from? We would have more doctors, more nurses, more common sense.

What I am saying is let us get back to the basics. Our immigration system was the best in the world eight years ago, but now we have immigrants who come here and then say they want to go back because this is not what was promised.

• (1115)

I have said that everything is broken, but what is broken most of all is the promise, the promise of Canada; the promise that we will reinstall a promise that in Canada it does not matter where people come from, but where they go. It does not matter if their name is Martin or Mohamed, or Singh or Smith, or Chong or Charles, or Patel or Poilievre, if they work hard, they can achieve anything they want in the greatest and freest country in the world. This is the common sense of the common people united for our common home. It is their home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Conservative Party leader. He always makes me laugh. Actually, I want to congratulate him. Not only will he vote in favour of the motion, but, by doing so, he will be taking a stand against the position adopted by the former Conservative Party leader, Brian Mulroney, who supports the Century Initiative. I congratulate him on taking a stand against Brian Mulroney. I have to say that takes courage.

Throughout his speech, he talked a lot about common sense. I get it. He talked to us about approaches that should be different. I think

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the government is making the immigration department the most dysfunctional of all departments in the machinery of Canadian government.

He did not answer one of my questions though. What does common sense mean to him when it comes to yearly immigration targets for 2023 to 2025? Is it 500,000 people? Is it 400,000 people? Is it 300,000 people? Has the Conservative Party, which has lots of researchers and plenty of resources, come up with an appropriate number for immigration targets? What are the Conservative Party's numbers?

• (1120)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, what interests me are the figures for small- and medium-sized businesses in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region that are looking for workers but facing a labour shortage. During a labour shortage, immigration numbers will be higher than average. When jobs are more scarce, the numbers drop.

Immigration numbers should be based first and foremost on Canada's needs. When companies and farmers need more workers because there are no Canadians to fill the vacancies, the process has to be fast-tracked to allow them to sponsor the workers they need. When the economy slows, there will obviously be fewer.

We have to base our numbers on common sense, not on the hopes and dreams of the CEOs of multinationals, like Dominic Barton. That is what common sense is all about.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I used to work in a non-profit organization that served newcomers to Canada. In that role, and in this role, one of the saddest yet most meaningful work I have done is to help members of the LGBT community leave their country of origin, where they are unsafe or their lives are at risk, and bring them home to Canada where they can be safe and experience all the freedoms they deserve.

I wonder what the member's thoughts are on ensuring that those targeted communities are safer and how we as a country can welcome and fast-track them to our country so they can be safe.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I do support allowing people from the gay and lesbian community who are being persecuted around the world to come and seek refuge in Canada. In fact, I think our previous Conservative government was the first one to allow that as a grounds for seeking asylum from countries where dictators, like in Iran, persecute people based on their sexuality, on who they are and who they love. They should be allowed to come here and enjoy the wonderful freedom and blessings of this land.

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Our freedom is what brings people here; it is not our warm weather. Why do they come here? Because we are a free country. They want to enjoy freedom. Therefore, not only should we welcome people like the ones the member just mentioned; we should remember why they came here in the first place. They came here for the freedom that our forebearers defended on battle fields around the world. That is why we must work every day, in every way, to make Canada the freest nation on Earth.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his speech.

I can say that the worst thing that could happen to Canadians is a Conservative government. I would like to ask my hon. colleague, who attacked this government, why he and his party vote against every bill that is good for Canadians.

Take help for seniors, for example, or reducing the retirement age from 67 to 65. Then there was the Canada child benefit and supports for the middle class. We have lifted 300,000 children out of poverty. We have helped build a good reputation for all Canadians so they can be proud abroad. The United Nations considers Canada's refugee system to be one of the best in the world.

What can the Leader of the Opposition tell us? What can he tell Canadians about these issues?

• (1125)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has again demonstrated just how out of touch this Prime Minister's Liberals are. Two-thirds of Canadians believe that Canada is broken after eight years of this Prime Minister. Housing costs have doubled. One in five Canadians is skipping meals because they cannot afford groceries, and 1.5 million Canadians have to use a food bank if they want to eat. Violent crime has increased by 32%. Nearly 30,000 Canadians have died of an opioid overdose since this Prime Minister, who is now legalizing heroine, cocaine, crack and all sorts of other drugs, took office.

Everything is broken after eight years of this Prime Minister. However, the good thing is that we will replace the pain he has caused with the hope that Canadians need. We are going to use good old common sense. We are going to bring back common sense.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the hardest parts of being in politics is having to speak right after the leader of the Conservative Party. He just delivered a powerful speech that was full of compassion for newcomers who choose to settle in Canada.

As many members know, I was myself a newcomer several years ago. I immigrated to Canada from Communist Poland. That country is no longer communist. That era is behind us. It is now a democratic country, and I am proud of my ethnic background.

My leader was right. Everything in Canada is broken. All federal government programs are broken, but immigration programs are even more broken.

As the immigration critic for the Conservative Party, I follow this file closely. I would also like to point out that one can become fran-

cophone as an immigrant. As I have often mentioned in the House, I am a child of Bill 101. It really is possible to learn how to be a francophone as an immigrant.

I know that the leader of the Bloc Québécois often mentions, with a hint of despair in his voice, that protecting Quebec culture is impossible. From my personal experience, I think culture can be preserved.

I am a Calgary MP, as my family is in Calgary now, and I am a proud Albertan. I still follow the day-to-day happenings in Quebec, but I also follow the work of great comedians. I want to mention one in particular who, to me, is one of the best in Quebec: Sugar Sammy. He is a great comedian. Many allophones and immigrants who have lived in Quebec, or who are still living there, follow Sugar Sammy.

I was in Quebec a few weeks ago, and I saw several announcements about an upcoming Sugar Sammy tour in Quebec. I know he may not be the comedian the Bloc would have preferred me to name, but I want to mention him, because I think he is a great Quebecker. He makes me laugh.

I want to come back to the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. There are backlogs in nearly every program. There are over 2,000 immigration applications from newcomers to Canada that are behind schedule. These people are waiting to come to Canada or to be allowed to stay in Canada.

I want to mention a few programs because I do like numbers. Let us talk about the government-assisted refugees program. I know that many Liberal members are going to talk about this program. One Liberal member already has. In 2019, it took 15 months to process applications. Today, it takes 33 months. That is a three-year wait.

There are also privately sponsored refugees. I am talking here about charities, churches, mosques or temples that decide they want to sponsor a refugee, usually from their community, and bring them to Canada. These refugees are desperate people who need help, and Canada gives them that opportunity. Private community groups cover all of the costs associated with that refugee coming to Canada. In 2019, it took 23 months for the federal government to process that type of application while today it takes 38 months. That is nearly a four-year wait.

Let us now talk about the federal skilled trades program. As another member mentioned, in 2019, it took 12 months to process applications under that program. Now it takes 20 months. For skilled workers in Quebec it used to take 22 months to process their applications and now it takes 73 months. As for business people in Quebec, it used to take 54 months to process applications, and now it takes 67 months.

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I am not pulling these numbers out of thin air. These numbers can be found on the government's website. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship came to the House to tell us that these numbers were not up to date and that this would take only six months from now on. If it is a six-month wait time for people applying today, then that is great. However, those who submitted their application one, two, three or four years ago are waiting their turn and will continue to wait. They will wait four, five, six or seven years. Sometimes no one knows how long it will take.

What is more, 90 to 95% of the files that are sent to Conservative MPs at their riding offices have to do with immigration. An error was made, the wait times are too long, the questions are not clear, etc. No one answers the phone. No one answers the email. The responses provided by the employees at immigration are sometimes confusing and contradictory and no one knows where we are headed.

● (1130)

We should be focusing on what could be done to help newcomers and people in our communities in the next 75 days, not the next 75 years. The Liberals have caused the challenges people are facing today.

In 2015, there were no backlogs in processing applications. The Canadian immigration system was the best in the world, and countries everywhere were trying to copy it. It was based on a points system, which gave everyone the chance to come to Canada. I want to be clear that it was a neutral system. If the person was young and well educated, they had a better chance of coming to Canada as an economic immigrant. Our immigration system treated everyone equally. Other countries wanted to copy it, but no one wants to copy our current system, which was created by the Liberals eight years ago. The backlog in the current system is over two million applications. After the pandemic, the backlog reached 2.9 million.

The Liberals claim that the backlog was caused by the pandemic, but that is not true: it was caused by them. The backlog had reached two million files before the pandemic. The pandemic made matters worse.

As my leader said, the things that newcomers go through and the services they receive from the federal government do not meet our expectations.

I myself am an immigrant, and I know that the people in our communities have a hard time finding a job, a place to live or people who share their mother tongue. In Canada, we can learn French and English. I, for one, learned French from *Passe-Partout*; I know all Quebecers are familiar with that show. English is my third language, and I learned it by watching *Sesame Street*.

[English]

This is a good opportunity for me to switch to English. There are a lot of opportunities for immigrants who come to this country, including those like me. I grew up in Montreal and am a child of the Bill 101 education system. It does work; I am proof, I think. There are many of us who are proof that it does work, that they can take up the language.

However, we have unrealistic plans. The false utopias that are being proposed by the Century Initiative are completely ridiculous. We have McKinsey executives, big business executives, including one from BlackRock and others, who do not spend the time visiting communities, smaller towns and rural regions, which are desperate for workers. Newcomers are coming to Canada, and there have been so many waves of immigration to Canada that have vitalized entire regions and communities. I know that, for example, in northern Alberta, there is a huge Ukrainian community, of Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox people, which is now accepting another wave of people fleeing the war in Ukraine. They are finding an opportunity to speak their mother tongue while also brushing up on their English or their French.

There are also communities in northern Alberta that are French communities and that have a historic French connection. I remember that, my first time in Alberta, when I first moved out there, I went into a rural area for, I think, a birthday party. There were two nuns there. They spoke to me in French. I could not believe it; it was immaculate, perfect French. They came from a French convent. We had a long discussion in that language, because that was their experience of being in Alberta: They had been brought up with both languages.

My leader was right. The Liberals have had eight years and have completely broken the immigration system. What we should be looking at is services. The newcomer experience to Canada is awful. That is why so many of them are talking about returning to their country of origin; it is because they cannot find the opportunities that they were promised here.

There is so much we can do to make sure foreign credentials are recognized. My father was not able to practise here as an engineer because he could not pass a language exam. He passed all of the technical exams. That is the experience of so many immigrants who come here and are discriminated against just because they have credentials from overseas. We have heard the numbers: 32,000 nurses and over 20,000 doctors. There are engineers in my riding who cannot practise here easily, because they are being discriminated against because of where they got their years of experience or where they got their credentials and education.

The provincial colleges need to be told to stop gatekeeping and allow people to practise their professions, to do the thing that they love here in Canada, to add to our communities, build a family and provide for themselves. That is the Canadian dream. That is what we have to restore.

● (1135)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether it is the leader of the Conservative Party or the member who just spoke. They seem to be in some sort of a dream world. They are trying to give the impression that the Conservatives did a good job on immigration. They need to get serious.

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If we look at the sponsoring of parents and grandparents, the backlog was over seven years long. It was so bad, the Conservatives actually cancelled the program. They would not allow someone to sponsor a parent or grandparent. In one area, the program got so bad, in terms of sponsoring immigrants, that they actually deleted hundreds of thousands of people who were already in the process and had been waiting years. It was an absolute disaster, including the backlogs to sponsor a loved one. I do not know where they are coming from. They obviously are in some other form of reality.

When can we anticipate the Conservative Party to enter into the reality zone when it comes to immigration?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, let us talk numbers. I remember it was a previous Liberal government that left behind a backlog of six to eight million applications for the Conservative government.

They did not shut down the program. They returned money to everybody and restarted the program from zero because they botched it so badly. There was no choice but to do that, and they are doing that again. The people who are going to suffer are newcomers and immigrants to Canada who are being given false hopes and dreams while they are processing these applications.

Let us talk numbers because the member raised them. I see here for the family class that every single one of the lines is longer than it used to be. Every single one now takes longer than they did in 2019. I am not even going back all the way to 2015, I am just talking 2019.

Every single one, parents or grandparents, spouses, partners and children, family relations, humanitarian and compassionate consideration, or H&C as we call it, is longer today than they used to be. The Liberals have a backlog that is two million applications, not the Conservatives. They created this problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I appreciate the quality of his French, which he uses regularly.

Today, we are hearing many speeches that say it is easy and it is important. Yes, French is spoken in some parts of Alberta. We are hearing stories about how French is found here and there, but the reality is that the Government of Quebec is having a hard time welcoming the immigrants it is already receiving. Why? It is because we lack the resources for our social and health services and for services to newcomers, and, in the meantime, the federal government hangs onto the money. Not only does it hang onto the money and prevent us from properly welcoming these people, but it tells us that even more people will be coming to Quebec. That is what does not make sense. We are being reasonable in the arguments we are making today.

Does the member not believe that the Government of Quebec should set its own thresholds without the federal government dictating them?

Furthermore, could we please get our money back so we can take care of our people?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question, which I think is very reasonable. Quebec has an agreement

with Canada regarding the establishment of criteria for immigrants who want to settle in Quebec. My family settled in Quebec. In the 1980s, my father worked at the shipyard in Sorel, which no longer exists.

It is not the government that welcomes immigrants. It is the communities in the cities and regions. Cultural communities and groups are the ones that welcome them. I think that there is tremendous potential if we ask for help from existing community groups that can get money from the private sector and from various religious communities that would be willing to help newcomers settle in Quebec and Canada.

• (1140)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as someone who is an immigrant to Canada myself, having come here 50 years ago, and as an MP who has attended citizenship ceremonies where I have seen the pride when newcomers become part of the fabric of Canada, and I have seen the many contributions they make in my riding, I am a bit confused by the Conservatives' speeches today.

I have seen the Bloc members congratulating the Conservative leader, I guess, in supporting this motion. What we have before us is a motion that styles immigrants as a threat to some Canadians and blames immigrants for housing shortages and for delays in the health care system.

I am really unclear, having heard the speeches that sound like they support immigration, about what the Conservatives are doing with the motion before us today.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the member's characterization.

I read the motion, both in French and then in English, and it sounds exactly the same to me. This motion basically rejects the Century Initiative, which is big business executives with these pie-in-the-sky dreams, these utopias that were talking about 75 years from now.

I want to talk about the immigrant experience today, right now. What they are experiencing on the ground is long wait times, families broken up and people divorcing. Spousal sponsorships for Iran are completely blocked at the visa processing offices during a revolution led by women in Iran. Spousal sponsorships are not being processed. There are people who have waited years, sometimes up to five years. There are people getting divorced because they cannot even bring in their partner from a place like Iran, where there is an autocratic regime. They are persecuting women and men on the streets right now.

We should be doing so much more. I do not see any of that in this motion right here. This is simply rejecting a ridiculous pie-in-the-sky utopian dream that these big business executives put together for McKinsey.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I have the honour and pleasure of sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Vancouver East.

Today we are seized with a motion that opens up a debate, which is clearly necessary and could very well be done for any public policy. A discussion of immigration, immigration levels, integration capacity, language, living together and living in harmony is always welcome, just as we would talk about public policies on health, the environment, international trade, and so on.

However, as La Presse columnist Rima Elkouri says, approach is everything. That is the point I want to make. Beyond the specific language it contains, this opposition motion is part of a wider political context where the issues of immigration and integration are being used as political tools.

Before I go into those details, however, I would like to read my colleagues a poem. I do not do this sort of thing every day, but I would like to read a short poem by Gérard Godin, one of Quebec's great poets. I really enjoy his work. This poem was transformed into urban art near the Mont-Royal metro station, not far from my riding and my home. I would like everyone to keep these words in mind:

at 7:30 a.m. the Montreal Metro
is full of immigrants
those people
are up early

are they the reason
the city's aging heart
still beats?

the city's worn and aging heart
spasmodic
occluded
murmuring
flawed

it has every reason in the world
to stop
to give up

I see this tribute to immigrants, who get up early to go to work, every day and every week in the Montreal Metro in my riding, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Last weekend, I had the honour of participating in a graduation ceremony for a social integration enterprise called PROPRET. The graduates, 90% of them immigrants, most of them women, went through housekeeping training and follow-up. Many of the people in the program also get French training. Diplomas were awarded to 67 people who have been through tough times but who work very, very hard and often struggle. However, they were proud of what they accomplished and of their successful integration into the labour market in French. It was wonderful to see.

I think we need to highlight these successes and this reality on the ground. This is what is really happening. The disaster that had been predicted by some news media has not happened. They like to light fires to get attention and clicks and thus make a profit.

It also reminds me of a documentary called *Essentiels*, by Sonia Djelidi and journalist Sarah Champagne, about temporary foreign workers. There are several beautiful stories in that documentary, but also some painful ones, because we really need these temporary foreign workers, which the Premier of Quebec seems to have just realized.

Edyn, a Latin American man, said that he worked 10 hours a day, had to take care of his two children who were going to school and cook for them, and that his wife had remained in their country of origin, with children as well. He said he did not know when he would have time to take French classes. He had tried to fit them into his schedule, but it had been difficult and he had failed several times.

Edyn eventually graduated, but the reality on the ground is that people have two or three jobs and work 60 or 70 hours a week to be able to make ends meet. They are told they just have to learn French, but it is not that easy. It makes for a good slogan on a leaflet or a button but, in the real world, these people are just trying to survive.

I also want to talk about Mamadou. People called him a guardian angel while he worked in long-term care facilities during the pandemic. He caught COVID-19. Despite all his work and his knowledge of French, he is now threatened with deportation. That is the kind of case we see in our offices. That is the reality on the ground.

That is why the debate on immigration levels to Quebec has become a bit toxic and unhealthy, because there is a lot of vocabulary being used to divide people, namely, us, the old-stock Quebecers, the historical majority, versus them, the newcomers who are being singled out. That is really unfortunate. There is not a lot of that kind of rhetoric in today's motion, but that is why I am saying that we need to pay attention to the context, which has been ongoing for many years.

● (1145)

We have had reasonable accommodation, the charter of values, very closed-off and discriminatory secularism, and negative language that has led to all kinds of problems. These are not just empty words.

In the most recent Quebec election campaign, candidate and minister Jean Boulet claimed that 80% of immigrants do not work and do not speak French. He said that during the election campaign, when he was minister. However, it is completely false. According to statistics from the Institut de la statistique du Québec, in 2021, close to 75% of immigrants spoke French.

I have said it before in the House, but we need to stop talking about how a mother tongue is such an important indicator of the health of French in Quebec. The purpose of Bill 101 was and still is to ensure that the mother tongue indicator no longer makes any difference. The idea behind Bill 101 is to ensure that, even if first-generation immigrants do not speak French and are unable to learn it, their children will learn it and integrate into our Quebec society. That has been a success. There are a lot of children of Bill 101 in my circle, and one of them lives with me.

Business of Supply

We also have to be serious when we talk about whether Quebec is receiving the funds it needs to integrate immigrants into French-speaking society. Once again, the reality in the field contradicts what some, like Coalition Avenir Québec, are saying. In an article published last year in *La Presse*, journalist Joël-Denis Bellavance wrote that, of the \$697 million that the federal government sends to Quebec for teaching immigrants French, 75% was used for purposes other than French courses.

Instead of complaining and saying that its integration capacity is stretched to the limit and that the federal government is not doing its fair share, maybe the Quebec government should do some soul-searching and consider spending this \$700 million on French courses for immigrants who want to learn French but are being forced to wait a long time.

Minister Boulet was not the only one to speak this way. Premier Legault calls immigration an existential threat. He warns that Quebec will become the Louisiana of the north and says that recklessly raising the number of immigrants would be suicidal. Those are weighty words. They taint the whole debate around integration capacity, immigration rates and Quebec's levels. I would point specifically to the front page of last Saturday's *Journal de Montréal*, with a headline that translates to "Quebec is caught in a trap", followed by subheadings such as "French forced into decline", "They want to assimilate us" and "Two worst-case scenarios". One columnist, Mathieu Bock-Côté, talks about "demographic drowning", echoing certain satirical cartoons that show a massive wave of immigration. That is tantamount to saying that we are being invaded.

I do not know the semantic difference between demographic drowning and replacement theory, but we hear about a lot of it from figures on France's far right, including Marine Le Pen and Éric Zemmour. They evoke the spectre of the disappearance of the Quebec people under the threat of immigration, when we should be using more positive language to refer to newcomers, in the spirit of dialogue and openness. Instead, they play on insecurities and fear, including the fear of the other. Fear of the other leads to insular attitudes and close-mindedness, division in our society between the original population, a concept that leaves out indigenous peoples, and our capacity for integration.

I do think we need to be vigilant. French is a minority in North America and always will be. We need to make an effort to protect and promote French. We need to pay attention to social cohesion and our capacity for integration. However, social cohesion comes with open arms, openness, support, not demeaning attitudes, finger-pointing and viewing immigrants as a threat to the Quebec people or the French language.

I am rather dismayed that, after all these years, we are having a debate that is extremely toxic and negative. Quebec is fully capable of working with the municipalities and the federal government to welcome people properly, make them future Quebecers and stop seeing them as threats to Quebec culture and identity that need to be rejected out of hand. It is an extremely dangerous slippery slope. With this type of motion, at this time, in the current political context, I think we need to cross our *t*'s and dot our *i*'s.

• (1150)

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie began by reciting a poem by Gérard Godin. I am not convinced that Gérard Godin would have agreed entirely with what my colleague said after that, though.

I can respond by quoting Gaston Miron. In *Compagnon des Amériques*, Gaston Miron said:

...reach out to everyone, country
you who appear...

It is about reaching out to others, but Gaston Miron also has this to say in *Compagnon des Amériques*:

...before all the compromises cloaked in mink pelts
before the champions of conscience soothing
the scrawny emancipated
the well-mannered insects
before all the commanders that exploit you
and your cobblestone flesh...

When Gaston Miron talks about "well-mannered insects", he is referring to those who accuse us of being intolerant when we claim our identity.

I have to say this, because it is a known fact: Quebec's future as a nation is in peril. Acknowledging this does not mean that we are closed to immigration. Anyone who says the opposite are the ones who are themselves closed, in my opinion.

I have a rather simple question for my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. The Quebec National Assembly passed a unanimous motion to reject the Century Initiative. There is even a motion adopted unanimously by his colleagues from Québec Solidaire.

Does my colleague realize that the future of the Quebec nation is in peril? Is he prepared to admit today that the future of the Quebec nation is in jeopardy?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his incisive question. I, too, can provide a quote.

I really enjoy Gilles Vigneault's music, and a line from one of his songs goes, "and these people are of my people". I think this is important in the debate we are currently having. We are dealing with real people and we have to treat them as such. This is not about good Quebecers versus evil immigrants.

It is appropriate to have a discussion about how many people we can accept and the integration rate, but members should know that the Quebec government selects 100% of its economic immigrants. Even Mr. Legault acknowledged that 80% of these economic immigrants speak French.

Do we need to do more for the immigrants who arrive under the family reunification stream, or as temporary foreign workers or refugees? Perhaps we do.

With respect to refugees, it is a little more complicated because their circumstances are different, but I believe we should have a rational debate about that. I have to say that at this time, I believe some columnists are using this topic to make political hay.

Business of Supply

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to how Canada's rich diversity has actually seen expansion in many ways. I have used the example of Manitoba, where more French is being spoken than there ever has been in its history. With respect to the diversity, I have reflected upon people of Filipino and Indian heritage, in particular from the Punjab. I often meet with youngsters and they are actually speaking French or learning to speak French. I believe this is healthy in the long term for the French language.

Could the member provide his thoughts in regard to the way many immigrants see learning and understanding French as a wonderful thing?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am not an expert on Manitoban history, but we do need to be somewhat careful. I think there was a time when the majority of people in Manitoba spoke French, before French was banned from being taught in schools. We have to put things in perspective, from a historical point of view.

Today, it is true that there is an interest in French and immersion classes. It has even reached the point where, in many parts of the country, there is not enough capacity in French or immersion schools to offer spots to newcomers and children.

That being said, is French under threat? Yes. Will it always be threatened? Yes. Do we need to do more in Quebec and on the federal government side? Yes, absolutely.

I think that significant steps will be taken this afternoon when we pass Bill C-13. The same can be said of the agreement that was reached between Ottawa and the Government of Quebec regarding this bill and the place of French in federally regulated companies.

Yes, we applaud diversity, but we have to give ourselves the means to properly integrate people into Quebec's culture and history and into the beautiful French language. I think we all need to work towards that, but without pointing fingers at immigrants, without portraying them as a threat.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that I am heartened to hear my colleague's words, to say that, when we engage in this debate, it is about the importance of it and what it means for all of us, but at the same time not to take an approach that vilifies and points fingers at others.

I look around this chamber and there are very few of us, truth be told, who are not immigrants, either ourselves or our ancestors. For those of us who are not indigenous, we came to this land as newcomers. Over the years, we have seen changes made. As always, when newcomers come to a country, to a new place, there are feelings of threat and fear, I guess, because of the unfamiliarity of these individuals.

For indigenous peoples and their history, and we already know Canada's colonial history, it is sad to say that those fears are very real and have done tremendous harm to indigenous peoples, to which Canada is still trying to reconcile, to reconcile in a real effort, in a meaningful way, and we have a long way to go. There is no question about that.

Now, with respect to other communities that are newcomers, there are those of us who came to Canada as immigrants. In my case, back in the seventies, when my family immigrated here, we were new in this country as well, but over the years we have worked hard to integrate into Canadian society. We learned the language, learned the Canadian culture and Canadian values, and actively participated in our communities. Some of us achieved different things, and I would say without hesitation that the immigrant community has contributed to Canada in every aspect and is engaged in Canadian society in every way. The contributions are significant economically, socially, culturally and environmentally, to be sure.

On the situation of what we are talking about here, we are now saying we have too many immigrants and we fear that, with more immigrants coming, it would take away from what we have. I think we need to think about what some of the concerns are that have been brought up.

First is the issue around ensuring that Quebec and the French language and culture are protected. I absolutely agree that Quebec is a very unique province and that it has a distinction with its language and culture, which we need to do everything we can to protect. Part of that work rests with the federal government, with its immigration measures, particularly as it pertains to ensuring that the immigration target for francophone immigrants is achieved. Sadly, that is not the reality.

The Liberal government has failed to meet the target year after year after year. In fact, the FCFA made a recommendation at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration calling on the government to adopt a new francophone immigration target of 12% in 2024 and to gradually increase it to 20% in 2036. I think that should be done. I think it needs to be done. We need to be aggressively pursuing those targets to realize that. We also need to do a lot of work to ensure that francophone targets outside of Quebec are also met. In addition to that, the work we need to do across the country is to ensure that languages, French classes, are made available to students.

• (1200)

I can say from personal experience that I desperately wanted my two children to have access to French immersion. What did I do? After they were born, I enrolled them in the lottery. That is the system that we have. I had to enrol them in a lottery to see if they would get picked to get into French immersion. Sadly, for my family, neither one of them won that lottery. That is the reality.

Business of Supply

To fix and address the question of preserving the French language, we need to make sure those kinds of programs are not done through a lottery, but rather, are made available for people. That is not the reality, and that is what we need to fix. That is not an immigrant problem. It is a Canadian problem that we need to face up to and ensure resources are provided and those programs are in place.

When I think about the contributions of the immigrant community, especially now in this period of dire need for health care workers, during the pandemic it became very clear that the immigrant community helped Canada in significant ways, sometimes by taking on jobs that put them in danger. We saw that in the aquaculture industry. Some migrant workers actually died while working to put food on our tables. That is the reality, and that continues to be a challenge for migrant workers who are taken advantage of because they do not have full status. They should be given full status and be regularized, by the way.

On the health care piece, let me put some important information on the table. Immigrants account for 36% of physicians, 33% of business owners with paid staff and 41% of engineers. What that tells me is that immigrants are engaged in all walks of life, in every profession in our communities, and they contribute significantly to our communities.

More specifically in the health care sector, 23% of registered nurses are immigrants; 35% of nursing aides and related occupations are immigrants; and 37% of pharmacists, 36% of physicians, 39% of dentists and 54% of dental technologists and related occupations are immigrants. At a time when we have a major need for health care workers, the immigrant community has shown, and I believe they will continue to show, their important contributions to the caring economy and the service economy, which we all depend upon to keep us healthy in our communities.

Part of the problem for the immigrant community in getting into these professions, which we have all talked about and needs to be addressed, would be for the government to ensure that credential recognition is made easier. Some provinces have embarked on that, which I am glad to see, and the numbers are astounding. The interest that has been shown is astounding. In Nova Scotia, as an example, almost 1,500 people showed interest in a new program that was put in place to start May 1. British Columbia is embarking in this process as well.

That is what we need to do. We need to eliminate the barriers for the immigrant community so they can fully participate in Canadian society. This will also ensure that the talents they bring are recognized so they can practise their professions. This will help all of Canada and most certainly help Quebec as well. In fact, Quebec specifically, during the pandemic period, wanted an immigration measure for health care workers to regularize those in Quebec in the health care profession. There is no question that the value of the immigrant community is significant. We need to make sure we also facilitate the process to support them in their contributions and successes here in Canada.

• (1205)

There are many aspects, when we are looked at as individuals, as human beings, that we have—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member's time is up. I am sure she will be able to add more during the period for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I recognize how much work my colleague has done on the immigration file. Indeed, I congratulate her because I agree with much of what she said in her speech, including the parts about francophone immigration.

Now I would like us all to look at the motion before us. I kind of have a hard time believing the NDP could vote against this motion. My colleague mentioned first nations in her speech. The motion reads, "That...the House reject the Century Initiative objectives and ask the government not to use them as a basis for developing its future immigration levels." One reason is that first peoples, not to mention Quebec, were never consulted with respect to the Century Initiative targets, which are determined purely on the basis of economics.

Based solely on the motion, I have a hard time seeing how a progressive party could vote against it. Essentially, it is an attack on McKinsey, a right-wing firm that considers only the economic aspects of immigration. No social factors came into play at all. Linguistic and cultural minorities were not taken into account.

I just want to understand why the NDP is going to vote against this motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, part of the motion says, "tripling Canada's population has real impacts on the future of the French language, Quebec's political weight, the place of First Peoples, access to housing, and health and education infrastructure":

I want to address this issue. I appreciate the member's work at the immigration committee. I have come to know him and respect a lot of the work that he does.

However, I think we are embarking on a very dangerous path, where we could signal that we are going to be vilifying and blaming the immigrant community for the health care crisis we are facing, the housing crisis we are facing and the problems that we have seen as a result of colonization of Canada for indigenous peoples.

It is not the immigrant community that should be carrying that weight, but rather, it is the governments that should be carrying that weight.

• (1210)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned medically trained people who are here in this country and ready to go to work.

Would the member not agree that that is more of a provincial issue to solve, with the individual medical associations and health authorities in each province? That seems to be a bit of a thorn in everybody's side, when the federal government tells the provinces what to do with their hospitals and who gets employed there.

Business of Supply

It is an answer to some of our immigration issues. Would the member agree that we should do everything we can to work with the provinces to make it much easier?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, there is no question that the provinces and territories need to step up and address that issue, but the federal government also needs to do the same.

Because the federal government, with its immigration measures, only allows migrant workers to come to work in Canada with the identified employer, they are not able to work elsewhere. Those with the talents to work in other sectors are unable to do so because of immigration restrictions, even though they meet the criteria and have the credentials. The federal government has a role to play to fix that problem.

At the end of the day, I hope we can all recognize the value of those in the immigrant community. Instead of vilifying them, blaming them and turning our guns on them, we should say that we are one community and we welcome immigrant communities. It does not have to be one or the other.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my long years of working with the newcomer population, one of the hardest parts was receiving numerous calls where Canadians were often confused and blamed immigrants for taking up too many resources.

I am just wondering if the member could talk about how important it is that we do not create that dialogue and that we, in fact, do all that we can to bring people together to build that sense of community.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, that is precisely what I fear with this motion. That is why the NDP is not going to support it, as it ties housing to the immigrant community.

The housing crisis exists because successive Liberal and Conservative governments failed on housing. They cancelled the national affordable housing program, they cut funding, and then they were developing initiatives that do not meet the needs. They are not tackling the core of the issue, which is corporate landlords. Instead, they continue to give them special tax treatment.

The issue here is not the immigrant community. It is the lack of action from successive Liberal and Conservative governments that has caused the housing crisis, and I would argue, also the health challenges that we face today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to note that I will be sharing my time with the excellent member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

I will start by saying this: I am pro-immigration, much to the chagrin of my detractors on social media and probably the member for Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie, who pride themselves on knowing my own thoughts better than I do. As I was saying, I am pro-immigration. The organizations I work with are aware of that. Together, we try to ensure the well-being of families in Quebec, including some families who entered the country through Roxham Road but would have deserved a proper welcome with dignity. These people

should have entered Quebec through the front door. I repeat: I am pro-immigration.

Quebec is also pro-immigration. Quebecers want to welcome newcomers with respect and dignity by offering them the resources and tools they need to make their immigration project a success so that they stay in Quebec. With the Century Initiative, it is impossible to do so.

People have heard me say many times what I am about to repeat, but I will do so once more. Newcomers are men, women, children and whole families who are looking for a better life. They are parents who want the best for their children. That is what we all want, in the end: to give the best to our children.

Many have decided to come to study and work in Quebec, charmed by the quality of life, the wide open spaces, the Quebec winter, of course, and Quebec culture. Others are attracted by better career prospects, a higher standard of living or educational opportunities. Their plans for the future contribute to Quebec society as a whole. From the bottom of our hearts, we wish them success. We hope they do well. Under no circumstances should their dreams be shattered by federal interests or lobby groups.

I will say it again: I am pro-immigration and so is Quebec, but not just any how and certainly not at any cost. As a small nation that speaks a minority language within North America, Quebec has a different capacity for integrating immigrants. Quebec's immigration policy has to take this integration capacity into account, as does Canada's. That is why Quebec's National Assembly unanimously condemned the Century Initiative targets. Just yesterday, the Bloc Québécois leader reminded us of a lesson from history when he said that those they intend to harm do not get consulted.

The Bloc Québécois strongly condemns the federal government's failure to consult the Quebec government, or the first peoples, for that matter, before increasing its new immigration level to 500,000 per year. The Bloc Québécois also condemns the thrust of the Liberal government's immigration policy, which includes targets that match those suggested by the Century Initiative lobby group to boost Canada's population to more than 100 million by 2100. The Bloc Québécois considers it imperative for the House to reject these targets and to ask the government to not use them as the basis for developing its own future levels.

That is why we are calling on parliamentarians of all parties to firmly reject this irresponsible and unrealistic option. This project would seek to increase Canada's population to 100 million by 2100. Oddly enough, the federal government's new immigration targets directly correspond to the objectives of the Century Initiative.

I will say it again: Neither Quebec nor the first peoples were consulted. Still, tripling Canada's population has real repercussions. There are repercussions for the future of the French language in Quebec and in Canada, Quebec's political weight, the place of first peoples, access to housing, and health and education infrastructure. None of these were considered when developing this project.

Business of Supply

Moreover, as stated by those who thought of and developed this initiative, social issues and demographic and language considerations were removed in their entirety from the assessment criteria. It is no secret that I enjoy debates. It is normal and healthy in a democracy, especially for important issues that shape the future. This discussion about the future of our nation is a democratic discussion that concerns all citizens of Quebec and Canada.

Unfortunately, because it is a part of Canada, Quebec is all too often faced with choices that are not its own. Too often, federal choices and priorities involve interests that have nothing to do with the interests of the Quebec nation, as it is the case with the Century Initiative. It is generally the case with the Liberal approach to immigration.

Let us talk about Liberal interests. In 2016, Dominic Barton, who still headed McKinsey, was appointed chair of the advisory council on economic growth set up by the Government of Canada, the Liberal government. Dominic Barton and his colleagues recommended substantial increases to immigration thresholds to increase Canada's population to 100 million people by 2100.

• (1215)

By Mr. Barton's own admission, some members of the committee felt that these levels were too high. Judging by the current immigration targets, however, the Government of Canada ended up following Dominic Barton's recommendation.

The former CEO of McKinsey is also the co-founder of Century Initiative, which is recommending gradually increasing immigration to more than one million permanent immigrants a year for a certain number of years, a calculation that is included in the detailed plan.

This lobby group is financially backed by many Toronto banks and corporations. Let us talk about lobbyists. The group is registered as a lobbyist. They are on the list of members of the board of directors. Some are Liberal Party donors and Conservative Party donors. I am not making that up, it is a matter of public record. Not surprisingly, the lobby group also wants Canada to continue oil and gas exploration and development. A lot of deposits are on first nations land. As far as we know, the lobby thinks that Ottawa should find a way forward. This is the lobby the motion is referring to, that we are talking about today. History tells us that we rarely consult those we might harm.

To sum it all up, the Liberal government decided, of its own accord, to exponentially increase immigration targets without any consultation with Quebec or the first nations and without any consideration for the particularities of the Quebec nation or Quebecers' desire to appropriately welcome newcomers by providing them with access to decent housing, health care and a quality education.

Either I do not understand or the government does not understand anything. Either way, one thing is certain, and that is that we do not agree on the targets. It seems as though we will never agree. However, let us remember one thing. If the federal government does not want to hear what Quebec has to say, then perhaps it is because Quebec no longer has a place in the Canadian federation. The day when we can no longer agree with the federal government on anything at all, we can always become independent.

That would be a really great societal undertaking that I am sure people from all over Quebec would want to participate in because we love Quebec and we want to take care of the people who live there. Taking care of our people cannot be done any which way and especially not at any price. Taking care of our people involves letting them in through the front door, with dignity and respect, knowing that we have room for them and that they will be happy here. That is what the Bloc Québécois is saying.

• (1220)

[English]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite keeps referring to the fact that he does not agree with what Canada is trying to do when it comes to immigration levels. I would ask him to either correct me if I am wrong or agree with me that Quebec sets its own immigration levels as a province within this Confederation. Is that still the case today, or is it changing?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, no, that is still the case. People in this party are always telling us the same thing: Quebec and Canada each set their own levels. If Quebec maintains its current levels and Canada increases its levels, Quebec will clearly lose demographic weight, and therefore political weight, within the Canadian federation. I am sure we agree on that. It is simple math.

The federal government voted down the bill brought forward by my colleague from Drummond, which asked that Quebec maintain 25% of the seats in the House. The Liberal government voted against it. We cannot seem to agree on anything.

However, one thing needs to be made clear: Every political party in the Quebec National Assembly voted against Century Initiative's immigration targets, which are now the federal government's targets.

There is a consensus in Quebec, and everyone is against it. We imagine that the Liberal government will vote for this motion since it always says it will work hand in hand with the Quebec government.

[English]

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my area in rural Ontario, we see a lack of people to fill jobs, whether in the agriculture sector, in restaurants or food services, or in the hospitality and tourism areas. We also have people looking to fill jobs in health care in some of our rural hospitals, whether with doctors or nurses, but there are so many people in this country who do not have the credentials to fill those key positions.

I know the member opposite and his party in Quebec are seeing a shortage of workers as well. When McKinsey or consultants from these cities make decisions in this country, they seem to be leaving out the rural areas. Could the member comment on how he sees this and the shortage of workers in Quebec?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

We have to face facts. Right now, greater regional immigration to remote areas would be welcome. My riding has wonderful immigration stories to tell. I was in Saint-Thomas-Didyme two weeks ago and took part in a Moroccan night. Saint-Thomas-Didyme is a long way from Ottawa. It is a small village with a population of about 600. Temporary foreign workers are currently working at the village sawmill and at another sawmill in the nearby village of Girardville. As I was saying, we had a Moroccan night. I am telling this story to show how welcoming and how open Quebec is to newcomers. We really need them to keep our small villages alive.

Unfortunately, the government is ridiculously dysfunctional when it comes to immigration. All the opposition parties agree that we have immigration problems everywhere. The issue is a concern for employers, but also for small communities.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am a bit perplexed by the Bloc motion today. I understand that there is a feeling that the French language and Quebec's weight in Canada are the real concerns. There are two ways, I guess, that such concerns could be approached. One is the defensive and negative way, which I see in this motion. The other is to tap into the great source of immigration abroad in the francophonie. There are more than 450 million French speakers around the world; they have some of the largest and fastest-growing populations and some of the youngest French-speaking populations. They could be a source of those immigrants.

Would an alternative approach not be to try to make sure that we raise those rates of immigration to help replace the aging population here and to help bring the diversity of francophones into Canada?

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I would have a lot to say about that. I thank the member for his good question.

We first have to understand one thing. When we talk to certain African ambassadors to Canada, they say we must ensure that we do not drain their countries of all their talented people, because they need nurses, doctors and teachers. I have had discussions with certain groups. We need to be careful that we do not take all those fine people from Africa because that would cause problems for those countries.

I would really like to continue this discussion with my colleague, but I do not have enough time. It is a good question. Let it be known that we are not negative, we are positive. I support immigration.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, Ottawa appears to want a post-national update to Canada 3.0.

The feds have given a multinational firm, a state within a state, the sprawling McKinsey firm, the lucrative mandate to set immigration thresholds, an incredibly important aspect of public policy. The matter is settled and the PR campaign is implacable. The only way to avoid accusations of racism, the only way to continue to

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shine in Toronto's salons, is to increase Canada's total population by 100 million by 2100.

In cobbling together this announcement, tailor-made for the big bosses, Ottawa combined its ignorance of what is needed and its desire to distinguish itself culturally from Quebec and the first nations with utter scorn for realistic immigration capacities. Ottawa does not even have the decency to provide services to these future newcomers and or even ensure that sufficient housing is built for them.

Let there be no doubt that the Century Initiative is not the idea of the century, despite the empty rhetoric that seems to be second nature to this Prime Minister.

Quebec, as a nation, has had a history marked by periods of survival and moments of affirmation, and its constant concern has been its cultural and linguistic continuity. In 1978, René Lévesque's Parti Québécois government adopted Quebec's policy for cultural development. It was written by two of the greatest thinkers in our history, Guy Rocher and Fernand Dumont, who worked for the brilliant minister, Camille Laurin.

I want to point out in passing that Camille Laurin was the true architect of the integration of newcomers to Quebec, more so than Gérard Godin, for whom I have a great deal of respect, but who is used as argumentative support so frequently that I find it somewhat annoying.

Everything was clear. What could be called traditional French culture must be a focus for cultural convergence. The reason is quite simple. In a democratic state, citizens must be able to agree on a common place of exchange. We will patiently repeat what we have said before. It is not a question of Quebec culture abolishing other cultures on our land, but rather about establishing a concrete and sensitive meeting place necessary for creating a common feeling of belonging, a shared vision of the common good. Quebec can be as much the nation of Gilles Vigneault as that of Dany Laferrière.

In 2023, that was reflected in the unanimous, all-party vote against the Century Initiative by the National Assembly, who, let us not forget, was never consulted about it.

To some extent, Quebec, a welcoming and generous nation, is ready to welcome as many immigrants as possible, but the word "possible" is key here. The numbers are important. If our state has the capacity to set the number of newcomers per year, it is legitimate to discuss, debate and reflect on it. Unfortunately, this debate is too often shut down or restricted through name-calling, such name-calling serving ostensibly to demonize the miscreants who, in reality, are only calling for a more harmonious integration.

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We often hear the tap metaphor when talking about immigration. Let us reflect on that. What is a tap? For a sink not to overflow, it needs to be filled mindfully and responsibly. Applying orange and red ideologies to this issue is quite simply wrongheaded, just as the will to exclude dissenting opinions from the debate is repugnant. These opinions are sometimes rigorous demonstrations by experts who point out the enormous danger to the very survival of the Quebec nation in the face of increases that would be too brutal, not harmonious enough and poorly thought out.

Canada, on the other hand, is infected to the core by a utopia, that of multiculturalism, the idea that all newcomers have to do is to huddle in inward-looking communities based on the old ways of belonging. The Canadian regime is oblivious to the existence of a nation with a common core where citizens have equal rights and duties. Instead, it sees a big pile of minority communities that can spend their entire existence without even needing to speak to each other.

• (1230)

This radical utopia became institutionalized in the Canadian Constitution, a Constitution that is impossible to reform, that is set in stone, imposed unilaterally by Pierre Elliott Trudeau and to which Quebec is still not a signatory today. The government of unelected judges is in charge of dismantling Quebec laws such as the Charter of the French Language, which is a shadow of its former self, such as Bill 21 whose future could be no brighter than Bill 101. The powers that be pride themselves in neutralizing Quebec democracy, suppressing its affirmation as a nation and stifling its political institutions.

It is hardly surprising in that perspective that junior now wants to fulfill daddy's dream. It is hardly surprising, not in terms of the drastic increase proposed today nor in terms of the depoliticization of such an important decision, that all of this is to the benefit—in every sense of the word—of the stateless clique at McKinsey, that is wreaking havoc and causing scandals everywhere it goes. Enough is enough.

Dominic Barton led the McKinsey firm, a state within a state, from 2009 to 2018. In 2016, Barton, who was still leading the McKinsey firm, was appointed to head the Advisory Council on Economic Growth, formed by the Canadian government. In addition to being led by this McKinsey executive, the group was supported by McKinsey Canada employees.

Dominic Barton is also a co-founder of the Century Initiative lobby, financially backed by big business in Toronto, which aims to gradually increase immigration to more than one million permanent immigrants per year. It should be noted that the Century Initiative also stands out for its aggressive stance on pushing oil and gas projects, notably in indigenous territory, regardless of indigenous support.

Could it be, in this case, that the wokeism of the great Canadian stateless capitalists—these two qualifiers may seem contradictory but very often go together—is simply artful posturing, self-righteous posturing that applies on a sliding scale? In this case, it presents itself as a lack of respect for the will of indigenous communities, who are shackled by the racist regime of the Indian Act,

regardless of the sorrowful speeches we often hear in the House that are meant to make the speakers look good in high society.

When Dominic Barton appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates as part of the study on McKinsey, he admitted, in response to a question from the member for Beauport—Limoilou, that the pressure group never took into account the impact that its proposal to increase immigration could have on the French fact. Forget about that. It was never even considered. There is no report on the group's website that mentions the impact that this massive increase in immigration levels would have. No one in the red and orange troops seems to be upset or concerned about that.

It is important that the Century Initiative's dangerous project be immediately shut down. However, if we want to get away from constantly begging, from forcing the Quebec National Assembly to repeatedly adopt unanimous motions that will not receive even the slightest bit of attention from the House of Commons, and from the trend where Quebec's weight in this House is permanently shrinking, which will only serve to make Quebecers a minority that will no longer warrant any attention whatsoever from the government, and if we want to make it clear to any individual who wants to settle in Quebec that they will belong to a homeland called Quebec and be one of us, then let us choose freedom.

The choice is clear: freedom or collective powerlessness and mediocrity; independence or folklorization and marginalization until we completely disappear. We will have our free, independent and resolutely French Quebec, and it will be one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

• (1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member closed off, close to what I was hearing, I think, and it will probably be in his answer as well.

Is the fear for the member opposite, regarding where the current immigration levels are expected to go, that Quebec would lose its power here in the House because the numbers would increase in other areas of the country, whether it be in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario or the Atlantic provinces? If they saw an island start to grow its populations much higher than they are, it would mean more seats in the House for those places versus what would happen in his home province of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: That is not quite right, Madam Speaker. My aim is simply that full authority be given to the parliament where 100% of the seats belong to us. To my mind, that would settle the matter. Canada could certainly set its own thresholds.

The fear we have is about the French fact in Quebec. We have a capacity for integration, and when we say “capacity”, we mean “capability”. We do not have an unlimited capacity. We cannot do that.

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We are talking about a target of one million. If the capacity is so unlimited, then why are we not talking about two, three or four million? Will such numbers be reached at some point? To go back to the tap metaphor, the sink still has to be filled mindfully and responsibly. It has to be done properly. That is all I want to say.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague and neighbour from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot on his excellent speech, and at the same time wish him a happy birthday.

There was a lot of passion in his speech, and a lot of facts too. There is one thing that concerns me greatly about the erosion of the political weight of Quebec within Canada. Laws are being passed in Canada to protect certain aspects of culture, including French, culture itself and the people who shape our cultural sector, which is always under threat, always at risk. In fact, it is often in danger, and we often have to come to its rescue.

With the Century Initiative, Quebec risks losing its political weight. What does my colleague think Quebec will have to do to protect itself from this increased risk of Quebec culture withering away?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, since my colleague worked on the broadcasting file, I think he would know how hard it is to get the message across that we need policies that support our cultural community and give them some leverage.

I think that the history of Quebec shows it. Just look at the Charter of the French Language. A very ill-advised former Liberal government minister named Stéphane Dion, whom we hardly miss in the House, once said that Bill 101 was a great Canadian law. What he meant was that it proved that we are perfectly equipped to defend the French fact in the current system. It is true that it has become a great Canadian law: there is nothing left of it. It is just a skeleton and a shadow of its former self. Of course, it has become “Canadianized” to the extreme.

Naturally, the only choice we have is to make all our own decisions without being at the mercy of the Constitution and the government of judges in Ottawa.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the issues that has been raised in the speeches is about the fear of the dwindling impact or representation for Quebeckers. Part of the issue is the immigration targets that the federal government has failed to achieve in ensuring new francophone immigration targets are actually met. The government adopted its targets and it has not met them. The FCFA has recommended the government adopt a new francophone immigration target of 12% in 2024 and gradually increase that to 20% in 2036.

Does the member think this is what the government should do?

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I believe that my colleague is talking about francophone immigration targets outside Quebec. Obviously, they have not been met. It is a

major problem and I hope that the NDP MPs will bend the ear of their government friends more often.

Nonetheless, today we are talking about targets that dilute the French fact in Quebec. That is what makes them dangerous.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

I am very pleased to rise today to discuss a topic of deep concern to my community and my constituency of Lac-Saint-Louis.

Canada is confronting demographic issues and a serious labour shortage. Every time I am on the ground meeting with business owners, whether they come from the tourism, restaurant, farming or manufacturing sectors, they all tell me about the daily effects and challenges they face because of the labour shortage. For SMEs, the consequences are painful. They mean excessive workloads for employees and delayed or lost contracts, not to mention the economic losses that result nationwide.

Canada's current unemployment rate stands at an all-time low of 5% nationally, and 4.1% in Quebec. Although Canada's economy regained 129% of the jobs lost during the pandemic, this excellent news comes with its own set of problems.

Fifty years ago, there were seven workers for every retiree. Today, there are three for every retiree, and in less than 15 years there will be two. These figures speak for themselves. Canada's economy is growing faster than the ability of some employers to fill positions, and this has been the case for several years.

As I was saying, whether in the fishery, agriculture, forestry, mining, tourism or processing industry, and in every other industry for that matter, there is a significant labour shortage in our country. It is a problem that our government takes very seriously and is tackling with a multi-pronged approach. One way to address the labour shortage is through immigration, because 100% of the increase in labour currently comes from immigration. That is a direct solution to the labour shortage in addition to being the historical foundation of our beautiful and great country. However, in recent days, misinformation has been circulating, and I believe it is important to clearly point that out.

The Century Initiative is not a government policy. I again want to be clear. The government does not subscribe to the findings of this independent group and does not have as an objective increasing Canada's population to 100 million.

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In November 2022, our government announced our immigration targets for the next three years. These targets were set based on Canada's needs, recognizing that immigration is essential to help businesses find the workers they need and to continue to grow our economy. It is important to remember that before we announce our targets every year, we consult with the provinces. Last November's targets were a reflection of current labour shortages, regionalization of immigration and francophone immigration.

I want to reassure the House. Increasing francophone immigration to halt the decline of French is a priority for our government and is even included in Bill C-13, which we will vote on at report stage this afternoon. Last year, we met our target of 4.4% of francophone immigrants outside Quebec, which is obviously good news.

We will not stop there. More recently, we announced our new action plan for official languages, which is more ambitious than ever. One entire pillar of that plan focuses on francophone immigration with an investment of \$137 million. This is a historic first. The plan includes seven new measures to support francophone immigration, including additional support for employers to recruit francophone foreign workers and for newcomers to learn French.

Through Bill C-13, we are also developing a new francophone immigration policy with clear objectives, targets and indicators to guide our action.

• (1245)

These examples show the importance of pursuing ambitious targets while trying to tackle current challenges too. On this side of the House, we believe in taking responsible action to address these urgent needs, which is exactly what we are doing.

Immigration levels are reviewed and revised every three years based on Canada's needs and capacities.

In conclusion, I would say once again that the Century Initiative is not a government policy and that our immigration targets are not based on its targets. Furthermore, immigration is a tool that will help us address the labour shortage. For a member from a region like mine, immigration is an essential part of regional economic growth.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his speech, which was very interesting.

I myself come from the business world, and I know that when an employee is happy, he becomes actively involved in the business.

I would like the member to explain to me how, if we open the floodgates of immigration, businesses will be able to integrate workers and make them happy. If businesses are unable to integrate workers, if they cannot teach them French or if they cannot make them happy in Quebec because they are overcome by all sorts of variables, the workers will leave. That costs businesses dearly. It must be taken into consideration.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, that is indeed a challenge, especially for a company's human resources department, which devotes a lot of time to ensuring that the company is welcoming and that the employees are happy with the programs the

company has in place for them. This is a challenge for every company, no matter what region they are in.

We need to encourage people to learn French. I think that any newcomer in Quebec who can see the magnificent culture and quality of life that we have to offer will be happy to live here.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I think that today's motion raises another question: Over the next few years, there will be a significant increase in the number of refugees who are displaced by climate change and the resulting crises.

I think we need to change the definition of refugee to reflect this real likelihood of an increased number of people determined to come live in Canada because their islands are being submerged or because they live in regions that have become too arid for agriculture.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of that possibility.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, as usual, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands is asking a pointed and well-thought-out question. I do not have a clear opinion on the need to change the definition of refugee, but she is not wrong in saying that, in the future, there will be more climate migration, which will cause a whole host of other problems, such as peoples being repressed.

My colleague's question is very interesting, and I am going to give it some more thought. I thank the hon. member.

• (1250)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my dear friend and colleague for his eloquent speech.

We agree that Quebec is the master of its own destiny when it comes to selecting immigrants. They could all be francophones, for example. Quebec can exercise its right to welcome up to one-quarter of all the immigrants who come to Canada. There are agreements between Canada and Quebec to protect the demographic weight of francophones in Canada.

Can the hon. member tell us more about that?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question.

We need to attract newcomers to Quebec who speak French or who are open to learning it. However, we need a strong economy to attract them. To have a strong economy, we need to address the labour shortage, so it is a bit of a vicious circle.

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A weak economy will not help Quebec. If the economy is weak, then people will look for work elsewhere. That happened in the 19th century when there was an exodus from Quebec because there were no jobs there. We therefore need a strong economy. That is essential to having a strong Quebec within a united Canada.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before addressing the Bloc Québécois motion, I would like to extend my most sincere condolences to the family of Sergeant Eric Mueller and the two police officers who, unfortunately, were injured in Bourget, which is in my riding. I want to salute their courage and thank the community, including the police officers and first responders who responded to this tragedy.

I want to thank you, Madam Speaker, and the distinguished members of the House of Commons for giving me the opportunity to speak to the Bloc Québécois opposition motion concerning our government's immigration policy. It is important to point out that many considered efforts have been made by people across the country to support immigration, and that many different groups and think tanks have provided suggestions, comments and advice. The perspectives, including those of the Century Initiative report, are part of a national dialogue on immigration and are accessible by any member or Canadian. The only thing they do not represent is a government policy.

As a Franco-Ontarian, I would like to focus my remarks on one important aspect of the reform of Canada's language regime, specifically francophone immigration. Francophone immigration is one of the cornerstones of the Government of Canada's vision for official languages reform, which was announced in February 2021 in the document entitled "English and French: Towards a substantive equality of official languages in Canada".

Francophone immigration has been the subject of numerous studies, reports and parliamentary debates, and often makes headlines in the Canadian media. There is no doubt that francophone immigration is one of the factors that will contribute to slowing the decline of French and increasing the demographic weight of official language minority communities.

Overall, our reform of Canada's language regime is based on two complementary components that include important measures on francophone immigration. First, legislative measures on francophone immigration are included in Bill C-13 to strengthen and modernize the Official Languages Act. Second, seven new or enhanced initiatives for francophone immigration have been included in the action plan for official languages 2023-2028, with an investment of more than \$137 million over five years.

Now let us talk about Bill C-13, which gives concrete expression to our desire to halt the decline in the demographic weight of francophone minorities, specifically by ensuring that the demographic weight is restored and increased. In addition to adopting a strengthened francophone immigration policy, the bill reiterates the importance of sectors that are essential to the development of official language minority communities, such as culture, education, health, justice, employment and immigration.

In addition, by strengthening part VII of the act and specifying the obligations of federal institutions to take positive measures and

to evaluate their effects, federal institutions are encouraged to take positive measures in all of these key areas, for all of their policies, programs and major decisions.

I would now like to speak in more detail about our official languages action plan, entitled "Action Plan for Official Languages 2023-2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration", which was unveiled to Canadians on April 26 at the Cité collégiale, where I had the pleasure of being a student, once. We are very proud of this plan, which includes a historic investment of more than \$4 billion over five years.

Francophone immigration is one of the four pillars that define and guide our five-year official languages strategy. This pillar confirms our government's commitment to fostering the vitality of francophone communities by addressing economic and demographic challenges through francophone immigration. As I mentioned, this pillar represents new investments of more than \$137 million over five years, divided among seven initiatives in support of francophone immigration.

The first initiative is the implementation of a new francophone immigration policy, similar to what is provided for in our bill to modernize the Official Languages Act, Bill C-13. This new policy will include objectives, targets and indicators to guide the development and implementation of policies and programs across the entire continuum of francophone immigration, from promotion to selection and integration of French-speaking newcomers to Canada.

● (1255)

The second initiative focuses on targeted expansion and increased promotion and recruitment support in order to raise potential immigrants' awareness of francophone communities and the services and programs available in French.

The third initiative provides a corridor for the selection and retention of French teachers in Canada through interconnected initiatives that aim to boost foreign recruitment and retention of French and French-speaking teachers.

The fourth initiative involves establishing a strengthened francophone integration pathway to facilitate the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada and bolster the reception capacity of francophone minority communities.

The fifth initiative focuses on creating a centre for innovation in francophone immigration that will enable francophone communities to take part in activities to promote, identify, support and recruit French-speaking and bilingual candidates.

The sixth initiative relates to developing a francophone lens that is integrated into the economic immigration program so as to improve the selection of francophone and bilingual immigrants.

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Finally, the last initiative aims to provide and develop measures to help newcomers learn French or English by increasing grants and contributions therefore expanding the geographic coverage and improving the quality of language training for newcomers.

I would also like to add that, alongside these initiatives, which will be developed and deployed by my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Canadian Heritage backs the initiative to recruit and retain French and French as a second language teachers in Canada, which aims to recruit and retain teachers who are recent immigrants. Canadian Heritage also provides contributions to provincial and territorial governments for minority language services. Our agreements enable these governments to focus on enhancing services in priority sectors, such as francophone immigration.

Lastly, I also want to point out that, in the action plan for official languages 2023-2028, our government committed to promoting diversity, inclusion and equity through new initiatives designed to support more vulnerable clientele. That is what we will do.

In conclusion, immigration is absolutely a pillar of our Canadian language reform agenda. We hope opposition party members in the House can see that we kept our promises with historic investments in excess of \$4 billion over five years for official languages. We hope they will support Bill C-13.

• (1300)

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his defence of Bill C-13. We will have ample opportunity to debate it in the House.

I want to remind the House that, in regard to this bill, Quebec once again claimed its full rights with respect to French integration. Only Quebec laws should govern what happens in Quebec. That claim was also denied. The answer is always no when Quebec asks to be treated as nothing short of a French-language Quebec nation.

I would like to know what the member thinks of the motion our party introduced today. Basically, what we are saying is not just about simple mathematics, it is about our accommodation capacity and our capacity to preserve what is most fundamental to us: our common language, which is French.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, actually, it is a matter of mathematics.

Right now, there is an average of 1.7 children per household in Canada and Quebec. What is more, our population is aging. If we do not have a strong francophone immigration policy in Canada, including the Franco-Ontarian community, then we are going to disappear in the near future. Francophone immigration contributes to the francization of our communities across Quebec and Canada.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his outstanding speech.

To address the labour shortage, we need a responsible, professional, robust and ambitious immigration system.

Without such a system, how can we make Canada a prosperous country with a steadily growing economy to create jobs for Canadians? How can we make this beautiful country one of the great nations of the world?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague, with whom I have many discussions. Whether it be in Montreal, Laval or anywhere in Canada, we are all hearing employers say that there is a labour shortage in our economy. Obviously, one of the solutions to that problem is immigration, which can help counter that labour shortage.

For my francophone colleagues, in Bill C-13, we established a threshold of recovery to 1971 levels. We are looking back and we want to ensure that the demographic weight of francophones across Canada returns to what it was when it was first calculated in 1971.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, several studies over the past few months and years have shown that francophones outside Quebec rely heavily on the strength of French in Quebec and on the support for French in Quebec to protect them in their official language minority community.

Why does my colleague think it is a good idea to improve and strengthen French outside Quebec but let it get weaker within Quebec? Does he not think that francophone communities outside Quebec are ultimately at risk of suffering the consequences and getting weaker themselves?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, as my colleague knows, the Government of Quebec alone determines its immigration policy. It has the power to choose all the immigrants it wants. It is up to the Government of Quebec to pull up its socks and roll up its sleeves to ensure that it has a strong francophone immigration policy in Quebec.

As far as the rest of Canada is concerned, I am working with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Official Languages on having a strong immigration policy in Canada for francophones, and I am sure that we will meet our targets. We already did last year, and we will do it again year after year.

• (1305)

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will take it upon myself to deliver to the Government of Quebec the message given by my colleague, who just finished his speech, that it should pull up its socks on the immigration file. I think it might appreciate the message, but I am not sure.

I will begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Terrebonne.

Our motion today is very simple. I think it has been a few minutes since we repeated it. It states:

That, given that,

- (i) the Century Initiative aims to increase Canada's population to 100 million by 2100,
- (ii) the federal government's new intake targets are consistent with the Century Initiative objectives,
- (iii) tripling Canada's population has real impacts on the future of the French language, Quebec's political weight, the place of First Peoples, access to housing, and health and education infrastructure,
- (iv) these impacts were not taken into account in the development of the Century Initiative and that Quebec was not considered,

the House reject the Century Initiative objectives and ask the government not to use them as a basis for developing its future immigration levels.

It is not a very complicated request. It only makes sense. It is a question of understanding each other.

This objective of increasing Canada's population to 100 million by the end of the century is something that worries me. I must say that I am finding the ruse to be less and less subtle. It is difficult to believe that the hidden agenda is not basically to put an end once and for all to Quebec's never-ending demands, which certain self-righteous federalist thinkers see as a fly constantly buzzing around their heads.

There are two ways of looking at this. The first is to see bad intentions. The government and its policy-makers know full well what they are doing to Quebec by setting immigration targets that are much too high for the province to absorb. They know that by doing this, they are ensuring that Quebec's francophone culture, the Québécois culture, will be completely snuffed out.

How will that happen? It will be because of the massive influx of newcomers who, even if they speak French, will not be welcomed as Quebec likes to welcome its immigrants. They will not be able to integrate into Quebec society properly because the infrastructure and services are insufficient and ill-equipped to receive such an influx. What happens when a host society is unable to welcome and integrate its newcomers? This leads to ghettoization. Newcomers gather where they feel safe, where they feel a sense of familiarity, and this creates ghettos. This leads to what we have already seen around the world, including in some Canadian cities. This is not what Quebec wants.

Quebec wants large numbers of francophone immigrants so that the common language, the language of work, the language of everyday life, is French. Quebec wants to welcome and integrate its newcomers based on a model that is not one of multiculturalism. Quebec's specificity is precisely that it has a language to protect, a language that is constantly at risk of disappearing in an ocean of some 300 million anglophones in North America.

There is also the issue of Quebec's political weight, which is mentioned in today's Bloc Québécois motion and is fuelling this discussion and debate. If Quebec loses political weight within the Canadian federation, it means that the various laws that protect the specificity of the Quebec nation will be open to more vigorous attacks, and Quebec will be even less able to defend itself. Consequently, Quebec will continue to dwindle gradually, little by little. It is a bit like putting a frog in a pot of cold water and then turning on the heat, letting the frog slowly get used to the heat as the temperature rises until, well, we know the rest of the story. I am not sure that has been scientifically proven, but everyone gets the picture.

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In short, Quebec will fade away and accept its fate, telling itself that a known misfortune is probably more comfortable than an uncertain happiness. We will then find ourselves in the ocean of multiculturalism that Trudeau senior dreamed of all those years ago. I will not be fooled into believing that protecting the French language was part of that particular dream.

● (1310)

That widespread lack of sensitivity is disappointing, but it also makes me realize that this is one of multiculturalism's adverse effects on French.

We know that Quebec culture is gradually drowning in the Canadian and North American cultural maelstrom. Those who champion French are increasingly viewed by many in the rest of Canada as old grey-haired reactionaries straight out of what they wish was a bygone era. I have to acknowledge that I myself might be an old grey-haired reactionary not unlike my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé. No doubt he approves.

If we allow things to carry on as they are, speaking French will eventually become a mere curiosity. A comparison comes to mind that deeply saddens me. It will be a bit like the first nations we hear about, where the language is still spoken by some elders but has disappeared from everyday use. Young people are trying to resurrect those languages. I recently talked to an Abenaki woman who told me she was trying to relearn her grandparents' language, which is no longer being spoken. Maybe one day my great-grandchildren will ask their grandfather, "Grandpa, say a few words in French." It will be cute and quaint, but also pathetic and sad.

That is what we are trying to protect. We are not trying to sow division or stir up trouble, as our friends on the other side like to say. We are trying to protect something that is dear to us, namely our culture, our language, our specificity.

We talk about political weight. Sometimes people say that Quebec's political weight boils down to the number of seats it has in the House of Commons. It seems that some people do not appreciate the importance of that. What is the effect of Quebec having less political weight? In future elections, if we do not correctly adjust the number of seats that go to Quebec, if we do not give Quebec a minimum number of seats, as is the case for other Canadian provinces, we will once again lose the influence we can have here in the House of Commons. We will lose the number of seats held by Quebec members of Parliament. I am not even considering the political affiliation, because the Quebec seats lost will not just be the ones held by the Bloc Québécois, but also those of Conservative and Liberal members of Parliament. There will be fewer of them because there will be fewer seats available for Quebec.

Would it have been possible to protect supply management, for example, if there had been fewer members of Parliament from Quebec? The work of my colleague from Berthier-Maskinongé and the Bloc Québécois on this file should be noted.

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Bill C-10 also comes to mind. It was tabled in November 2020 as a modernized Broadcasting Act and was later rebranded as Bill C-11 in the next Parliament. It contained nothing for Quebec culture. Without a strong Quebec caucus and the Bloc Québécois's unwavering determination to add measures to the bill to protect the French language and content created by our artists, I am not sure if the new Broadcasting Act would have provided any protection for Quebec's francophone culture. Quebec's political weight made all the difference.

The more influence that Quebec loses within the Canadian federation, the more Ottawa can push its centralizing agenda and keep sticking its big fat nose where it does not belong. On February 8, 2022, the House had a great chance to show Quebec that it believes in the need for Quebec to preserve its culture and acquire tools to protect the French language. On February 8, 2022, I had the honour of tabling, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, a bill to amend the Constitution Act. Yes, while awaiting independence, a Bloc member is trying to amend the Constitution Act.

We simply wanted to add a provision that would guarantee Quebec 25% of the seats in the House of Commons. That would have been a game-changer because, with a threshold of at least 25% of the seats, we would no longer have to worry about the political weight of Quebec being at risk and the consequences that would bring, regardless of any demographic changes that might occur in the coming years.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is moving a motion today to reject the immigration levels proposed by the Century Initiative, which the government seems to be following very closely. This is a good opportunity to debate that, but it is also a good opportunity to understand why the Bloc Québécois wants to reject those objectives.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member underestimates the impact of the growth of the French language within the province of Manitoba, my home province, and I do not think this is unique to Manitoba.

Through immigration policies, and I made reference to this earlier, more people than ever are speaking French in the province of Manitoba. I attribute it to communities, whether they be Portuguese, Filipino or Indian communities. We can hear people speak French, Tagalog and English. There is a growing admiration for the French language, and we hear more and more people speaking it.

Would the member not recognize that, as opposed to trying to paint immigration in a negative light, we can see the benefits of the diversity of people from around the world who come to Canada, learn the French language and pass it on?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

First, I take issue with one of the premises of his question. We are not painting immigration in a negative light. On the contrary,

we are in favour of immigration. We are in favour of immigration policies that will ensure that French is able to thrive and that get people interested in speaking French, as he said about people in his province of Manitoba.

I think it is great news that francophone immigration is on the rise, that francophones are being welcomed, that French is being seen in a positive light and that people in Manitoba and other provinces are interested in learning to speak it.

However, the situation in Quebec is different than in the rest of Canada because French is the common and official language in Quebec. It is in danger in the English-speaking ocean of North America and Canada. The reality is not the same in Quebec. We need to protect French because it is at risk. We are not trying to help a minority grow. It is a majority language in an ocean where it is a minority and at risk. That is the difference.

That being said, we are all in favour of immigration.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Drummond on his excellent speech.

I would like to hear him tell us more about why Quebec should decide for itself how many immigrants it should take in. Yes, we are pro-immigration and want to welcome people from other countries, but we want to welcome them with dignity, to allow them to integrate. From the moment they set foot on our soil, we want them to become full-fledged Quebecers. To do this, we need resources. I would therefore like my colleague to talk about the resources we currently have to welcome these people and why the government that is in charge of welcoming immigrants should be the one deciding how many it will accept.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, that is a good question, and it fits in with what I said at the beginning of my speech.

We want to welcome and integrate immigrants. We do not want them to end up in ghettos in the areas where they will settle. In just about every Quebec municipality I know of, there are organizations dedicated to supporting and integrating newcomers. Who generally manages and sponsors these organizations? It is either the municipalities or the Quebec government.

Once again, there is a clear desire on the part of Quebec to make sure that we have the capacity and infrastructure to allow immigrants and newcomers to integrate, to take advantage of services, to send their children to school and to participate in society upon their arrival. Newcomers who integrate into Quebec communities in French are not a burden. They benefit society.

It is important to make sure we have the infrastructure, and for that, we must take into account our capacity to integrate immigrants. Otherwise, we would simply be doing a poor job, and we do not want to do that with immigration.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his speech. He addressed a number of things.

As previously mentioned, I am a prime example of a successful and integrated immigration. I do not have an accent when I speak French.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on the fact that Quebec is the only province in Canada that has an agreement with the federal government on immigration. Quebec has everything it needs to proceed with integrating francophone immigrants and it has the means, since the money is paid directly to Quebec. What more could the Government of Quebec do to welcome francophone immigration?

• (1320)

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, the Government of Quebec is already doing a lot of good things to manage immigration and to welcome francophone immigrants.

It is true that as far as my colleague from Hochelaga is concerned, other than a slight Hochelaga accent, we can say this is a perfect integration in French. She is a colleague that I hold in high regard.

Quebec often has its hands tied because of Ottawa, which manages immigration for the most part. The fact that Ottawa is looking to set immigration levels at 500,000 people a year is a big problem. The crux of the problem is the fact that this will create a huge imbalance in the demographic weight and in the political weight of Quebec.

I think that we could debate this at length, my colleague and I, but, essentially, we agree on the fact that there are a lot of fine examples of immigrants who were welcomed and integrated successfully.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, Canada is a concept, one that has changed greatly over time. At first, Canada was the heart of New France. The conquest brutally changed its identity and turned it into a British colony.

Modern Canada arose from another change that took place with the betrayal of the night of the long knives, when the country's DNA was changed in secret, behind closed doors and without Quebec or the first nations.

We are on the eve of another great change. We can rest assured that the very essence of Canada respects the strong tradition of ignoring democracy when it comes to major issues. I am of course referring to the Century Initiative. I am saying this in French in the House, because French was never considered by this initiative, as admitted by one of its authors.

Economists, and I am well positioned to talk about them, do not always think about identity. It is not necessarily the first thing they think of when developing a public policy. French, democracy, political balance, political weight are not necessarily their priorities. They think about GDP, productivity and the cost of labour. It is up to us in the House to reflect on these issues.

However, even in terms of economic issues, the *Century Initiative* project is poorly designed, poorly thought-out and impossible to implement. I say that the project is poorly designed because this Liberal government sets its economic targets based on false and simplistic economic parameters. If we want to solve the labour

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shortage, says the government, let us bring people from all over the world to work here.

Although immigration has a role to play in filling specific gaps in the labour market, it is far from being a magic bullet to fix this problem.

As economist Pierre Fortin explained in the report he presented last year to Quebec's ministry of immigration, francization and integration, a sustained increase in immigration creates a bigger workforce, but also increases demand for goods and services. He believes that in taking into consideration the further increase in demand for health services and education, the increase in employment opportunities would be negligible.

Other public policies can be put in place at the same time to address the labour shortage, as the Bloc Québécois has proposed on numerous occasions and in a constructive manner. For instance, tax credits should be granted to people who have reached retirement age but may want to remain in the workforce. Let us think about it. These individuals are trained and want to work. However, ridiculous tax policies prevent them from staying in the workforce. This could be fixed quickly. This is not a long-term solution like immigration.

Rodrigue Tremblay, professor emeritus of economics and a minister in the René Lévesque government, also explained the situation like this:

A rapidly growing population requires additional infrastructure (housing, hospitals, schools, universities and infrastructure of all kinds). Savings and capital are therefore needed to build that infrastructure.

He goes on to say the following:

When a population grows too quickly, this can sometimes lead to a general decline in the standard of living.

Ultimately, the countries that perform the best in terms of standard of living and quality of life are not the most populous countries in the world. They are countries like Norway, Ireland and Switzerland, whose population size is more similar to that of Quebec than Canada.

What makes Quebec unique, in addition to its language and culture, is the quality of its social safety net and its public policy, which are recognized as progressive. I am extremely proud of them. Quebec's low-cost child care system sets the bar. In fact, the federal government is trying to set up something similar, the kind of system we have had for decades. Quebec's affordable education system, its universal health care system and all its other social policies also set the standard.

Here is another example I am very familiar with: Quebec's parental insurance plan, copied by other jurisdictions around the world and head and shoulders above other such programs in Canada. To maintain and even improve that level of service, the Government of Quebec has to make wise economic and demographic decisions that ensure the long-term sustainability of its social services. The National Assembly provides all those social services, so it is up to it to determine Quebec's optimal population level.

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● (1325)

It will be up to Quebec to offer and use its own budget to pay for the services and infrastructure that will be specifically offered to the newcomers we welcome with open arms, as everyone knows.

This project is poorly thought-out. Indeed, one has to be extremely out of touch with reality to think that a country like Canada, with such a delicate political balance, could work with this type of immigration policy without even consulting Quebec and the provinces. I really wonder why the Bloc Québécois has to keep reminding the House of this, but Canada is not a unitary country. The onus will be on Quebec and the provinces to deal with this immigration flow. The federal government is not a character in a video game seeking to make Canada an empire. It cannot continue to impose the whims of its preferred consultants on the democratically elected governments throughout Canada.

I have said that the project is poorly crafted and poorly thought-out, and I would like to add that it is impossible to implement. How does the federal government think it can pull off something this big when it is not even able to adequately deliver on any of its missions?

The Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has a chronic inability to process claims in a timely manner. I will give some brief examples. After the pandemic, there were over 2 million files in the department's backlog. We are talking about the labour shortage, and 25,000 applications for skilled workers in Quebec were on hold on the federal government's desk. Skilled workers wanting to work in Quebec had to wait over 24 months—if they were lucky—while the service standard is 11 months, which itself could be considered to be quite long.

As we can see, the Century Initiative is a bad project. It is politically problematic, economically ill-conceived, and administratively impossible to implement. It has only one great advantage: It forces the people of Quebec to choose between turning into quaint folklore and becoming independent. My choice is obviously independence. I do not think that is news to anyone in the House.

I am an immigrant myself. I was born abroad. The language we speak at home is Spanish, and that is the language I use when I speak to my son. My mother came to Quebec at the age of 37 and passed the bar in her third language. We grew up in a house where the first language was not French, and yet we all chose independence. This is our project. We will build this country together, newcomers to Quebec with old stock Quebecers, as well as with our brothers and sisters from the first peoples—because anyone who wants to be a Quebecer is a Quebecer.

Canada wants to reach a population of 100 million people and invite immigrants to come and contribute to its economic growth. All my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I can do better. What we can offer immigrants, whom we will always welcome with open arms, is an invitation to the founding of a new country. That is the idea that drives us, and it is the idea of the century.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was born in Lebanon and I came to this country at the age of 20.

I met many people, including some who came to Canada with me and did not speak a word of French. After a few months and a great deal of work and effort, they learned French. Like me, they graduated from a French-language university. Now they contribute, in every sense of the word, to our Quebec and Canadian society. These people work, for example, in the fields of medicine, engineering and accounting.

Should we not encourage these people to come to Quebec? Are they not an added value for Quebec and Canada? Should we not avoid putting up barriers in their way and allow them to come and contribute to life in Canada?

● (1330)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate all those like him who were born abroad and want to contribute to Quebec society, if that is what they wish to do. I congratulate everyone who is learning French and helping make Quebec a better society.

I will be very clear: We do not want to put up barriers in their way, quite the opposite. We are for immigration. As we have said, this issue cannot simply be boiled down to being either for or against immigration. We are here to talk about “better”, not “more”. That is very different from wanting less immigration, which is not what we want. That is not our line of thinking at all. We are in favour of immigration like the member described, that is, immigration made up of people who want to contribute to Quebec society. That is what we represent.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, historically, Quebec and Canada were built through immigration and with the presence of the first nations, who are too often forgotten.

Historically, people have settled in what is known as the Quebec-Windsor corridor, which accounts for about 60% to 70% of the Canadian population. If Canada reaches 100 million people in 2100, this corridor would be home to between 60 million and 70 million people. One of the largest watersheds in Canada, the one that provides water to all of these people, is located in this corridor. Many cities are already having problems with water supply.

What would be the environmental consequences if the 60 million to 70 million Quebecers and Canadians settled on this piece of land?

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, there will indeed be major environmental consequences. Take, for example, water consumption. Water consumption is one of the environmental concerns, but there is also water pollution. Waste water has to be treated. There is also waste management. Waste has to be handled properly and safely stored. There is also atmospheric pollution, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. There are tons of different forms of pollution and repercussions associated with the presence of humans that will be felt if we increase the population more quickly than what nature can handle.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my esteemed colleague from Terrebonne for her excellent speech.

I read an article recently that said that Quebec was caught in the Canadian trap. Canada is increasing its population too rapidly. The article said that Quebec has the choice of increasing its population or of seeing its political weight drop. Meanwhile, members are refusing to support the bill that we introduced to ensure decent political representation here.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that the Bloc Québécois did indeed introduce a bill to try to save Quebec's political weight, and yet those who are now claiming to be the defenders of French in Canada and the defenders of Quebec voted against that bill.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time, if there is any left, with the member for Winnipeg North.

As the member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, immigration is so important to me and to the survival of my region that it was out of the question for me to participate in today's debate without discussing the realities of rural regions, and in particular the realities of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands.

The newcomers and temporary foreign workers in my riding have helped my region get through various crises. Without the temporary foreign worker program, the fish processing plants in my region would have closed their doors many years ago, as there would be no one to work there. For many years, immigrants and temporary foreign workers have enabled our communities to survive and thrive. Our newcomers learn French. When they arrive in our region, every spring, people are happy to see them.

With respect to renewable energy, in my riding, in the Gaspé, there is the largest wind turbine manufacturing plant in North America. Securing the development of this plant required welcoming a Filipino community. Expansion announcements were made and the plant practically doubled its production. More than 200 new Filipino workers were brought in, because the region does not have enough people for this kind of development. This goes to show how much businesses need immigrants. We need people who have received training, but we also need workers.

During my election campaigns, I went door-knocking. My colleagues from the Bloc may not realize what people in the regions are going through. They need to talk to entrepreneurs in the tourism or hospitality sector, among others. Every entrepreneur we met wanted to grow their business in the region, and they were prepared to invest in expanding their operations.

Some entrepreneurs cried as they were talking to me, because they were unable to develop their business, even though they had the ambition to do it. What was the hold-up? It was the labour shortage. During the election campaigns, they kept telling me that they could not go on for much longer, that they needed people to grow their business and take their place.

I know this scares the Bloc Québécois, but you cannot build on fear. In reality, we are all immigrants. Jacques Cartier arrived in the Gaspé and it was there that he met the indigenous communities.

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When I was young, there were six elementary schools in my small village that served 700 children. Only one school remains, and it does not even have 70 students now. Will we ask 70 children to provide for an ageing population? The regions need immigrants.

• (1335)

When I was young, there were seven schools and now there is one. I do not see any reason why we could not build schools if we brought in immigrants.

The people who will come will work and ensure that our communities are vibrant. We will be able to populate and use our land. We talk about old-stock Quebeckers and I am one of them. Newcomers have never prevented us from continuing to speak French. I have never been afraid of that. I have not lost my culture. That is what the Bloc Québécois is trying to make us believe.

When we are proud of our culture, we promote it, we talk about it and we welcome newcomers and immigrants. We share our culture with them because we are strong enough to preserve that culture.

I will cede the remainder of my time to my colleague from Winnipeg North.

• (1340)

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her passionate remarks on Quebec's regions.

The Bloc Québécois will take no lessons from her on our regions. Nearly all of us in the Bloc come from rural regions. I myself am extremely concerned about the labour shortage in the regions, particularly in Charlevoix, which is a tourist area. I am also our party's critic for fisheries and oceans, where there are also labour issues.

Can my colleague, who is the Minister of National Revenue, explain how, with a really large influx of immigrants to the regions, we are supposed to provide housing for all these newcomers? What hospital can care for them? Where will they go for child care and where will their children go to school?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Madam Speaker, if my colleague had listened carefully to what I said, not so long ago—I may be of a certain age, but that is not to say that I am old—when I was young, we had schools in my town. There were six elementary schools. Now there is one.

Immigration is productive for a region. It can bring a region to life. These are people who work, who will get involved in the community. They will be good citizens and will pay their taxes, and that money can be used to build schools. They will get training. This can only be good for our regions.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague.

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This morning, I was saddened to hear the leader of the Bloc Québécois using the same kind of language that the French far right uses when discussing this topic. I thought that was extremely inappropriate. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

The other aspect is the government's failure to meet its francophone immigration targets. We know that the world's francophone population is surging. There will be half a billion francophones on the planet by 2050.

That population represents our opportunity to get professionals here, the people we need to come fuel our economy and allow Quebec to remain a strong francophone society, and for francophone communities across the country to grow as well, like in my home province of British Columbia. Francophone immigrant communities enrich British Columbian society in an extraordinary way, with schools that are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will let the hon. minister answer.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Madam Speaker, I have met with business owners in my riding and all over Quebec, and I have also worked in the health care sector. I can say that businesses will do the work and take care of teaching people French. We know that. They are ready to do it. The business community is ready to co-operate, be it the Quebec Employers Council or the chambers of commerce.

In the health care sector, back home, the physicians who are coming to work in our emergency rooms are travelling doctors. They are doctors who come from abroad. They speak other languages, but they also speak French. They are able to come help out in our communities. This is a plus for the region.

I also want to point out that Quebec sets its own targets for immigration.

• (1345)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard the response to the first question and I assure the member that she is still quite young.

More importantly, as I listened to her speech today, I really appreciated when she said that unless we are of indigenous descent we are all immigrants to this country.

This is a young country. It is only 175 years old. We have all come from different parts of the world. My parents did the same thing. I wonder if she would talk to the importance of continuing that to grow our population.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Madam Speaker, in order to grow the population, we need people from all over. Quebec was created from immigrant populations.

I encourage my colleagues to visit Grosse-Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site, which is truly an extraordinary

example of what immigration has brought to Quebec and to Canada as a whole.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to follow the Minister of National Revenue. If only I could speak as passionately as she does in French. What I really appreciated about the minister's speech is the fact that she talked about how immigration has been of such benefit for the province of Quebec, as it has been for the entire country.

That is why I am a bit disappointed in the leader of the Bloc party. In essence, what he is doing is taking the very important issue of immigration and the impact that immigration has had from coast to coast to coast here in Canada in such a wonderful way. We are a country of immigrants. Immigration helps Canada grow into the future. All one needs to do is talk about where the needs are in many different ways in many different sectors of our country and one will quickly come to the conclusion that for Canada to continue to prosper in the future, immigration policy is so critically important.

Today, we have the leader of the Bloc party trying to use this as an issue for the party's own personal cause, which is not in the best interest of Canada or Quebec. When I think of the French language and I think of my home province of Manitoba, today there are more people in Manitoba who speak French than there ever have been. If it were not for immigration, Manitoba's population would have been decreasing; it is because of immigration that our province has been growing. It is because of immigration that the French language today is spoken more in Manitoba.

With respect to our communities, we should be looking at how our diversity enriches our society not only economically but also socially. Therefore, in terms of the French language, bilingual schools and so forth, it is fantastic when I see someone who is young of Filipino heritage or Indian heritage or someone who speaks Tagalog, English and French; or Punjabi, English and French. Even in terms of the caucus, we just heard from the Minister of National Revenue. We also have a member in the Quebec caucus of Sikh heritage who is francophone. We have had other members speak of the importance of immigration not only to Quebec but, I would suggest, to our entire country. That is the issue that I have with the Bloc: Why would the members try to use this issue and try to portray immigration in any way as a negative issue when it comes to our heritage and the very social fabric of our society?

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Then we have the Conservative leader, who responded to the resolution. It was hard to stay seated as he espoused the issues regarding immigration. It was hard to sit because I was the immigration critic in part during the Harper era when the leader of the Conservative Party was sitting around the cabinet table and Stephen Harper and that government decided to cut the parents and grandparents program completely. The leader of the Conservative Party is criticizing us on backlogs. The backlog for sponsoring a parent when Stephen Harper was the prime minister and the member was around the cabinet table was eight years. It got so bad that they actually said to the people of Canada that they were cancelling the program, so if someone wanted their mom and dad to come to Canada, they could forget it because they would not be able to come as landed immigrants.

• (1350)

That is something the Conservative government did when he was sitting around the cabinet table, and he is talking about backlogs. I still remember the issue when—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I would not normally say this, but I am not feeling all that well today. Could the member just keep it down a little bit and just talk to us, as opposed to shouting at us? It is really hurting my ears.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, he is almost as loud as I am when I get agitated about something, so it is very loud—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate. I do want to remind members that we have microphones, and we also want to make sure that the interpreters are not being impacted.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we will find that members, at times, might raise their voices a little bit when they feel passionate about an issue. Members are always welcome to leave the chamber or turn down the volume if they so choose. I hope that point of order did not take any of my time away.

At the end of the day, when the leader of the Conservative Party tries to give the amazing impression that, somehow, the Conservatives understood immigration, it seems they really need to get a reality check when it comes to immigration.

I made reference to the cancellation of the parents and grandparents program. One day, they have this other area on immigration. Imagine that someone is in line and has been waiting for years. They want to come as an independent and to be able to do some good things in Canada. They have been waiting for years under the Conservatives. The Conservatives have an idea: Here is how—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am getting a lot of heckling on the official opposition side, so I would ask members to hold on, because there will be an opportunity to ask

questions and comments for five minutes. I would just ask members to hold off.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let us imagine this. We have thousands of people in waiting lines, being processed. The Conservatives say they do not want to deal with this particular stream, so what they are going to do is just delete them all. Imagine being in queue, waiting for years, and the Harper government decides that the waiting lines are so long and that one of the ways they can deal with them is just to delete them, to pretend they did not even exist. A lot of people had a difficult time with that one.

One can imagine why the Conservatives say that things are broken. We are still fixing the broken system that we inherited from Stephen Harper. That was truly broken.

The leader of the Conservative Party says he wants people to feel good, to feel as if they can make a difference. Do members know what he talks about? He talks about immigrant credentials. That is a very important issue. There is no doubt that it is an important issue. In fact, the government has spent literally hundreds of millions of dollars to assist provinces in getting immigrant credentials recognized, far more money than Stephen Harper.

What does the Conservative leader say today? He says that they are going to have a blue seal program, and that a person would come to Canada, write an exam and be a doctor anywhere they want in Canada. That is balderdash. That is absolute, underlined, “cannot say the word”. At the end of the day, the Conservatives do not know what they are talking about. They have no idea what all is involved. One cannot just say, “Here, write an exam and then we will allow you, as a doctor, to practise anywhere you want in Canada.”

An hon. member: That is how it works.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: No, that is not the way it works, Madam Speaker—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

There is a cross-debate again, and there are some people who seem to be repetitive in not respecting the silence that I have asked of them during the hon. member's speech. I would just ask members, again, to stop heckling and to stop trying to engage in conversation while someone else has the floor.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

I am now getting it on the government side as well.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I should start from the top.

Statements by Members

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That would be a good punishment, maybe. I just meant that, because of the conversations I keep having, I should maybe get the member to start from the top, but I will not.

I would just remind members that we are getting close to question period and I am sure that they have a lot of questions that they want to ask the hon. member once he is done, for questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the point is—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to offer a way of bringing some order back to the decorum. It always seems that it is the member for Winnipeg North who is causing this. Could you take some of this last five minutes—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not a point of order. Again, I would ask members to please be respectful.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what I was trying to clearly demonstrate is the fact that the Conservative leader has absolutely no idea, in terms of immigration policy or the types of things that would really make a difference, and we see that. I really wish I had the time and wish we were allowed to ask the Conservative leader questions based on the speech he delivered. Not only was he wrong on so many fronts when he tried to say that our system is broken, when in fact we inherited a broken system, but he also used the opportunity of the Bloc's motion to talk about the immigration policy of the Conservative Party. There is no Conservative policy on immigration.

I think he understands, to a certain degree, some of those hot issues, but he has no idea how to deal with them. If we want to talk about immigrant credentials, we have to work with the provinces and different stakeholders. By telling people who are here today, or would-be immigrants, that they just have to write an exam and they will get the so-called blue seal, trying to make a comparison to the Red Seal, the Conservative leader is doing a huge disservice. He is trying to give the impression that the Conservatives would do a better job on immigration, when their record is the absolute opposite. That is the reality of the situation.

That is why I found it very difficult to be in my seat while the leader of the Conservative Party tried to explain a Conservative policy on immigration. The Conservative leader needs to go back to the drawing board. He really and truly needs to look at ways to contribute to the debate on immigration, because he failed on all accounts coming into this particular debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments will come after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

FARMING ON PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, island farmers are at the leading edge of climate adaptation. They are strong stewards of the environment and they know first-hand the impacts a warming climate has on the future of their industry. Recently, island farmers have been working with the potato board researchers and the living lab in their studying of cover crops.

Cover crops assist in retaining nitrogen and nutrients, build soil organic matter, reduce erosion and create better resilience against increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Research has also shown they can produce up to a 10% yield improvement, and some varieties of cover crops can produce additional income for farmers. They are now utilized in nearly 50% of fields where potatoes were planted the year prior.

I would like to commend the leadership of research and agronomy specialist Ryan Barrett and island producers on their innovative efforts to adapt to changing climate while still ensuring they produce some of the finest foods in the world.

* * *

• (1400)

MOOSE HIDE CAMPAIGN

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, with Red Dress Day having just passed, it is important to continue our commitment to end violence against all women and children.

The Moose Hide Campaign is an indigenous-led, nationwide movement started along Canada's infamous Highway of Tears. It calls on men, boys and all Canadians to stand up against gender-based violence. The co-founders, Paul and his daughter Raven, started this campaign to honour women and children and to challenge men and boys to stand with women and children, to speak out against gender-based violence, to support each other, to hold each other accountable, and to be positive role models for one another.

By wearing a moose hide pin and participating in Moose Hide Campaign Day, Canadians are making measurable and meaningful progress towards reconciliation and the creation of a country where violence against women and children can no longer flourish in the shadows. I encourage all members of the House to show their support by wearing and sharing a moose hide pin today.

MOTHERS

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, “mother” is a simple word, yet it has many deep meanings. Mother is birth, mother is love, mother is warmth, mother is hope and mother is a walking miracle. A mother comprehends what the child does not speak. A mother’s hug lasts long after she lets go.

“Mother” is a simple word, but being a mother is no simple job. Indeed, the mothers of our nation and those of others, such as Iran, are the embodiment of strength and resilience. They take these traits with them everywhere they go, from home to their community and society. A feminist economic policy that puts equality and providing opportunities for our nation’s mothers at its core is essential, and it works. It is not easy being a mother. If it were, fathers would do it.

I say to my wife, Homeira, that to the world she is a mother, but to our family she is the world.

* * *

[Translation]

LUC NOËL

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, when I was newly elected, I met a great man from Minganie who inspired me. His name is Luc Noël and, in fact, he has made a mark on the entire north shore. Today, as he steps down from his duties as an elected reeve, a position he held for more than 10 years, I want to ensure he understands just how grateful I and the people of the north shore are.

His Anticostian, Acadian and Innu roots combined to give rise to a man with a loyal head and heart, a man dedicated to the area and those who shaped it. That is because he is a Cayen. My colleagues may not know what a Cayen is. That is what the people back home call those from Havre-Saint-Pierre.

Imagine an ocean wind, filled with raw strength, that can fill every bit of space and can move, transform, change and create anything and everything through movement or speech. Imagine something that is energetic, with a benevolent yet unbreakable will. That is but a tiny part of who this man is.

I thank Luc. He is one of the people building our country within a country. That is why there will never be enough Cayens, particularly Cayens of his calibre.

* * *

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is National Nursing Week, and I want to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the incredible work that nurses do every day. They are unsung heroes who work tirelessly to care for, comfort and support those who need it.

Our lives are vastly improved by the dedication, compassion and expertise of Michelle, Nicole, Johanne, Kathy, Jay, Hassan, Karim, Frantz and all nurses, particularly those at the Cité-de-la-Santé hospital in Laval. They hold our hand, listen to our concerns and provide essential care when we need it most. They are incredibly strong and brave, and their efforts do not go unnoticed. They are

Statements by Members

the backbone of our health care system, and we are all grateful to them.

I want to thank them on behalf of all Canadians.

* * *

[English]

TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been far too many closures, far too many accidents and far too many lives lost along the Trans-Canada Highway through northwestern Ontario. That is why we have been calling for the twinning of this stretch for years. This project was supported by the former Conservative government, and it is supported by the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba, but the only missing piece is support from the federal Liberal government. We are thankful that construction of phase one has begun, with the support of the province, but we need federal involvement to be able to get it over the finish line.

That is why I rise today, to once again renew my calls for the federal Liberals to step up, stop stalling and support this key infrastructure project so that people can travel safely throughout northwestern Ontario. If they cannot bring it home, I can assure Canadians that Canada's Conservatives will.

* * *

● (1405)

WILLIAMS SYNDROME

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do colleagues know that Williams syndrome occurs in about one in every 10,000 births? Williams syndrome is a genetic condition that is caused by a random genetic deletion. Medical, developmental and learning challenges typically occur alongside unique abilities. It occurs equally in males and females, in all cultures, and to birth parents of all ages. Those with Williams syndrome have medical and developmental issues, but at the same time they exhibit striking verbal abilities, highly social personalities and an affinity for music.

I would like to highlight the accomplishments of Karina Scali, who lives with Williams syndrome. Karina has taken the stage at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, travelled to the United Nations with the Minister of Disability Inclusion and recently graduated from Sheridan College with her ECE. We can never say that Williams syndrome has held Karina back, because she is accomplishing more than most people do in their lifetime.

I ask members to join me in raising awareness for Williams syndrome.

*Statements by Members***PORTUGUESE CANADIANS**

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 70 years ago, a group of 85 young men set sail to Canada from Portugal to start a new life. May 13 marks the anniversary of the first official labour migration of Portuguese arriving at Pier 21 aboard *Saturnia* in 1953. The community referred to them as pioneers. I would like to take this moment to recognize them and my father, Antonio Sousa, who made that inaugural journey in search of opportunity. Many were sent to work in farms and forestry. My dad went to work in the camps in Goose Bay, Labrador. His determination paid off, in making Toronto's Kensington Market my family's new home. Soon others followed, including my mother and brother a year later.

This is but one story of the courage and resilience that define the Portuguese Canadian experience. Through hard work and perseverance, they and their descendants have contributed greatly to Canada's social, cultural and economic fabric. As the community celebrates this milestone, we recognize the legacy of those pioneers who opened doors. We thank them and many more Portuguese Canadians, men and women, who, to this day, continue to lead the way in building a strong and vibrant Canada.

Parabéns e obrigado.

* * *

JOURNALISTS' SOURCES

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as if censoring what Canadians can see, say or hear online was not bad enough, the Liberals had to go even a step further. That was this past weekend at their convention. They decided to put forward a policy that would require journalists to give up their sources in order to be published online. It was not enough to censor Canadians at large; they had to target journalists.

Imagine this for a moment. Imagine what would happen if journalists had to be vetted by the government in order to release a story on, say, donations given by the Beijing government to the Trudeau Foundation, or foreign interference in our elections, or the many, many ethical breaches of the government. I wonder what would happen if journalists had to be vetted in order to release those stories. They probably would not go public, which begs the question, is the government simply acting pre-emptively in order to get ahead of future stories they know will be coming? Why is the government so hell-bent on censoring the media?

* * *

[*Translation*]

SHOOTING IN BOURGET

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I rise in the House. This morning, we were horrified to learn about the tragic events that had unfolded in the community of Bourget, in my riding. Every time there is a shooting, we always say to ourselves that such a thing would never happen in our own community, that these things only happen somewhere else. Sadly, this morning, one police officer lost his life and two others were injured.

[*English*]

I cannot stop thinking about Sergeant Mueller's family. I cannot stop thinking about those officers who had to deliver the news to Sergeant Mueller's family. I cannot stop thinking about those officers who were injured, and I cannot stop thinking about the OPP officers who lost a colleague. The next few days, weeks, months and years will be hard on our community, but especially on our local police officers.

My deepest condolences go to Sergeant Mueller's family, and I wish a speedy recovery to the injured officers.

Let us never forget that every day police officers are putting their lives in danger to protect our communities.

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

I want to thank all the police officers and the first responders who assisted with this morning's tragic events.

Thank you to our police officers from the bottom of my heart.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is completely out of touch. His government is driving up farmers' costs, and now he plans a 41¢-a-litre tax on gas, heat and food.

Canada's largest megaproject, spring seeding, is now in progress. Farmers are planting their crops and they tell me this is the most expensive year ever. Farm cash expenses exceeded \$11.5 billion in 2022, 11% higher than in 2020, and this year they will be even higher. His deficits have driven up borrowing rates, making it more expensive for farmers to finance their crop inputs. Thanks to the Prime Minister's carbon tax, farmers continue to have expenses that their global competitors do not have.

Our farmers want a change. They are tired of the Prime Minister's out-of-touch policies. They want a government that does not punish them for growing food. They want a government that is committed to letting them do what they do best: feeding Canadians and feeding the world.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of implementing a plan to fight inflation, the Liberals are determined to repeat their failed inflationary approach, and people are paying the price. Canadians are out of money and the Liberal government is out of touch.

The good news is, Conservatives have a plan to clean up the Liberal mess. Our Conservative leader stands for the common sense of the common people, united for our common home: Canada.

We will lower prices by ending inflationary deficits and scrapping the carbon tax on heat, gas and groceries. We will bring home powerful paycheques for workers by lowering taxes and clawbacks to reward their hard work. We will ensure people can find a place to call home, by firing the gatekeepers and freeing up land to build. We will protect communities by ending the catch-and-release of repeat violent criminals.

Our Conservative team will keep working to turn hurt into hope, and under the leadership of our Conservative leader, we will bring back the common sense of the common people.

* * *

MOTHER'S DAY

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Mother's Day. Mothers are the foundation of our families and the backbone of our communities. We must also remember that Mother's Day is a celebration for mothers across this country and for those who play a motherly role in our lives, who provide us with love, care and guidance. They all deserve our gratitude and appreciation.

[Translation]

Our mothers nourish us, support us and play a defining role in our identity. Through thick and thin, they give us comfort, courage and wisdom when we need it most. Let us pay tribute to the mothers who showed us the way.

[English]

I express my deepest gratitude to all mothers, including the members in this House, for their love, strength and resilience. Let us come together to express our heartfelt appreciation to all mothers for their selfless love, unwavering dedication and boundless sacrifice.

To my mother, Norma, and my mother-in-law, Lerma, I love them so much.

[Translation]

Happy Mother's Day.

* * *

[English]

RURAL POST OFFICES

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, postal workers play vital roles in our small communities, but Canada Post's model for rural communities is just not working. In many small towns, the postmasters themselves are responsible

Statements by Members

for providing a facility for the post office, something that Canada Post only pays them a couple of hundred dollars a month for, much less than market rates. The starting wage for these positions, which lie at the heart of community life, is less than \$20 per hour.

The community of Southbank was without its post office for almost a year. Local residents and the regional director, Clint Lambert, had to renovate a community building in order to restore postal services. In Atlin, where I am heading tomorrow, the community still has not received a permanent post office location from Canada Post, nor a postmaster.

Rural places deserve reliable service delivery from the government, and Canada Post's model for rural post offices needs a lot of work. I hope the minister will improve the model for rural Canada and its postmasters.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the pathetic circus has returned to the Hill. With their fake smiles and their fake compassion, these anti-choice, anti-women demonstrators have returned. We see once again the generous Conservative donors eagerly waiting to applaud the few members of the official opposition who will come out to encourage them and sing the praises of their holy crusade against women's rights.

They are there, en masse, with their signs, showing their sweetest, most inoffensive faces. However, these are the same people who intimidate doctors in front of abortion clinics, try to make young women feel guilty and threaten staff. They call themselves pro-life, but they have no problem wrecking anyone's life. They are incapable of recognizing that a woman's body belongs to her at all times. They are incapable of recognizing that women do not have to justify the decisions we make about our bodies to anyone.

I am proud to belong to a party that defends women's right to abortion and even more proud to be a member of a nation that has already listened to the cause.

These people have the right to protest, and that is truly their right. However, they should not expect our respect and they shall not have it.

* * *

[English]

SHOOTING IN BOURGET

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I stand to honour our brave police officers, after the country received devastating news that, yet again, one of our police officers has fallen. Early this morning, in the small town of Bourget, Ontario, Sergeant Eric Mueller was killed and two more officers were injured on the job.

Oral Questions

Conservatives join with the OPP and police officers across the country in praying for the two officers still in hospital, for the family of Sergeant Mueller and for the safety of our brave police officers across Canada.

This terrible tragedy follows nine months that have been the worst in recent memory for Canadian police. We have lost and we honour Constable Andrew Hong, Constable Morgan Russell, Constable Devon Northrup, Constable Shaelyn Yang, Constable Grzegorz Pierzchala, Constable Travis Jordan, Constable Brett Ryan, Sergeant Maureen Breau, Constable Harvinder Singh Dhami, and now, Sergeant Eric Mueller.

To all our police, I say that we mourn with them and we stand with them today and every day.

* * *

ABORTION RIGHTS

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I speak, just outside this House, a protest is under way spouting anti-choice chants with the goal of tearing away a woman's access to abortion.

Countless women have fought for years for our right to an abortion, a hard-earned freedom, to privacy, to autonomy and to choice. As the foundation that they built comes under threat from the rhetoric spewed by the Conservatives, we have a responsibility to not let up the fight. We cannot go back. We will not go back.

As we fight tooth and nail to protect abortion as the safe health care practice that it is, we are relentless. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to protecting my freedom and every woman's freedom to choose. I am proud of each and every woman and man on this side of the House who is committed to ensuring these rights are upheld indefinitely.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PASSPORTS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with his woke, egotistical, liberal ideology, the Prime Minister is trying to delete our history by erasing Terry Fox, who fought cancer, by erasing Quebec City and by erasing the soldiers at Vimy, only to replace them with a colouring book that includes a picture of the Prime Minister swimming at Harrington Lake.

I am announcing today that a common-sense Conservative government will restore our history and our passport, which includes Vimy, Quebec City, Terry Fox, and all of the history that makes us proud.

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that we commemorate Canada's history, but let us not pretend that the only place we are able to do that is inside the pages of our passport.

I know about Vimy Ridge because I have read books about it, researched it independently and talked to veterans who served in the military. I know that Brigadier-General A. E. Ross said, "in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation", but it is not because a picture was included in a passport.

We are going to continue to take opportunities to commemorate our nation's heroes. Whether that includes statues on Parliament Hill or Viola Desmond on the \$10 bill, or whether we seek other opportunities to commemorate our history, we will continue to engage Canadians along the way and make decisions that celebrate our nation's heroes.

• (1420)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the current Prime Minister's woke and out-of-touch ideology is so egotistical that he cannot imagine there are any Canadian stories bigger than him. That is why he deleted Terry Fox, the soldiers who died at Vimy, the city of Quebec and the RCMP from our passport to replace them with a colouring book that includes an image of him swimming at Harrington Lake when he was a boy.

I announce that a common-sense Conservative government would bring back Vimy, our memory of Terry Fox and pride in our country, and it would restore a passport that all of us can be proud of.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would caution the opposition leader against claiming that he somehow has a monopoly on caring about Terry Fox. He should talk to the member for Oakville about her advocacy for Terry Fox and the money she has helped secure for cancer research.

Terry Fox lives on in the memories of Canadians because of the courage he demonstrated during the Marathon of Hope and in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to have to interrupt the minister.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to hear the answer to the question he asked. I am going to let the minister start from the top so that the hon. Leader of the Opposition can hear the whole thing.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I would caution all members of this House against claiming some sort of a monopoly on caring about our nation's heroes.

Terry Fox is loved by Canadians, not because his picture was in the passport but because of the courage he demonstrated during the Marathon of Hope, and the research funding that has come to help advance care for cancer patients. My family has been affected by cancer, and I still celebrate Terry Fox's contributions to our national discourse. Let us look at the advocacy of the member for Oakville on Terry Fox's behalf to help secure funding to perpetuate his legacy and continue to improve cancer research.

We can commemorate our heroes in a number of ways, and we are committed to doing that.

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is out of touch and in hiding. Yesterday, as he left the House, he challenged me to have more of these debates, and now he will not even get out of his seat and answer my questions.

We know why. He is afraid. He is afraid to defend not only his first carbon tax, which he admits will increase the price of gas by 41¢ a litre, at thousands of dollars of net costs per family, but he now has carbon tax 2, a second tax with no rebate, that will increase food, heat and gas prices even further.

How much will the second carbon tax increase the cost of gas for hard-working Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we now have the Conservative premier of New Brunswick, at the request of one of the Conservative members, asking the federal government to put in place our carbon pricing system. We have a number of Conservative members who have argued in favour of carbon pricing. All the provinces and territories in Canada have put in place carbon pricing. While we have done that, we have increased jobs and economic development in Canada, and we have reduced our pollution by more than 50 million tonnes.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question that the Prime Minister was too afraid to stand up to answer and debate me on was about the cost of the second carbon tax.

We know that the Prime Minister's first carbon tax will cost 41¢ a litre, at a net cost to average families of over \$1,500. However, that is not enough for him. He wants a second carbon tax, which will add even more costs without any rebate at all.

We know that he told falsehoods about the first tax. Will he finally have the guts to stand up and tell us how much his second tax will cost Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if allowed, I will read from the Conservative Party of Canada's election platform from the last election, the platform that this party stood and spoke to Canadians about. I am quoting from page 78, where it says, "Our plan will ensure that all Canadians can do their part—"

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry. I am starting to hear chatter again. I am having a hard time hearing the answer, and it is coming from a certain point. I am sure they do not want the next question to be swapped with the last one and have someone very special to them—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: It was coming equally from that side and from this side.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lethbridge will apologize to the Chair for interrupting.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Very good.

Now, I want to remind all members to have some respect for this chamber. That includes the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay. I hear his chattering throughout. I just want to ask him to keep it down and stop, please.

Now, we will go back to the minister, from the top, and I want to see everything calm down.

The hon. minister.

• (1425)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and many members across the way have called me "woke" before, and if "woke" means standing up for the future of my children and grandchildren so that they have access to clean air and clean water, then so be it. If "woke" means standing up to create jobs for generations of Canadians by investing in the clean economy, then so be it. If "woke" means standing up for the rights of women to choose, then so be it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is woke, and so Canadians are broke. I will say what "woke" means in practice. His government approved dumping millions of litres of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence River; that is what "woke" means. "Woke" means charging a single mom higher costs to drive to work and feed her kids while the Prime Minister jets around using Canadian tax dollars and pumping emissions into our atmosphere. That is the woke hypocrisy across the way. If he has the guts to tell the truth, he will tell us this: How much will carbon tax 2 cost Canadians?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is exceptionally disappointing from the Leader of the Opposition is that at a time when families in Alberta are experiencing some of the worst wildfires in their history, he is railing against policies that are helping to fight climate change. When he talks about that single mom, unfortunately, he has opposed sending her the Canada child benefit, which has put thousands of dollars into her pocket. He has also opposed the child care agreements that are supporting families across this country and saving them thousands of dollars. When it comes to the environment and supporting families, we know where the Leader of the Opposition—

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they want to bring in 100 million people by 2100. Everyone in Quebec can see that the so-called Century Initiative is nothing of the kind.

Oral Questions

Quebec's premier even declared it a threat to our nation. Quebec's National Assembly adopted not one, not two, but three unanimous motions against these targets. Every elected representative in Quebec is against them. These people are not big bad nationalists. They simply are not willing to see Quebec transformed in such a radical way without debate and without their input.

Will the government commit to not increasing immigration to reach 100 million citizens by 2100?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: the Century Initiative plan is not our government's policy. It is very important to welcome people who work in our communities and make an essential contribution to improving Canadians' quality of life. It is possible, important and essential to welcome newcomers while protecting francophones' demographic weight. Not only is it possible, it is this government's policy right now.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all parties in the House have recognized the Quebec nation, yet today they are unable to respect the Quebec nation.

The Liberals are adopting immigration targets that are unanimously opposed by the Quebec National Assembly. The Conservatives, meanwhile, say they will determine their targets based on business demands, not the will of Quebecers. The NDP says, "Quebec? Who cares?"

Will Quebecers from the other parties stand with their nation and say no to these targets of 500,000-plus people a year?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows full well that Quebec has several tools to control immigration into Quebec. We also know that there are posters all over Quebec saying, "we are hiring".

On Monday, I was in Saint-Eustache with ministers from the Quebec government. On the way from Saint-Eustache to Ottawa, there were companies everywhere, in industrial parks, that need workers.

We will work with the Quebec government and Quebec businesses to ensure that businesses have access to this workforce—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby South.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives will try to reopen the debate on the right to abortion. Once again, the Liberals will place their hands on their hearts and declare their outrage, without doing anything to guarantee the right to abortion.

When will the government stop with the empty words? When will they guarantee access to abortion?

[*English*]

Ms. Jenna Suds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker,

we know, on this side of the House, that health care and abortion go hand in hand. We will always protect a woman's right to an abortion.

We have seen, on the other side of the House, an attempt to attack a woman's right to an abortion. To be clear, that will not stand on this side of the House.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is, with the Liberal government, it is often all talk and no action, particularly when it comes to something as important as reproductive rights.

The Liberals promised to ensure that all regions of this country would have access to abortion services. Did they deliver? No, they failed. The Liberals promised to ensure that anti-abortion groups spreading misinformation would not receive charitable status. Did they deliver? No, they failed.

Again and again, the Liberals continue to say one thing and do another. Will they stop with the empty words and deliver concrete steps to defend, not just the right but the absolute right—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, our policy is clear. We are a feminist government. That includes defending women's rights, including a woman's right to choose and a woman's right to access abortion.

We will always be there to fund clinics, but also to fight the radical right that models itself on everything that comes out of the United States, south of our border, which certainly has repercussions for our colleagues opposite.

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSING

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$3,000 is the price that Canadians could soon be paying to rent a one-bedroom unit in Toronto. That is according to a piece from BNN Bloomberg this week. The report says that limited supply, which of course gives us higher prices, is the reason for this.

Under the Prime Minister, new units are not being built fast enough, housing prices have doubled and the dream of home ownership is slipping away. When will the Liberals get out of the way and actually get shovels into the ground?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really amazing to listen to the Conservatives finally come around to actually proposing some half-baked ideas about housing.

Oral Questions

We have been doing everything that the hon. member is talking about for the last two years. We have been tying infrastructure to housing. We have been investing in municipalities to make sure that we have more housing supply. We have been building more affordable housing. We have been putting measures in place to help first-time homebuyers. We have been building rapid housing for the most vulnerable.

We have been doing it all, and the Conservatives have voted against every single measure we have brought to this House.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is because none of it is working.

The housing minister is spending \$89 billion to double the price of a home, double rent and double mortgage payments. He is about to build 50,000 fewer houses this year than he did last year. In eight years, we have also lost 20,000 affordable housing units. The Liberals are spending more money to get higher prices and worse results. It is a failure by any measure.

Will the housing minister bring home places to live for our people that they could actually afford?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member needs to talk to her leader, because he stood up in this House and insulted and denigrated three of the leading mayors of Canada's largest cities, calling them "woke."

He also stood in this House and pledged to cut housing funding. He hopes that, somehow, all of that would result in some magical solution to the housing issue. It is the same magical thinking that underpinned his advice to Canadians to go with cryptocurrency to get out of inflation.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has created a cost of living crisis. Housing prices have doubled under the Liberals. Many Canadians are skipping meals just to keep up with their bills. Now the Liberals plan a 41¢ per litre tax increase on heat, gas and food.

When will the Liberal government come to its senses and cancel its harmful tax increases?

• (1435)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives talk a big game when it comes to energy in Canada, but here are the facts.

Under the Conservative government, foreign oil imports were double what they are today. It is a fact that imports from non-U.S. sources have declined 80% under our government. These facts speak for themselves.

Under our government, more Canadians are using Canadian energy. The member opposite may not like it, but a fact is a fact.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Liberals have not met one single climate target.

Liberal taxes are breaking the backs of Canadians. Liberal policies are discouraging workers by clawing back more and more of what Canadians earn. The Liberals are making it impossible to get ahead. So many Canadians are discouraged and concerned about buying their first home, starting a family or working toward financial independence.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his plan to raise taxes on food, heat and gas, and give Canadians some hope?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to let the hon. member know that from the very time we formed government we have been laser-focused on making life more affordable for Canadians. I note that at every step along the way when we have cut taxes for the middle class or delivered benefits directly to families, the Conservatives have reliably been there to vote against the measures we put forward.

With respect to some of the comments that are coming from the Conservative Party right now about money that is being earned by Canadians is so-called being taken away, the reality is that those are the funds that go toward ensuring Canadians have access to the Canada pension plan. Those are the funds that go toward making sure Canadians have access to employment insurance if they fall upon hard times.

We will defend the social programs that keep my neighbours well during difficult—

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

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, The Globe and Mail reported that the Trudeau Foundation was used as part of an influence operation to get access to the Prime Minister. We heard from the CEO this week that with the donation there was no oversight and no due diligence or audit.

Within five weeks of the Prime Minister's brother signing this \$200,000 donation agreement with two Beijing-backed donors, they both had direct access to the Prime Minister.

The question is very simple. Does the Prime Minister still believe the allegations in The Globe and Mail are false?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what has been said time and time again in the House is that the Prime Minister has not had a connection, direct or indirect, with the foundation for more than 10 years. It is an independent foundation that is responsible for giving scholarships to young leaders, who are going to have tremendous futures in our country. If members have questions about that organization that gives those scholarships, they should ask the foundation directly.

Oral Questions

However, what we have seen from the testimony is that whether it is attacking the CBC or independent organizations, those members have no care for whom they attack with their partisan attacks or what damages it does. They are just seeking partisan—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we saw is that the president of the Trudeau Foundation, a long-time Liberal and good friend of the Trudeau family, Edward Johnson, was a good student. Like the Prime Minister, he wilfully chose to turn a blind eye to Beijing's attempted interference in the foundation to influence the current Prime Minister. The foundation manages \$125 million in taxpayer money and Mr. Johnson, a good soldier, put a freeze on all internal investigations into this \$140,000 donation from the regime in Beijing.

Why will the Prime Minister not acknowledge that he too wilfully turned a blind eye because his party benefited?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the foundation in question is independent. The Prime Minister has no direct or indirect involvement in the foundation. That is clear.

The foundation is responsible for scholarships. The foundation is independent and ensures that future generations of leaders receive support for their education. If the member across the way has any questions, it is important to address them to the foundation directly.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government can go ahead and say that it is not following the Century Initiative, but it is using the same targets. I said, “the same”, but that is not accurate. The Century Initiative is recommending that Canada welcome 475,000 newcomers in 2025, but the government chose to go with 500,000. It is moving even faster, despite the unanimous opposition of the Quebec National Assembly, and without even consulting Quebec or holding a public debate.

The Bloc Québécois is calling on all parties, especially the Liberals, to listen to my question. If they want to copy the Century Initiative or even increase the level of immigration even faster, will they at least be honest enough to tell Quebeckers about it?

• (1440)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is interesting. It is obvious that my friend across the way did not read the federal government's plan for immigration levels. If he had read the chapter on francophone immigration, then he would know that it is possible to create a system that will welcome the largest number of francophone newcomers in the history of Canada. That is the government's plan right now.

However, the situation in Quebec is very different. Quebec now has the power to set the level of newcomers to Quebec. Quebec has the power to choose every person who comes to Quebec through the economic class.

Now—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they reached their francophone immigration target once in 20 years and they are boasting about it. That is ridiculous.

Immigration thresholds are not an abstract concept or just a number in a notebook. They are not statistics that are just thrown around. Behind the numbers there are people with needs. These people need housing, they need health care, day care and schools for their children. They also need to integrate into their new society, learn its language and its culture. We cannot look at immigration from a strictly economic point of view. We are talking about human beings.

Will the government commit to rejecting this bad initiative and finally consider the ability to integrate these people when establishing these thresholds?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention.

When I think about immigration, I think about the labour shortage. What we need to make clear to all Quebeckers watching today is that Quebec has the authority to select immigrants.

What we are hearing across Quebec and in the regions is that there is a need for workers. When we make investments, for example in the GM plant that will be built in Bécancour, the mayors and officials of the RCMs tell us that they need skilled people.

That is how we will build Quebec and Canada.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about health transfers.

The provinces said they needed \$28 billion a year. The federal government gave them only one-sixth of that amount. That was insulting enough, but that was only to provide care for the current population. That did not take into account the Century Initiative.

The Liberal target is a minimum of 500,000 people per year. What studies have they looked at to determine that Quebec and the provinces can provide health care to at least 500,000 more people every year with one-sixth of the money we already need?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, as the Bloc Québécois is well aware, because the minister has already said so, the initiative mentioned is not a policy of this government. That is the first point.

My second point is that, to my knowledge, there were no Bloc Québécois members present with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the Minister of Health when they were negotiating an additional \$8 billion in health transfers to Quebec.

That is what Quebeckers wanted from our government and that is what we delivered.

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister refuses to appear at the finance committee for two hours to answer basic questions about her failed budget. She spent more time in a round-trip flight between Toronto and—

[Translation]

The Speaker: I have to interrupt the member for a moment. I would like to remind all hon. members that, when they speak among themselves, other people can hear them.

[English]

We have great acoustics, but it echoes all over. I want members to be mindful so we can hear the questions and the answers. I know that some of it is not done on purpose and that members are talking among themselves, like being at work and talking to the next person maybe four or five benches over, but it really does echo and it interferes. I just want everybody to be conscious of that.

The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn, from the top, please.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Speaker, the finance minister refuses to appear at the finance committee to answer basic questions for two hours about her failed budget. She spent more time in a round-trip flight between Toronto and Ottawa than she did in the finance committee in the last year.

Her failed budget added an extra \$4,200 cost on struggling households with the \$43-billion Liberal budget bonanza.

Why is she hiding from answering for two hours at the committee? Is she as embarrassed by this budget as much as Canadians are?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear on this issue. The finance minister is very ready and is scheduled to appear at the finance committee. Guess what is happening.

This morning, once again, the Liberals showed up to work to listen to testimony on the budget implement act, but what did the Conservative MP for South Shore—St. Margarets want to talk about? It was the *Taxman* from the Beatles. I have nothing against the Beatles, but I do want supports getting out to Canadians.

Therefore, my appeal to every member in the House is this. Let us come together, right now, and pass the bill.

• (1445)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I were the finance minister, I would be embarrassed to answer for two hours as well. She misled Canadians and said that she did not want to add fuel to inflation. She then threw a \$43-billion inflationary jerry can on the inflationary fire that she created in the first place.

The Liberals gaslit Canadians for years about their failed carbon tax scam, while Canadians watched them jet-set around the world trying to up their phony celebrity status. Now it seems like the finance minister is auditioning for her next career.

Oral Questions

When will the finance minister realize that this is not a part-time job? When will she get to work, appear at the committee for two hours and answer basic questions about her failed budget?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the Conservatives are not happy about the fact that Canada has maintained its AAA credit rating, that Canada has made sure in this last budget that inflation has not gone up. In fact, it has been going down for nine consecutive months in a row. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 and the fastest-growing economy.

What is the Conservative filibuster stopping? It is stopping faster payments for the Canada workers benefit, supports to parents to help with their kids' education, tax reductions for tradespeople. The Conservatives are filibustering. When are they going to stop and deliver for Canadians?

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are stretched to the limit. They are struggling to get by. They are at the end of their rope, they are fed up and they cannot take any more.

Meanwhile, this government is digging in its heels and taking even more money out of their pockets and off their paycheques. It is continuing with its plan to increase the price of gas, groceries and housing. The people in my riding talk to me about it every day.

The Prime Minister should stop taking luxury vacations all over the world and listen to Canadians, who also talk to him every day.

Will he finally put an end to his policies that are driving up the cost of consumer goods?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Listening to Canadians is exactly what we did. It is something that the Conservatives should do. Canadians told us three things.

Oral Questions

First, they told us that they need help with the cost of groceries. That is why we proposed a grocery rebate that will help 11 million Canadians across the country. Second, Canadians told us that they want a family doctor. That is why we took action in health. Third, Canadians told us that they need help getting ready to succeed in the 21st-century economy. That is exactly what we are doing. We are positioning Canada for the 21st-century economy.

* * *

[English]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a mother and if my daughter ever needed an abortion, I would do everything possible to make sure she had access to the full range of reproductive health care, yet the government has done nothing to ensure equal access for Canadians. Only one in six hospitals in the country provide abortion services.

The Liberals are all talk, but women in rural communities are suffering. Abortion care is not a campaign slogan. We need more providers, more funding and more action from the government.

How long are Canadians going to have to wait?

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the right to an abortion and access to abortion undoubtedly go hand in hand. In Canada, universal access to abortion is guaranteed under the Canada Health Act. Through the \$45-million sexual reproductive health fund, we are making sure that Canadians facing obstacles to accessing abortions are supported financially and that organizations providing these services have capacity to do so.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Priests for Life is this militant political action group fighting against women's reproductive freedom and its behaviour is so extreme that Pope Francis himself had to kick its leader out of the Roman Catholic Church.

How is it possible that this group of anti-women extremists keeps getting approval for Canada summer jobs? It is unconscionable. Canadian youth are being encouraged to get trained by this extremist political network while taxpayers foot the bill.

Will the minister explain why Canada summer jobs continues to offer funding to anti-choice extremists?

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know in the House how much we value Canada's summer jobs in our community. It provides incredible opportunities for youth and for employers throughout.

Throughout this process, we know MP input is critical. We value that input, and I encourage all MPs to bring forward their suggestions, their concerns, their ideas. We are always happy to hear from them.

• (1450)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, gun violence and violent crime have prevented Canadians in B.C. from feeling safe in their communities.

Since 2015, our government has prioritized prevention, intervention and enforcement as ways to keep guns off the street and give resources to our neighbourhoods. Could the Minister of Public Safety tell the House what the Government of Canada is doing to eliminate violent crime in British Columbia?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank my colleague from Surrey for his advocacy and hard work. I would also be remiss if I did not take a moment to express our condolences to OPP officer Sergeant Mueller's family. He died in a tragic incident last night. Our hearts and our thoughts go out to them.

We want to be sure that these sacrifices are not in vain. That is why we made an announcement earlier this week on providing \$390 million for law enforcement across the country, which will help ensure we can prevent another tragedy like that from occurring again and keep Canadians safe from gun violence.

* * *

PASSPORTS

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Prime Minister could be more out of touch with the reality of Canadians.

It really was not too long ago that people literally lined up and stayed the night, camping out, to get their passport renewed or a new one altogether. People missed out on being able to go see a dying loved one before they passed away. They missed out on weddings. They missed out on funerals. They missed out on family celebrations. Why was that?

Well, it turns out that it was because this government was more concerned with erasing history by removing Terry Fox, Quebec City and Vimy Ridge from our passports, rather than getting passports expedited to Canadians. Why is the government so hellbent on erasing Canada's history?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with members of the House that my hon. colleague is deeply mistaken.

Oral Questions

With regard to the ability of Canadians to get their passports in a timely way, I want to credit the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development for her work to eliminate the backlogs so Canadians can get passports for travel where and when they were needed. With respect to the changes to the passport, the designs were approved a number of years ago, before there were any considerations of backlogs and passport applications.

It is very important that no party in the House claims a monopoly over owning Canada's history. Every member of the House cares deeply about our nation's history and is proud of the country. We will continue to commemorate it in the years ahead.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are erasing Terry Fox's picture from Canadian passports. Terry Fox came from Coquitlam, B.C., and was Métis. After his leg was amputated for cancer, he began his cross-country Marathon of Hope to raise funds for research.

Terry did not live to finish the race to the Pacific, but now millions participate in the annual Terry Fox Run to continue his race. Terry Fox is an international hero. Why would the Prime Minister rip this great Canadian's picture from our passports?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it breaks my heart to hear anyone in the House politicize a Canadian hero such as Terry Fox. That is something that the Fox family has prided itself on since Terry passed away in 1980.

Not only that, but during the convoy, Terry's statue was defaced here in Ottawa, and the members opposite were supportive of that convoy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

On both sides I am hearing a lot of talking among members, which makes it hard to hear the questions and the answers. This then elevates, and the chatter starts back and forth.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are saying that we are erasing Terry Fox from history. Terry Fox will never, ever be erased from history, not here in Canada, and not around the world.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Terry Fox's hometown said, "Whoever made the decision to remove Terry Fox from Canadian passports needs to give their head a shake. Our country needs more Terry Fox, not less."

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

The members across the way have the nerve to say that we are politicizing the history of the Canadian passport. More than ever, the government is showing that it is totally out of touch with reality. It is despicable to erase the history of our country from Canadian passports.

Will they ever figure that out?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a Terry Foxer. I am proud every member in the House is probably a Terry Foxer. There is no Canadian who people relate to more than Terry Fox. He will never be erased from history.

I want to remind the members opposite, who seem to stand here wanting to politicize one of the greatest Canadians ever, that they said nothing when Terry's statue was defaced on Wellington Street during the convoy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite the parliamentary secretary and everyone over there to repeat what they said to the mayor of the city Terry Fox was born in. Good luck!

That is not all. The passport is the most important document Canadians carry when they are abroad, but it is also important for what it contains. Quebec City is referenced in it four times: The Quebec conference, Quebec City itself, Samuel de Champlain, and Captain Bernier, who discovered the Canadian north with his boat, are illustrated within its pages.

Once again, why is the government erasing our national history, which we can be proud of, from the Canadian passport?

[*English*]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important that nobody in the House claims a monopoly over caring for our national heroes, such as Terry Fox, or claims a monopoly over caring about our nation's history.

The reality is that over the past 10 years, an exercise to consult Canadians was taken on to understand what people wanted reflected in their travel document. We have themes recognizing the different regions of Canada, our natural environment, the contributions of indigenous Canadians and of course improved security features.

The Canadian passport is one of the most powerful travel documents. It allows one access to almost every country in the world. It is something we should be proud of. We can protect the security of our passport and celebrate our history at the same time.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister meets with CSIS once a week. If we do not include his vacations and his many foreign missions, we can presume that the Prime Minister was given at least 50 briefings since 2021, when CSIS was informed of the threats against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. In all those briefing sessions, no one apparently addressed an issue as important as threats against one or more MPs. Come on, that is unbelievable.

Oral Questions

Of the fifty or so weekly meetings with CSIS, how many of them addressed the threats made against one or more elected officials?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister already stated earlier this week, CSIS decides what information it shares with departments and with the Prime Minister. The 2023 budget provides funding for the establishment of a national counter-foreign interference coordinator and for the RCMP. That is how to protect not only democratic institutions, but also all Canadians

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister was notified by CSIS that candidates in his party might be getting support from Chinese authorities, he did nothing and said nothing. When he was notified by CSIS that members of Parliament and their families were victims of threats and intimidation, he did nothing and said nothing.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House with a straight face that if the threats against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills had not been made public, he still would have expelled the Chinese diplomat?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said many times that we are a government that takes the threat of foreign interference extremely seriously. We have been announcing measures since we formed government, and we have enhanced them. As far as threats against members, senators or parliamentarians are concerned, obviously this is completely unacceptable. We gave a clear directive to the authorities and intelligence agencies to share this intelligence, and we will always follow up as needed.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberals, this is where housing is at in Canada: Housing prices, rent and mortgage payments have all doubled. At a time when we need more housing built, the Liberals' own statistics show they are down 32% in housing starts.

The Liberal response has been that they are spending record amounts of money, and now we know where that money is going. The housing minister signed off on \$51 million in performance bonuses for gatekeepers at the CMHC. Can the Liberals explain why they are giving bonuses to housing gatekeepers who are failing by every possible measure?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that independent Crown corporations are responsible for the compensation of their staff.

When it comes to the housing supply, we are supporting Canadians struggling with the cost of housing and protecting the dream of home ownership by including things such as a \$4-billion housing accelerator fund to speed up the construction of new housing, a federal top-up to the Canada housing benefit to help millions of Canadians, our \$40,000 first-time homebuyer tax-free savings account

and new guidelines to protect Canadians who already have mortgages.

All of these measures are helping Canadians, and what did the Conservatives do? They voted against each one of them.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already know that the Liberals' \$80-billion housing plan has only made the crisis worse. In fact, as of a few weeks ago, the CMHC has raised government fees on new rental construction. Countless housing providers have abandoned new projects because of the red tape and endless delays at the CMHC.

We have now learned that every single executive at the CMHC got a fat bonus. Why do the Liberals reward executives who are actively making the crisis worse?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, intergovernmental affairs allows me to work with the mayors of Canada's cities and towns. One thing I can say is that they want a partner who will help them with the housing crises in their communities. That is exactly what our government has done.

I will tell members what we have not done. We have not decided that it would be a successful housing strategy to insult the mayor of Montreal, the mayor of Toronto and the mayor of Vancouver. They want a government that will work with them on the housing crisis. That is what my colleague, the Minister of Housing, is doing, and that is what our government will continue to do.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister should come with me as I criss-cross the country talking to community groups whose members have given up. They come to me in tears because of the disastrous housing policy the government has presented.

They have handed out \$26 million in bonuses. How many homes could we build with an extra \$26 million?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we explained our housing plan to the leader of the official opposition, we could see from his face that it was the first time he had heard of the plan. When we launched the housing accelerator fund, that same afternoon, the Conservatives launched a half-baked plan that basically mimicked our plan.

For the last two years, we have been connecting infrastructure to housing. We are working with municipalities to speed up housing supply. We have been helping first-time homebuyers, and we are investing in affordable housing.

The problem is that the Conservatives keep voting against all these measures, and then they get up to talk about how they are talking to communities and want to do something about housing, but when it comes time to take action, they fail every time.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, abortion is health care. A woman's right to choose is hers and hers alone.

However, as we speak, anti-choice activists are gathering on Parliament Hill in hopes of rolling back our basic rights. Their goal is very clear. They want to impose abortion restrictions on Canadian women.

Can the minister inform the House of what the government is doing to protect a woman's right to choose?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for her important question.

We know what happens when right-wing activists team up with anti-choice politicians to try and take away our basic rights. The only possible outcome is restricting women's rights.

Our mothers and grandmothers fought hard for us to have these rights. All women should have freedom of choice and should have access to services.

I have a bit of news for the Conservatives: There is no going back.

* * *

• (1505)

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are out of money, while the Prime Minister is out of touch, and soon he will be out of a job. Why is that? It is because the Liberal government is driving up the cost of living through its inflationary spending and higher taxes.

It used to be that Canadians who worked hard and made the right decisions would get ahead in this country. Unfortunately, more and more Canadians are falling behind. Many low- and middle-income families and Canadians are paying marginal tax rates in excess of 50%, 60% and 70%. As if that was not enough, the Prime Minister is going to add another tax, a new carbon tax, on top of a 41¢-per-litre tax, raising the cost of home heating and food.

Will the Prime Minister finally give Canadians a break and axe both the taxes?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have just gone from the sublime to the ridiculous. Why does the hon. member not add 80%, 90% or 100% tax in this fictitious world he lives in?

For heaven's sake, that is absurd in the extreme. I have seen *com-media dell'arte* in my life, but I have never seen such a farce in the House of Commons.

The Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. members, only one question at a time. Members cannot come up with a supplementary while their question is being answered.

The hon. minister has 15 seconds left, if he wants to continue.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to add.

* * *

PASSPORTS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Battle of Vimy Ridge united Canada as a nation through the service and sacrifice of 3,598 Canadian soldiers. Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope leaves a legacy that lives to this very day for our nation. Nellie McClung pushed our nation forward with more equality and human rights as a suffragette leader.

Instead of honouring the great moments in our country's history, these Liberals are instead focused on man with wheelbarrow and squirrel with nuts.

Why is the Liberal government so intent on erasing Canadian history from our passport?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is emblematic of how the Conservatives acted when they were in government. They spent more time on symbols than on action.

When it comes to our veterans, what did they do? They closed nine veterans offices across the country. When it came to cancer, what did they do? They did not make any investments.

What did we do? We invested in the Terry Fox Foundation. When the Terry Fox statue was being desecrated, what did they do? They cheered on the convoy. When it comes to women's rights, what did they do? They campaigned on the Hill and they introduced legislation to make it harder for a woman's right to choose. Give me a break.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

* * *

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are two worlds, two realities.

Oral Questions

On the one hand, we have a princely Prime Minister indulging in luxury holidays at the expense of Canadian taxpayers. On the other hand, we have overtaxed Canadians being forced to tighten their belts in order to pay their rent and bills.

Can the Prime Minister stop having his rich whims paid for by all hard-working Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Liberals showed up at the Standing Committee on Finance to work hard and move forward with support for Canadians.

The Conservatives continue with their misguided plan to filibuster. If the Conservatives are genuinely worried about the cost of living, they can stop the filibuster and work with us to pass the budget implementation bill.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard concerns from many constituents and members of the Pakistani community in Canada about processing times for temporary resident visas for Pakistani applicants. Currently the IRCC website gives a wait time of 802 days, compared to a few weeks for nearby countries.

I know the Minister of Immigration is personally engaged on this issue. Could he please explain why this number is misleading, and what is really happening with processing times for Pakistan?

• (1510)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her advocacy on behalf of the Canadian Pakistani community, as well as my other caucus colleagues who recently approached me to discuss this issue.

I have good news. Today an application for a TRV from a Pakistani applicant is expected to take 60 days. We anticipate, very soon, returning to the 30-day standard we enjoyed before the pandemic.

The website shows an extended period because we have gotten through such a significant volume, about 80,000 cases in recent months, that we are now tackling applications that were submitted during the pandemic when travel was not allowed. That is why we see an inflated wait time on the website, but the truth is things have improved dramatically and people should expect timely resolutions to their immigration decisions.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, reproductive health rights are at risk. Generations of women are exhausted by their continued fight to protect and improve access to reproductive health care.

The Liberals claim they are feminists but they have not invested to deliver the health care services women and diverse genders need.

In B.C., the NDP government has taken the important step of making prescription contraceptives free. Why will the Liberals not do the work and make this a reality for all Canadians?

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague across the way mentioned B.C. because earlier this week we are able to announce a \$4.2-million investment to SCI Action Canada Lab and UBC so that they can continue to serve women with vital, reproductive health care and access to abortion. On this side of the House, we will continue to do everything possible to ensure access to reproductive health care.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, as the government shudders in fear over what China may do to punish it for expelling a diplomat, Canada should look at reining in China's ability to waltz in and buy numerous mining land claims. Canadian prospecting companies have no chance of getting claims approved in China, which are rejected without reason, but the welcome mat is often put out for Chinese companies that are often thinly veiled arms of the Chinese Communist Party. Canada's indigenous groups are not even consulted as they see Chinese land claims spring up on territorial lands.

Will the government send a clear signal to Beijing that Canada is not their personal plaything and that we too will strongly stand up for our national security and sovereignty?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague well knows that we have a very important Indo-Pacific strategy that includes our China strategy. In there it is clear that we will put a national security lens on foreign investments. Therefore, of course we have the security of Canadians in mind, at stake, as a priority.

Meanwhile, as my colleague mentioned in his question, we will never accept any form of foreign interference. We will never accept any form of meddling in our democracy. That is why we declared the diplomat in question *persona non grata*.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for question period today.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. There was some surprise when I told the Liberals that in fact some Canadians are facing 50% to 60%. Therefore, I would like to table a document from the C.D. Howe Institute that demonstrates that many low- and middle-income Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I do not think we have unanimous consent. I am hearing no already. It was a good attempt at debate, though.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

AN ACT FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at report stage of Bill C-13.

[*Translation*]

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

● (1525)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2, 3, 5 and 8 to 10. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

● (1540)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 317*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bergeron	Berthold

Bérubé	Bezant
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gaheer
Gallant	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genius	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Lighthound

Government Orders

Government Orders

Lloyd
 Long
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Martinez Ferrada
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod
 Melillo
 Mendicino
 Michaud
 Morantz
 Morrison
 Motz
 Muys
 Nater
 Noormohamed
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Patzer
 Pauzé
 Petitpas Taylor
 Poilievre
 Qualtrough
 Redekopp
 Rempel Garner
 Roberts
 Rogers
 Rood
 Sahota
 Saks
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schiefke
 Seeback
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Shipley
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sinclair-Desgagné
 Small
 Soroka
 Steinley
 St-Onge
 Stubbs
 Tassi
 Thériault
 Thomas
 Tochor
 Trudeau
 Turnbull
 Valdez
 van Koeverden
 Vandal
 Vecchio
 Vien
 Vignola
 Virani
 Vuong
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Wilkinson
 Williamson
 Zahid
 Zimmer

Lobb
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacGregor
 Maguire
 Martel
 Masse
 May (Cambridge)
 Mazier
 McDonald (Avalon)
 McKay
 McLean
 McPherson
 Mendès
 Miao
 Moore
 Morrice
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Naqvi
 Ng
 Normandin
 Oliphant
 O'Toole
 Paul-Hus
 Perkins
 Plamondon
 Powlowski
 Rayes
 Reid
 Richards
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Ruff
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Savard-Tremblay
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simard
 Singh
 Sorbara
 Sousa
 Ste-Marie
 Strahl
 Suds
 Taylor Roy
 Therrien
 Thompson
 Tolmie
 Trudel
 Uppal
 Van Bynen
 Van Popta
 Vandenbeld
 Vidal
 Viersen
 Villemure
 Vis
 Wagantall
 Waugh
 Weiler
 Williams
 Yip
 Zarrillo
 Zuberi — 316

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Duclos
 Freeland
 Fortin
 Liepert — 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 carried. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2, 3, 5 and 8 to 10 also carried.

The question is on Motion No. 4.

[*Translation*]

A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 6.

● (1550)

[*English*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 4, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 318*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif
 Albas
 Alghabra
 Allison
 Anandasangaree
 Arnold
 Arya
 Atwin
 Badawey
 Baker
 Barlow
 Barron
 Battiste
 Beech
 Bergeron
 Bérubé
 Bibeau
 Blaikie
 Blanchet
 Blaney
 Blois
 Boulerville
 Bragdon
 Brière
 Brunelle-Duceppe
 Cannings
 Carrie
 Chabot
 Chahal
 Champagne
 Chatel
 Chiang
 Collins (Victoria)
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 Damoff
 Davidson
 DeBellefeuille
 Desbiens
 Desjarlais
 Dhillon
 Doherty
 Dowdall
 Drouin
 Duguid
 Dzerowicz
 El-Khoury
 Epp
 Aitchison
 Aldag
 Ali
 Anand
 Angus
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Bachrach
 Bains
 Baldinelli
 Barrett
 Barsalou-Duval
 Beaulieu
 Bendayan
 Berthold
 Bezan
 Bittle
 Blair
 Blanchette-Joncas
 Block
 Boissonnault
 Bradford
 Brassard
 Brock
 Calkins
 Caputo
 Casey
 Chagger
 Chambers
 Champoux
 Chen
 Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
 Cooper
 Coteau
 Dalton
 Dancho
 Davies
 Deltell
 Desilets
 Dhaliwal
 Diab
 Dong
 Dreeshen
 Dubourg
 Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Erskine-Smith

Government Orders

Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Ferrerri
Findlay
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gallant
Garrison
Gazan
Genuis
Gill
Godin
Gould
Gray
Guilbeault
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Jeneroux
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lake
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod
Melillo
Mendicino
Michaud
Moore
Morrice
Morrisey
Murray
Naqvi
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Petitpas Taylor
Poilievre
Rayes
Reid
Richards

Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau
Généreux
Gerretsen
Gladu
Goodridge
Gourde
Green
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Kelly
Khera
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Kwan
Lalonde
Lametti
Lantsman
Larouche
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maguire
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLean
McPherson
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morantz
Morrison
Motz
Muys
Nater
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Plamondon
Powlowski
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts

Robillard
Romanado
Ruff
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Scheer
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sorbara
Sousa
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Thompson
Tolmie
Turnbull
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

Rogers
Rood
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Seeback
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Soroka
Steinley
St-Onge
Stubbs
Tassi
Thériault
Thomas
Tochor
Trudel
Uppal
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi— 318

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Duclos
Freeland

Fortin
Liepert— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 4 carried. I therefore declare Motion No. 6 carried.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 7. A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 15.

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

● (1605)

[*English*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 7, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 319*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Aitchison

Government Orders

Albas	Aldag	Kelloway	Kelly
Alghabra	Ali	Khalid	Khera
Allison	Anand	Kitchen	Kmiec
Anandasangaree	Angus	Koutrakis	Kramp-Neuman
Arnold	Arseneault	Kurek	Kusie
Arya	Ashton	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Atwin	Bachrach	Lake	Lalonde
Badawey	Bains	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Baker	Baldinelli	Lamoureux	Lantsman
Barlow	Barrett	Lapointe	Larouche
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Battiste	Beaulieu	Lawrence	LeBlanc
Beech	Bendayan	Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Bergeron	Berthold	Lemire	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Bérubé	Bezan	Lightbound	Lloyd
Bibeau	Bittle	Lobb	Long
Blaikie	Blair	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Blaney	Block	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Blois	Boissonnault	Maguire	Maloney
Boulerice	Bradford	Martel	Martínez Ferrada
Bragdon	Brassard	Masse	Mathysen
Brière	Brock	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
Cannings	Caputo	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Carrie	Casey	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Chabot	Chagger	McLean	McLeod
Chahal	Chambers	McPherson	Melillo
Champagne	Champoux	Mendès	Medicino
Chatel	Chen	Miao	Michaud
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Miller	Moore
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	Morantz	Morrice
Cormier	Coteau	Morrison	Morrissey
Dabrusin	Dalton	Motz	Murray
Damoff	Dancho	Muys	Naqvi
Davidson	Davies	Nater	Ng
DeBellefeuille	Delteill	Noormohamed	Normandin
Desbiens	Desilets	O'Connell	Oliphant
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	O'Regan	O'Toole
Dhillon	Diab	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Doherty	Dong	Pauzé	Perkins
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Drouin	Dubourg	Plamondon	Poilievre
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	Rayes	Redekopp
El-Khoury	Ellis	Reid	Rempel Garner
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Richards	Roberts
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Robillard	Rogers
Fast	Fergus	Romanado	Rood
Ferreri	Fillmore	Ruff	Sahota
Findlay	Fisher	Sajjan	Saks
Fonseca	Fortier	Samson	Sarai
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Fry	Gaheer	Scheer	Schiefke
Gallant	Garon	Schmale	Seeback
Garrison	Gaudreau	Serré	Sgro
Gazan	Généreux	Shanahan	Sheehan
Genuis	Gerretsen	Shields	Shipley
Gill	Gladu	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Godin	Goodridge	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Gould	Gourde	Singh	Small
Gray	Green	Sorbara	Soroka
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Sousa	Steinley
Hallan	Hanley	Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Hardie	Hepfner	Strahl	Stubbs
Hoback	Holland	Sudds	Tassi
Housefather	Hughes	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Hussen	Hutchings	Therrien	Thomas
Iacono	Idlout	Thompson	Tochor
Ien	Jaczek	Tolmie	Trudeau
Jeneroux	Johns	Trudel	Turnbull
Joly	Jowhari	Uppal	Valdez
Julian	Kayabaga	Van Bynen	van Koeverden

Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi — 319

Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Duclos
Freeland

Fortin
Liepert — 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 7 carried. I therefore declare Motion No. 15 carried.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage with further amendments.

The Deputy Speaker: The vote is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1620)

[*English*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 320*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Albas
Alghabra
Allison
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barlow
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bergeron
Bérubé
Bibeau
Blaikie

Aitchison
Aldag
Ali
Anand
Angus
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Baldinelli
Barrett
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Berthold
Bezan
Bittle
Blaney

Block
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brassard
Brock
Calkins
Caputo
Casey
Chagger
Chambers
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cooper
Coteau
Dalton
Dancho
Davies
Deltell
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dong
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
El-Khoury
Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Ferreri
Findlay
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gallant
Garrison
Gazan
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gourde
Green
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Jeneroux
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lake
Lambropoulos
Lantsman
Larouche
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maguire

Government Orders

Blois
Boulerice
Bragdon
Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings
Carrie
Chabot
Chahal
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Damoff
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Doherty
Dowdall
Drouin
Ehsguid
Ehsassi
Ellis
Erskine-Smith
Falk (Provencher)
Fergus
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser
Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau
Généreux
Gerretsen
Godin
Gould
Gray
Guilbeault
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Kelly
Khera
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Kwan
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacDonnon (Gatineau)
Maloney

Royal Assent

Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean	McLeod
McPherson	Melillo
Mendès	Medicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Morrissey
Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Robillard
Rogers	Rood
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schieffe
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Thompson	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Uppal	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williams	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi— 311	

NAYS

Members

Housefather— 1

PAIRED

Members

Duclos Fortin
Freeland Liepert— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 50 minutes.

* * *

[*Translation*]**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a big week in the House. I would like the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to tell the House what we will be working on at the end of this week and into next week, the week before constituency week.

Would the government House leader kindly share his plans with us?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, which is an important one. This is such a busy time for the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Tomorrow, we will deal with third reading of Bill C-13, an act for the substantive equality of Canada's official languages.

On Monday, we will resume report stage debate of Bill S-5, which would amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

On Tuesday and Wednesday of next week, we will be dealing with report stage and third reading of Bill C-21, which, as we know, is the firearms legislation.

Thursday, May 18, will be an allotted day.

Finally, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), I would like to designate Monday, May 15, for the consideration in a committee of the whole for all votes under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

ROYAL ASSENT[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

May 10, 2023

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the schedule to this letter on the 10th day of May, 2023, at 4:59 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Maia Welbourne

Assistant Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates that the bills assented to on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, were Bill S-211, An Act to enact the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act and to amend the Customs Tariff—Chapter No. 9, 2023; Bill S-227, An Act to establish Food Day in Canada—Chapter No. 10, 2023; and Bill C-46, An Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the Income Tax Act—Chapter No. 11, 2023.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN BILL C-243 AND BILL S-211

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair would like to make a statement regarding the status of Bill C-243, an act respecting the elimination of the use of forced labour and child labour in supply chains, standing in the name of the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

On June 6, 2022, the Chair advised the House of similarities between Bill C-243 and Bill S-211, an act to enact the fighting against forced labour and child labour in supply chains act and to amend the Customs Tariff.

[Translation]

Both bills have the same objective. They seek to require certain entities to report on measures they take to prevent, and reduce, the risk of using forced labour and child labour in the production of goods and in supply chains.

• (1625)

[English]

A long-standing practice prohibits the House from deciding the same question twice during a session. As a result, the Chair ordered that the status of Bill C-243 remain pending pursuant to Standing Order 94(1) and that it not be considered until proceedings on Bill S-211 have concluded.

Bill S-211 was adopted by this House on May 3, 2023. The bill subsequently received royal assent yesterday, May 10, 2023.

Accordingly, the Chair is ordering that Bill C-243 be dropped from the Order Paper.

I thank all members for their attention.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—IMMIGRATION LEVELS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think we were at questions and comments.

The member for Winnipeg North has made several interventions in the House in today's debate. One of the things he said was how proud he is of certain francophone communities in Manitoba and the vitality of French in Manitoba.

Business of Supply

I would like to remind him that in 1870, when Manitoba joined the Canadian Confederation, the population was 50% francophone. Today, he would have to give us the numbers, but I think it is below 50%.

My question is the following. The member for Winnipeg North has a French-sounding last name, but as far as I know, he does not speak French. Maybe there is no connection, but should Quebec learn from what was done in Manitoba when it comes to protecting the French language?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is being a little mischievous. If we were to take a look at the population of Manitoba back in the era in which he was talking about, our population was not that big. In fact, we looked like a little postage stamp.

The reality is that there are more people speaking French in the province of Manitoba today than there ever has been.

Because of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's multicultural policy and commitment to the French language, today we are seeing a multitude of different ethnic groups that are learning to speak French. French is a language that is loved and cherished in the province of Manitoba today because the national government has played a very important role in its promotion.

I personally come from an era where, sadly, French was discouraged. Today, that is not the case. Today, we have people of all different ethnic—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the text of the motion before us today includes a connection between immigration and housing. It is a connection that we hear of often in my home province in Ontario as well.

I did not hear the member for Winnipeg North speak about housing in his speech. Can he speak to how important it is for governments at all levels, including the federal level, to invest more in housing across the board?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I take a look at the province of Manitoba, where our numbers of immigrants, on average, are probably about 3,000 a year. We more than tripled that number, and the way in which housing, at least, in part, is being dealt with, we need to recognize that it is not just Ottawa.

Ottawa needs to step up and show leadership, and we have done that through the national housing strategy, which has hundreds of millions, going into billions, of dollars supporting municipalities and the provincial governments. The provincial governments, municipalities and the other stakeholders, all of us, have to step up to the plate to work together to deal with this. All of us want to see an increase in immigration numbers because we see the benefits of a progressive immigration policy. It adds so much value to our economy and to our Canadian heritage.

Business of Supply

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I quite enjoyed the member's speech. I know the member works very hard in his riding to work with different ethnic groups and work on case work when it comes to immigration. Immigration is so important to so many of our communities and to Canada as a whole. It is important to our economy.

The other day, I met with the Metropolitan Plumbing and Heating Contractors Association. It was startling and surprising to hear how many of our current tradespeople will be retiring in the next few years. There will be a huge gap we will need to fill in order to keep up with housing and infrastructure in our country. I would love to hear the member's views on that.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize the importance of the contributions that immigrants make to our communities. In Manitoba, if it were not for immigration, our population would have declined. If it were not for immigration, many of the industries we have would not be there.

If someone takes a walk through any of our hospitals or care facilities, they will find people of Punjabi heritage, Filipino heritage and others, who make up the bulk of the workforce today. Whether it is in health care, the trucking industry or the trades, we will see it is often the immigration community fuelling the labour supply and ultimately contributing to our economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will share my time with my colleague from Montcalm, the always classy member I am so very fond of.

I am a little hoarse. I wish I could say it is because I am angry, but it is just a cold. Actually, I am kind of angry because of what I have been hearing all day. That brings me to one pretty simple question. Is it possible, in the House of Commons, to think critically about immigration levels without being immediately labelled a xenophobe, intolerant, a great replacement theory adherent or a far-right extremist? I heard that today, and it made me feel a little dubious.

Everyone knows that people often have extreme and ideologically entrenched views on immigration. That happens a lot, so I think we need to rise above that.

I listened to the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie this morning who told us that, essentially, the Bloc Québécois is using this issue to weaponize the debate on immigration. I found this rather amusing because, in his speech, my colleague referred to Gérard Godin. We are very familiar with the poems of Gérard Godin, a sovereignist if ever there was one. I would remind the House that he was Pauline Julien's husband. Anyone who has ever heard Pauline Julien's songs and read Gérard Godin's poems knows that they are part of the culture that gave the sovereignist movement its soul.

I shot back with a little quip, quoting a poem by Gaston Miron, and I might very well pick up on that again later. The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie shot right back at me by quoting Gilles Vigneault, quoting the phrase at the end of the song *Mon pays*: “And these people are of my people”. Now that is what I would call

weaponizing, especially since the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie left out the first few lines from Vigneault's song, where he sings:

My father had a house built
And I'm going to be true
To his ways, to his example

Gilles Vigneault tells us that Quebec society is a welcoming society, with its own cultural identity. What Gilles Vigneault, Gérard Godin and all the people who built Quebec culture have in common is that they want us to cherish that culture, to be a part of it and, above all, to try to stand up for it. That is why I find it so rich to be told that I am weaponizing the debate, when someone keeps taking all the work of the people who created Quebec culture and hijacking for ideological purposes. I have seen that a lot from the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

During the Bill 21 debate, he kept pointing me to a quote from Albert Camus, taken from *Notebooks*, a book that is not very important in light of Camus's overall body of work. It is the famous quote about democracy that goes like this: “Democracy is not the law of the majority, but the protection of the minority.” Camus did write that, but it is shameful to apply this quote to the debate on Bill 21. Anyone who does that must be ignorant of Camus's point of view on religion. With all due respect, I would recommend that my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie read *The Rebel*, especially the part about the metaphysical development of rebellion, in order to understand Camus' point of view, as long as he does not want to just hijack it for his own purposes, of course.

I am being accused of weaponizing the immigration issue. Meanwhile, members are taking positions rather lightly, quoting ideas left and right that they do not understand.

What I propose is perhaps to take the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie at his word and to go back to what Rima Elkouri wrote: If we want to talk about immigration, approach is everything.

I think that the right way to discuss immigration is, of course, to have thoughtful discourse and especially to refuse to fall into the trap of conflating different issues. I bring this up because that happens all too often here in the House. Whenever we present legitimate demands in order to protect the Quebec identity, it is seen as a manifestation of intolerance and insularity.

It goes without saying that putting the words “Quebec” and “identity” side by side in the House seems to really annoy some of my colleagues. I have always wondered why.

• (1635)

We know that members of the Bloc Québécois are immediately suspect because we defend Bill 21 on secularism and Bill 96 on language, and today, because we are criticizing an immigration strategy that Gérard Bouchard, one of the greatest intellectuals in Quebec, described as imperialist and aggressive.

Business of Supply

I would submit that no one should be ashamed to use their history to give meaning to their culture and condition. No one objects when indigenous national minorities demand recognition. No one has the audacity to tell them that they are doing it to the detriment of ethnic minorities. We just have to deal with it.

That makes certain thing clear. The first thing we need to state and make all of the members here understand is that Quebec is a national minority. I get the impression that the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and some Liberal members never understood the very basic principle that Quebec is a national minority.

The main crux of the immigration issue is that we cannot cut corners when examining two opposing identities. On the one hand, there is the Quebec identity, and on the other, there is the Canadian identity. There has been an opposition between the two since Confederation. It is rather simple. When we talk about identity, what the federal government usually does is refuse to recognize the Quebec people, the Quebec nation, in a way that would enable them to grow.

It is fairly simple. I am going to go back to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, the Laurendeau-Dunton commission, which gave rise to the Canadian model of integration. The commission's starting point was to offer recognition to French Canadians, one of the founding peoples, the Quebec people. That was the starting point, but what would we end up with? The commission would say that Canada would be a bilingual country, but never a bicultural one. Canada opted for multiculturalism instead. The reason for this is simple: Recognizing all cultures means recognizing none. The commission left Quebec to drown in an ocean of Canadian diversity that would express itself in English anyway. It was the best way to ensure that, in the future, Quebec's demands would be moot.

However, multiculturalism is not only an institutional policy that was developed in Canada, it is also a liberal theory. That is the problem. I would like to borrow the words of Gaston Miron, who wrote about “emancipated milksops and well-mannered insects” who are unaware of what multiculturalism really means. They blithely conflate pluralism and multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, as a theory—a liberal theory that is very well developed in both Canada and Quebec—suggests that there are two kinds of minorities.

There are ethnocultural minorities, whose rights must be defended. We have an obligation to recognize them. Will Kymlicka, a specialist in multicultural policy, says that we must also recognize national minorities. However, never in this chamber have I seen a representative of the NDP, the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party stand up and say that there is a national minority in this country. There are many national minorities, but there is one in particular: Quebec. Most people here pride themselves on defending multiculturalism without necessarily understanding it.

It is clear from the debate that the government wants to drown Quebec in an ocean of newcomers without allowing us to use our own unique system to integrate them. The government thinks that by using multiculturalism and welcoming 500,000 immigrants a year, it can meet employers' needs. What it is not thinking about, however, is the survival and vitality of the Quebec nation. That is

why, today, my colleagues have moved this motion that is critical to Quebec. The Century Initiative has been condemned by all members of the Quebec National Assembly.

● (1640)

I will not be called a xenophobe for defending my nation.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have witnessed a very ugly rise of xenophobia in Europe, which is the targeting of immigrants as though they were a threat to national identities. I heard my colleague talk about how Canada was going to be “swamped” with people coming in. I believe that was the term he used.

I think Canada has proven that we are different because, unlike Europe and the extremist fights happening there, we understand the importance of the different identities in this country. The fact that Quebec has the power to decide its own immigration policy is a reasonable thing. However, I would also say that in northern Ontario, we are more than willing to welcome the 450 million francophones out there who want to come and participate to build a just society. We are not going to say that they are outsiders, that they are a threat or that they are swamping our nation. Instead, we are going to say that our nation is built on the good will of people who come here with a desire to build a better country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, that just proves my point about what I would call arrogant and predatory federalism. My colleague did not make any effort to understand the explanations I gave about what multiculturalism is. He did not make any effort to understand the specificity of the Quebec nation.

Based on the preconceived ideas that he has about what it means to be a Quebecker and the type of nationalism that we assert in the House every day, he sees Quebec as a small, closed society. I have seen that before. We read about it in the 1960s. Members need only read some of Hubert Aquin's writings.

My colleague believes that Quebec would be fine in a very strong Canada that minimizes Quebec's identity. That is his objective, but we do not support it. We will continue to annoy him.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be quick because I really want to hear my colleague's response to my question.

I think he knows that Quebec has an agreement with Canada and that a rather significant amount of financial compensation is transferred from Canada to Quebec, which is the only province to receive this type of compensation. There is also the idea that French integration in Quebec is tied to financial compensation.

I would like to know if my colleague is aware that Quebec does not spend all the money it is transferred. Could he say a few words about that?

Business of Supply

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I think it is a mistake to reduce immigration to a monetary issue. It goes beyond that.

What I was trying to explain to my colleague earlier is that Quebec has a unique integration system. What the House is trying to do is put an end to that integration system.

It is going to challenge Bill 21 on secularism. A majority of parliamentarians here are against Bill 96. These are two pillars of Quebec's integration system. Quebec is a French-speaking state and a state where religion is relegated to private life; that is what secularism means.

That is what I wish my colleague had taken away from my speech. That is what I wish she had focused on in the presentation we made today, not on the matter of money and making a connection between migrants and money, between migrants and workers. There is another important dimension, which is the collective Quebec identity. Unfortunately, people here do not seem to fully understand it.

• (1645)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, just to expand on what my colleague was saying earlier, we hear a lot of members talking nonsense. We heard the member for Winnipeg North say that there are more francophones than ever in Manitoba.

I have the numbers right here. In 1971, there were 60,500 Manitobans or 6.1%, whose mother tongue was French. In 2021, there were 39,600, which represented 4% of the population. These are the same numbers for the language spoken at home. The numbers are declining, as is knowledge of French.

In the words of Gérard Godin, the federal policy on French in Canada can generally be summarized as follows: strengthen French where it is on its last legs—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but he has taken more time than what he was allocated.

The hon. member for Jonquière for a brief response.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, here is my brief response. For us, the solution is quite simple: independence.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Jonquière may not yet have experienced how passive-aggressive the House can sometimes be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize for interrupting the hon. member, but I was about to forget an important part of my job, which is to announce the questions to be raised in Adjournment Proceedings.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Indigenous Affairs.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I was saying that perhaps my colleague has not had that experience.

I introduced a bill on two separate occasions indicating that multiculturalism, a political ideology that undermines respect for differences and the integration model advocated by Quebec, should not apply in Quebec, and I have received a barrage of insults as a result. Some people have insinuated that I am racist or xenophobic.

I am a democrat, a separatist and a humanist. When a human community established within the same territory has a language, a culture, a history and a heritage, when it is driven by a will to survive, when it is aware of its uniqueness, when it is driven by a desire to live together, when it is articulated around a common interest, then a vision of society and a nation emerges.

Madam Speaker, could you please tell the member opposite—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I myself am beginning to hear things I should not hear in this place, without even having to consult Hansard.

The hon. member for Mirabel on a point of order.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the subject can be sensitive for some, but the “racist” epithet used by the member for Timmins—James Bay who is attacking us on the basis of our deepest values—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I heard name-calling from both sides of the House. Surely it was in response to something else, but I heard it from both sides.

I remind hon. members to try to be as civil as possible in the House and to please restrain themselves.

• (1650)

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, that is not a good look on a party that calls itself progressive.

As I was saying, these are the objective and subjective criteria for a nation to be born. The people of Quebec form a nation.

Unfortunately, this recognition here is only symbolic. Indeed, the rest of Canada has always refused to enshrine that in the Constitution, to give it a legal effect. That is why Bill 101 was necessary and was passed in 1977, although we were told it was a Hitlerian law. The Quebec nation continues to speak French today thanks to this law.

At the end of the 1990s, I was saying that the use of French was declining. I kept saying that there would be an accelerated decline of French in Montreal. I was called a language zealot.

Today, on both sides of the House, they are trying to change the Official Languages Act while still considering the Quebec English-speaking community as a minority. We are now paying the price for what happened in 1982. What happened in 1982? Why has no Quebec premier, whether sovereignist or federalist, ever signed the Canadian Constitution since 1982? That is because, in 1982, we were deprived of our nationhood and minority status, quite simply.

Who forms the minority? According to the anglophones in Quebec, they do. If, indeed, the Canadian Constitution is built on the idea that there are 10 equal territories and that minority rights are protected, where do the rights of francophone Quebecers fit in? Francophones are the minority in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and the Maritimes. Although they are a minority on the continent and in Canada, francophones are the majority in Quebec, which means they have no rights. That is how it was presented to the UN.

What did the UN say to Howard Galganov? It said that the so-called English-speaking minority in Quebec was not a minority, but a community that was part of the Canadian and continental majority. These things need to be remembered because I feel that, from one election to the next, historical and sociological references get lost.

I would like to say to my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie that Quebec is asking to have its differences recognized and respected. As long as it is searching for recognition and respect of those differences, it cannot deny any other the same recognition and respect of its differences.

That is why, when people arrive in Quebec, we want to be able to welcome them in dignity. Dignity is not what multiculturalism has achieved over the years, by ghettoizing differences, turning these people into cheap labour, making them incapable of earning a decent living, even though some of them hold several degrees. Juxtaposing cultures is not what will allow us to live together in harmony.

I would like to highlight what Boucar Diouf, our national Boucar, has to say about this. On the subject of multiculturalism, he said, “It is impossible to live together without truly embodying the word ‘together’.”

Madam Speaker, I think members are talking a bit too loudly across the way.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I understand that the member for Timmins—James Bay feels the need to socialize, but I think he should do so quietly.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I would like you to rule on whether we are allowed to walk over to talk with colleagues at any point. I do not mind staying in my seat, but I thought it was common practice that, if we have to speak to a minister about an issue and we do it respectfully, we are able to do that. Would you say that is the rule of the House?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is the rule. I did not hear any particular noise, but I am not on that side of the House, so I cannot hear what my colleague may have heard. I do expect everybody to respect the rights of each member to speak and be heard.

An hon. member: It is like a rat.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I want to quote Boucar Diouf, a Quebecer who considers himself a part of Quebec society and who says that our society is a close-knit one. He said, “It is impossible to live together without truly embodying the word ‘together’. Multiculturalism”—

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I understand people get heated in here and we have issues, but I thought I overheard a colleague from this side call a colleague on that side “a rat”.

If you look at the record and you listen to the Hansard, I hope you observe this and make a decision—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have asked all to be very courteous with another. I will take it under advisement, and we will look at the Hansard.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, on that point of order. I am reassured that I heard that. I would never believe that my colleague from the Bloc would use such unparliamentary language.

Is the term “rat” unparliamentary? I believe it is. I think it is a very ignorant thing to say, if he did say it. I was not sure that he would say that, and I was so shocked—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have said we will look into it and check the Hansard. The Speaker will come back with a decision.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, the NDP members obviously do not want me to read that quote, and yet it is universalist. As I was saying, “Multiculturalism is much more like living side by side and harbouring frustrations with one another, with results that fall far short of the ideal presented by politicians.”

The truth is that multiculturalism rejects the idea of a common culture, encouraging the coexistence of multiple cultures side by side. It favours cohabitation based on indifference rather than on recognition and the respect of differences, which invariably leads to the ghettoization of cultures.

That is why what we in Quebec want is an intercultural model based on three fundamental principles that form a common standard that protects Quebec's distinctiveness. Being a Quebecer has nothing to do with looking like a Quebecer. Being a Quebecer is first and foremost a political choice. A person can identify as a Canadian. I respect that. They can also identify as a Quebecer. We hope that everyone who settles in Quebec can get on board with that and identify as Quebecers. It is up to them how they identify themselves.

We are asking for respect for what defines the soul of the nation, in other words French. We cannot welcome 500,000 people a year and not tell them that Quebec's official language is French.

Business of Supply

Secularism is a principle that my colleagues surely agree with. It is important to Quebec, which had its Quiet Revolution and separated church and state. The other principle is equality between men and women. From there, each person, with their diversity, can indeed come build the country with us and that is what we want.

How is any of that xenophobic? How is it racist? These are values born of philosophical liberalism that are meant to be at the very core of the political foundation of every member in the House.

I am out of time. I thank the members from the NDP for sabotaging my speech.

• (1700)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I just want to reassure the member for Montcalm that he was given his full speaking time.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of Justin Trudeau, Canada's immigration system—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, pardon me. I apologize.

After eight years of the Liberal government, Canada's immigration system is broken. With a backlog of over two million and an average processing time of over 20 months, targets simply will not be met. For skilled workers under the federal stream, in 2019, processing an application took 9 months. Today, it has tripled to 27 months.

Why is the Government of Canada so slow at processing workers, whom we need in Quebec, in British Columbia and across Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question.

Every year, around the same time, we have to deal with the foreign worker issue. Nothing moves any faster, yet these are house-keeping issues.

More concerning here is that the Century Initiative has in no way calculated the impact that these immigration thresholds would have on the reality of Quebec's linguistic demographics and the vitality of the French language in Quebec. At the same time, the federalist parties on both sides of the House boast about how important it is to defend the French fact in Canada. In my opinion, they are improvising. Gérard Bouchard, though a measured person, is outraged. He has vehemently criticized this plan.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his stories and explanation today, but I would also just like to perhaps reassure the House and set the record straight. I lived in Quebec for 28 years and my daughter was born there.

I will go back to the question I asked his colleague. Canada transfers significant amounts of money to Quebec for its francization programs and, unfortunately, more than 75% of last year's funds were not used by the Quebec government. Could my colleague enlighten me and explain why these funds were not used to help francization in Quebec?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, perhaps the money had to be spent on health care, given this year's paltry health transfer.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on the excellent question asked by my Conservative colleague.

Toronto has a very large population from France. They are professionals, and I have spoken with a number of them who work in journalism and television. I have asked them why they come to Canada, and they say they are tired of the culture wars in France, the xenophobia and the growing alienation of outsiders.

They feel inclusive. However, the problem is that we are inviting people into the country, but we do not have housing, so then people cannot afford to live. We are failing at that. We have a real opportunity to invite people who are coming from countries where they are tired of the xenophobia and say we are a welcoming country, but we need to make sure we are able to utilize these incredible talents coming from all over the world so they can build our society.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, up to now, I did not really understand why my colleague talked about xenophobia in his speech. I do not believe that my speech could be deemed xenophobic.

The fact remains that what we want is to be able to welcome people in a satisfactory manner, with dignity, so they can fully participate in building the Quebec nation and ensuring its survival. We must recognize that Quebec has an additional challenge that is not shared by the rest of Canada, as Canada has a huge desire to welcome a large number of people without ensuring that it has the ability to give them a dignified life.

• (1705)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are in a Parliament and we want to debate ideas.

Earlier, the member for Jonquière demonstrated how important it is to do so in an appropriate and democratic manner. I listened to the NDP speeches, including the speech by the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. These people are going to sit down with immigrants who have just arrived to warn them about us, saying that we are racist, and most importantly, that they should reject the host society that wishes them ill. Is that not one of the most divisive and extreme strategies possible?

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Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, despite Bill 101, despite 40 years of enforcing Bill 101, and despite the fact that French is the language of work, the fact remains that English attracts five times more learners in Quebec than French. That is the reality.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to mention that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I am wondering what the real point of the motion proposed by my Bloc Québécois colleagues today is, if not to sow discord or stir up trouble. What are the real needs of Canada, and what are Quebecers and Canadians saying about it?

I would like to share a bit of what I am hearing from every community in Quebec and across Canada. Employers in Quebec and Canada need skilled labour in all fields. With the exception of the first nations, we are all descendants of immigrants. Many immigrants come to Canada, and they are an exceptional source of wealth for us Canadians. Canada owes a great deal to its immigrant population, because immigrants work hard and integrate into our communities. Now more than ever, we need them.

The government has the desire and the responsibility to address the needs and concerns of Canadians. We are putting in place a realistic and ambitious plan, based on the number of permanent residents admitted to Canada each year, with targets for overall admissions in each immigration category. Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the minister must table this plan each year in Parliament, in this House.

The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship makes his decisions on federal immigration thresholds independently, on the advice of departmental officials and in consultation with organizations, stakeholders, the provinces and territories, as well as citizens across Canada to determine the best immigration policy. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, I was able to take part in several of those consultations.

The minister was very clear earlier today. The opinions and recommendations of the Century Initiative are not the policies of the Government of Canada. Economic and demographic growth on a global scale is compatible with francophone immigration, and so is protecting the French language and culture. It is important to remember that Quebec does not have the monopoly on French language and culture in Canada, nor on defending them.

The federal government is and always will be there to stand up for and promote the French language. I will mention, as an example, my assistant, who is an immigrant of Moroccan origin. He is brilliant and perfectly bilingual, and he decided to settle in Ontario, here in Ottawa, rather than Quebec, because he knew that his proficiency in French would be an important asset in his job search. It is because of our immigration system that I work with such a dynamic person who helps me in my parliamentary debates. I would like to salute him and say thank you.

He is also very proud to be part of the 4.4% of francophone immigrants outside Quebec who arrived in Canada in 2022. We

achieved that target one year ahead of the 2023 target set out in the minister's mandate letter.

The example of my staffer is not anecdotal, as some of my Bloc Québécois colleagues pointed out this morning. French across Canada is a reality, and francophone immigration across Canada is not a naive dream. It is a reality. Francophone communities are increasingly present across the country.

• (1710)

On Monday, I had the great pleasure of being in Yukon, where I talked about immigration and the strategic review. I also met with the people in charge of francophone immigration and people who speak French. We are so proud of the territory because the number of francophone immigrants there is growing vigorously.

Over the past few months, my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has afforded me the opportunity to meet various stakeholders who are concerned about the shortage of skilled workers, workers Canada needs to be competitive.

Yesterday evening I was sitting with a group of Quebec business people. They were worried. They raised a question that I consider very important and very germane to today's debate in the House. They asked me if Quebec will be competitive enough to attract highly skilled workers and meet future labour market demands.

I shared that because it is so important and it made me feel sad, in a way. Quebec sets its own immigration targets. Quebec has the exclusive authority to select most of its immigrants. Under the Canada-Quebec accord, the government provides financial compensation to Quebec to help newcomers integrate both culturally and linguistically.

However, and this is what I was trying to clarify with my Bloc colleagues, we have learned that, last year, the Government of Quebec only spent 25% of all that financing. Basically, Canada gives Quebec money, but Quebec does not spend it. Quebec is the only province that receives an annual immigration subsidy from the federal government. The total amount set aside in the Main Estimates, 2023-24 for that Quebec subsidy is \$726.7 million.

I want to say that I am very proud of our government's commitment to our immigration targets. The immigration levels plan paves the way to responsible increases in immigration targets to support three elements: economic growth, a solution to the acute labour shortage in Canada and Quebec, and respecting our commitments to vulnerable people.

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I know that the Prime Minister answered a question about that a few days ago. Today, someone in the House mentioned Saint-Eustache—I think it was the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities—where manufacturers from all sectors in Quebec are in dire need of skilled labour.

I firmly believe that immigration is good for Canada and good for Quebec. However, perhaps it is Quebec that needs to get on board and understand the importance and immense contribution of immigrants to Canada and Quebec, including francophone immigrants. I will stop there, but I thought it was very important to raise these points in the House today.

• (1715)

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary was saying earlier that the Bloc motion is simply about stirring up trouble.

The Bloc Québécois is the only party that brings the interests of the National Assembly to the House, and the National Assembly unanimously denounced the government's immigration targets. I am quoting from this motion, in which Quebec speaks with one voice. In its motion, the National Assembly "...asks the federal government to adopt immigration thresholds based on Quebec's and Canada's integration capacity and levels that are likely to maintain the weight of French and Quebec within Canada".

That is the reason for our motion. If the parliamentary secretary sees it as a desire to stir up trouble, that is her problem, not mine.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, I have many colleagues who represent the interests of Quebec, including the Prime Minister, who is proud to call himself a Quebecker. I know there are many ministers and members of my caucus who have a strong sense of belonging and are proud to be Quebeckers and Canadians. We will always help the Quebec government achieve its goals.

Today, what matters is that we want our new plan to be realistic, but we have to be ambitious. We really need to support immigration. We know that people are in dire need of people to help them.

When we talk about it here, we always refer to "the employer", but we should actually be talking about the employees, in hospitality, in restaurants, in hotels. They too want more workers to help them. They need it.

I want to thank them in the House because they worked very hard for all of us during the pandemic.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, in Edmonton Strathcona, the number of francophone immigrants is increasing. We are very happy about that. These new francophone Canadians bring so much to our community. As the member knows, Edmonton Strathcona is the heart of the Franco-Albertan community. I would like to see more francophone immigration to my riding.

However, the Government of Canada has not met the francophone immigration target for years. Why is this?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I am going to reiterate what I was so happy to announce in the House not so long ago. For the first time in history, since we started keeping track, we

have met our target of 4.4% francophone immigration outside Quebec. That was in 2022, one year ahead of schedule.

I understand very well and I respect my colleague because she supports francophone immigration, and I thank her for asking me this question in my language.

We need to remember two things. On Bill C-13, I know we are all working together to obtain royal assent, and I hope the House will support it. We also have the action plan. I was very proud to see the component relating to our national strategy on francophone immigration, which is supported by \$137 million over the next five years to help the province of Alberta and organizations set and achieve even higher francophone immigration targets.

• (1720)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, on the issue of immigration, we have legitimate concerns about some portions of our population.

The question is whether we are ready. Are we ready in terms of the need for shelter, affordable housing, support for people who need to learn English or French, and support for the cultural needs of everyone?

I am, of course, in favour of immigration, but the question is whether the Government of Canada is ready to meet the needs of new Canadians.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, we certainly do hear those concerns all across Canada and Quebec. I just want to remind my colleague that, for the first time in Canadian history, our government has put a housing strategy in place, and that policy includes affordable housing.

When it comes to speeding up housing construction, the \$4-billion accelerator fund—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was wonderful to see you this morning when we greeted the Moldovan president, Maia Sandu, who is quite an impressive individual. We wish her much continued success in her endeavours in Moldova.

I wish to commence by saying that my parents are immigrants. I am the son of immigrants to Canada. In the late 1950s, early 1960s, my mother and her seven siblings came over to Canada by boat via a famous location in this country, Pier 21. They came to build a better life for their family and, eventually, for their children and grandchildren. Canada has given us much to be thankful for. Canada chose us. It chose my parents, and as newcomers to this country, we never forget that. Therefore, I wish to give thanks.

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[Translation]

I am pleased to rise today to tell members about the Government of Canada's immigration levels.

Every year, the government tables the annual immigration levels plan for the following year. Canada's immigration levels plan is based on input from employers, communities, provinces and territories, and it is informed by data.

Let me be clear. Canada needs more newcomers to address our demographic challenges and the labour shortage and to ensure our long-term prosperity.

Under the Canada-Quebec accord, Quebec has rights and responsibilities with respect to the number of immigrants Quebec takes in and how they are selected, welcomed and integrated. We therefore work closely with Quebec on everything related to immigration.

Without immigrants, it would have been very difficult for Canada's economy and Quebec's to deal with the challenges of the past two and a half years. In fact, many temporary and permanent residents in this country work in key sectors, such as health care, transportation, agriculture and manufacturing. One of these programs, dubbed the guardian angel policy for health care workers, was created with Quebec's help.

Immigrants played a key role in Canada's post-pandemic economic recovery, which was among the strongest in the world. That includes Quebec, of course. Canada also has historically low unemployment right now. The problem is that the recovery has resulted in a major labour shortage. There are currently over 700,000 vacant jobs in this country. Employers across the country are having a hard time finding and keeping the workers they need, and economic opportunities are being lost as a result.

Permanent immigration is essential to Canada's long-term economic growth. It accounts for nearly 100% of the growth in our workforce and, by 2032, it will account for 100% of our demographic growth.

Fifty years ago, there were seven workers for every retiree in Canada. Today that number is closer to three, and it will likely drop to two by 2035. If we do not change our current trajectory by bringing more newcomers into Canada, we will no longer be having conversations about labour shortages. We will be having conversations about whether we can keep schools and hospitals open.

Immigration helps us alleviate critical labour shortages at all skill levels in key sectors across Canada. Our plan will help us ready Canada's workforce to respond to both current and future challenges.

Canadians know that immigration is one of our greatest assets. It helps us compete. If we want to boost our economic success significantly, we need to boost immigration.

Canada will welcome 465,000 permanent residents in 2023, 485,000 in 2024 and 500,000 in 2025.

- (1725)

It is important to note that these levels are far from the numbers that the Bloc Québécois mentioned.

I would say that these increased immigration levels will help Canada recruit the workers that it needs to address the critical labour shortage and build a strong and resilient economy for the future.

There are many advantages to Canada's global leadership position in immigration and our welcoming immigration policies. Immigration enables us to meet our demographic challenges while supporting the stable and reliable social programs that we take for granted as Canadians. As I said before, we recognize that this needs to be done carefully.

Canadians are now living longer and having fewer children. That reality will impact our economy now and for years and decades to come.

That is why Canada must increase the number of immigrants that we welcome. In other words, increased immigration means that we will have more people in Canada to participate in our labour force, contribute to our social programs and grow our communities.

As the member knows, the Canada-Quebec accord is clear about the establishment of immigration levels. Canada sets the annual number of immigrants for the country by taking into account the number of immigrants Quebec wants to welcome.

Under this agreement, Quebec is solely responsible for selecting immigrants in the economic and humanitarian streams and for applying the federal selection criteria for family reunification.

If Bloc Québécois members are concerned about the decline in the number of newcomers to Quebec or the immigration thresholds set by the province, they should discuss that directly with the province.

The Bloc Québécois's main concern seems to be the work of a non-partisan, independent group of Canadians who have written their own report on potential targets and suggestions for immigration. We encourage all Canadians to provide suggestions and feedback on our immigration plan and system.

It is essential that all governments commit to meeting the needs of the people we serve, whether in Quebec, Nunavut, Nova Scotia or British Columbia. This is one of the reasons Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has held meetings on the future of immigration. Thousands of groups, citizens and organizations have submitted their views on their visions for immigration in the next 15 to 20 years.

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We are not looking to set immigration levels for the coming decades, but we are trying to understand the needs of employers, industries, communities, provinces and territories in order to make sure we have the operational capacity and modernized immigration system to support those needs.

We have heard from and worked with francophone communities and Canadians outside Quebec on the challenges of declining population size in francophone minority communities.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and I have worked closely with the Minister of Official Languages to support the implementation of the official languages action plan, which includes strengthening francophone and bilingual immigration through the francophone immigration strategy. In 2022, we reached the target of 4.4% of francophone immigrants admitted outside Quebec.

I look forward to questions and comments from members.

● (1730)

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I always like to listen to the member because I know he speaks from the heart.

Throughout the day, I often heard speeches implying that the Bloc was against immigration, which is not the case at all. We are not against immigration at all, but we are for an immigration policy, that is for sure. I have heard a lot of arguments involving the labour shortage and economic considerations, but that was always in the short term. I also heard a lot about stirring up trouble.

I would like the member to clarify something for me: In his view, if a people want to avoid the annihilation set out in the Century Initiative, is that such a bad thing?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for his question.

Immigration is very important for Canada's economic growth, now and in the long term.

[English]

It is very important when newcomers come to Canada, whether temporarily or permanently, that there be lots of housing and social services that are able to meet the demands across this country. Of course, the Province of Quebec and the Government of Canada have entered into agreements on immigration since the early 1990s. That plan has worked over the decades, and it continues to work.

[Translation]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Ontario, who was born in British Columbia, on the quality of his French. I know that he is of Italian origin and he also speaks English, but it warms my heart to hear him speak French.

Often, when people talk about the Century Initiative, they say that it is a federal government initiative. We know that is a false argument because it is just one initiative out of the 3,000 stakeholders that chose to submit ideas to the federal government. The govern-

ment does not have any intention of increasing the Canadian population to 100 million people.

Can my colleague make a few comments on this? How can we encourage francophone immigration in Canada and certainly in Quebec?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, with regard to how we set our immigration targets here in Canada, obviously, it is a consultative process. We take in suggestions from numerous organizations and look to employers and the provinces as to the numbers that we need to have. I view immigration as nation building and as bringing newcomers to Canada who want not only to work but also to create a life for themselves and their families. They want to create futures and call this beautiful country that we are all blessed to live in home. It is truly special when Canada says yes to a person coming here, and they know how special it is. That is what makes our country very unique throughout the world. Again, I will repeat this: We are blessed to be Canadian, and we are blessed to call this country home.

● (1735)

[Translation]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, I have a question that ties in to meeting targets.

I have to say that I too am the daughter of immigrants. Like my colleague, I am very proud to be one. I know that immigration is an essential part of our country and that it contributes to building a better Canada.

They say they want to welcome more francophones in particular. In Canada, and more specifically in western Canada, we desperately need consular services to support these families.

Does my colleague agree that we need to ensure that these services are offered on the ground? Does the government need to invest in these services?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question. We know here in Canada that settlement services receive much funding from the federal government to help newcomers who come to Canada to settle into their communities quickly by understanding what they need. These services help them in their need to start working and to get the services that are provided by each level of government. Our office tries to assist them as well to ensure they know where to go for a driver's licence, for example, or their hospital card or to apply for different services. We need to continue to do that, particularly for those coming here with knowledge of the French language who are going to different parts other than la belle province.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, first I want to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Mirabel, who seems to enthusiastically agree, which is good, because it means that I will not have to give a 20-minute speech when I have prepared a 10-minute speech.

As I have often stated before when rising in the House, I would like to be able to say that I am pleased to rise today. Unfortunately, I feel that I am here to debate a decision, regardless of whether it is a government initiative or an ill-considered McKinsey initiative. I am speaking about a decision that is anything but the idea of the century. I will later speak about where the idea really came from.

First, what is this about? It is about increasing Canada's population to 100 million people by 2100. Let us go back a little. At the end of last fall, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced new immigration targets for 2023 to 2025. The number of permanent residents for 2022, which was already a record 431,645 people, would set the tone for later years. The government informed us that it intended to welcome 500,000 immigrants a year by 2025.

The Bloc Québécois was already sounding the alarm last fall, outlining the various foreseeable consequences of this massive influx of newcomers. During question period, my colleague, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, asked the following question:

...is [the Prime Minister] providing more money for French language instruction? We just got our answer, and it is no. Is he increasing health transfers in response to demographic changes? The answer is no. What about the full-blown housing crisis? Is he providing more money to keep pace with the growing population? Again, the answer is no.

Later on, after the holidays, we learned that the government had dramatically increased its use of the firm McKinsey. One of the ideas put forward by McKinsey and its former president, Dominic Barton, was the Century Initiative. My colleague, the member for Beauport—Limoilou, asked Mr. Barton about the demographic and language implications of this initiative by asking him the following:

...you said earlier that you were concerned about the French issue. In the Century Initiative and the growth council reports, which of the recommendations address the protection, development and promotion of French in Quebec and Canada?

Mr. Barton simply replied:

● (1740)

[*English*]

I think the focus, again on the growth council, was just on economics. It wasn't thinking about the social context. It was on productivity.

[*Translation*]

Productivity is exactly what the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Liberal government have been saying. The government did not bother to consider the impact this measure would have on the linguistic demography any more than McKinsey did. The government uses the same targets as McKinsey, the same reason for increasing the targets as McKinsey, and the same disinterest as McKinsey with regard to the impact increasing targets would have on French.

The minister is stubbornly telling us that the decision to raise the levels to 500,000 per year is his and his alone, but at least we have an idea where he is getting his inspiration from. This measure, no matter who is behind it, is wrong. Who, exactly, does this initiative serve?

Those who support the new targets have repeated this non-stop in the House today. The business community is complaining about labour shortages, and that is the only issue the Century Initiative is

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supposed to address. Should immigration policies not prioritize serving newcomers themselves? Unfortunately, the government missed the mark completely on that one.

My colleague from Longueuil-Saint-Hubert said it more than once it yesterday: Massive immigration is exacerbating the current housing crisis. It is a recipe for impoverishing tenants, young people and large families. Most importantly, it risks causing even greater distress for newcomers, who, as we know, have more trouble than the rest of the population finding housing that is both affordable and of good quality.

My colleague from Montcalm raised another issue today. He rightly reminded us that the government has only given Quebec and the provinces one-sixth of the health transfers needed to meet their current needs and provide adequate services. The member for Montcalm then asked on what studies the government based its claim that at least 500,000 more people can receive care each year with one-sixth of the money that is already needed. The government did not answer.

The same questions could be asked about other services for the public. One can think of education, for example, and the fact that the children of newcomers will bear the brunt of increased pressures on schools. There are good reasons to believe that French-language schools in Ontario might not be able to keep up with the growth, especially when we know that there is a severe shortage of francophone teachers. Officials from school board associations and francophone teachers' unions told us yesterday that the situation is bordering on disaster.

The government's immigration agenda does not seem to be aimed at the interests of newcomers, but rather to respond in a purely utilitarian manner to the demands of employers. In addition to being out of step with the needs of potential newcomers, the immigration targets of the current government have harmful and certainly not insignificant effects on Quebec. Although it has been recognized in the House that Quebec is a nation, the government did not hesitate to turn a blind eye to the will of Quebec when setting its targets.

The Century Initiative and its targets for Quebec are what I would call a catch-22. Quebec will be forced to choose the lesser of two evils. On the one hand, if Quebec decides to increase its immigration thresholds in line with the general Canadian trend, it will face immense challenges related to integration and French language instruction. As I mentioned earlier, access to health care, education and housing will be jeopardized. We also have to ask some questions about issues related to land use, the green transition, and more broadly, our ability to maintain the economic and social model that is unique to Quebec.

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On the other hand, if Quebec decides to maintain its own targets regardless of what the feds want to do, then it is doomed to lose some of its demographic weight within Canada, which would translate into a significant decline in Quebec's political weight within the Canadian federation. As we know, the demographic trend in Quebec is already declining compared to Canada. In a little over 50 years, Quebec's weight in the Canadian federation has dropped from 29% to 22%. Canada's migration policies were much less ambitious in the past. This has an impact on the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments even at the most superficial level.

According to former Liberal minister and tenured professor Benoît Pelletier, the decline of Quebec's political weight in the Canadian federation is irreversible, and this decline will inevitably be accompanied by a greater centralization of powers at the federal level given that Quebec plays a role in slowing down this centralization.

One thing that was mentioned by the Bloc Québécois is that it is normal and healthy in a democracy to have public debates about important issues that shape the future, especially the demographic future, about the kind of economic growth we want, and the safety net that we want to build. These discussions include the immigration policy and its effects on the host society.

We keep being told that Quebec is free to set its own immigration targets. However, as I just mentioned, the federal targets cannot help but impact what Quebec will look like, and Quebec was not consulted. As proof, we have the three motions in that regard that were adopted unanimously in Quebec's National Assembly.

One might believe that the federal government inadvertently forgot to take Quebec into account. I am willing to give the benefit of the doubt. However, the government now knows that Quebec opposes its intention to increase the thresholds. As of now, continuing with this proposal is to officially and knowingly ignore the will of Quebec.

Some may have said to themselves, in the fall, when the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship presented his new targets, that perhaps he was only thinking of economic interests linked to labour shortage problems. However, after today's debate, we will see if the minister decides to maintain his targets. As the member for Beloeil—Chambly would say, a known consequence constitutes intention. If the minister decides to go ahead, we cannot help but see a real intention in that, which is to see Quebec's weight diminish or to see the province unable to ensure its linguistic, cultural and socio-economic future.

Faced with these two choices that the federal government is trying to force upon them, I can only hope that Quebecers will see the third and only real path to follow, which is to finally give themselves their own country.

• (1745)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that my hon. colleague from Saint-Jean said that we should take immigrants' interests into account. We

should not resort to a utilitarian argument to speak on behalf of these people.

I am a Quebecker. If we want to ensure the vitality of the French language in Quebec and if we really want to put ourselves in the immigrants' shoes, we could ask the hundreds of thousands of francophone immigrants from West Africa and the Caribbean who would like to come to Quebec if they are ready to accept the conditions in Quebec and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry. I have to allow the member to answer.

The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, there are two things.

One of the problems with mass immigration is that when we try to look for top-notch people, we drain their countries of origin of the brains they need as much as we do.

The other thing is that we are talking about francophone immigration. That is great. We can welcome francophone immigrants. As I mentioned in my speech, however, the resources are not available. We are seeing that in Ontario right now, where there is a teacher shortage in French schools. If a francophone family moves here, but there are no staff at the French schools, what will happen? They will send their children to an English school, cancelling out the impact of francophone immigration.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Madam Speaker, it is rare that I have an opportunity to debate with the member.

These people are francophone and do not need to be francized. We can attract teachers who are ready to teach. They could also offer their services to Quebeckers. Why not let these people determine their own future? Why, as Canadians, should we determine what they should do and in what conditions they should live? Why not let these people vote with their feet?

• (1750)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, if it is so simple to bring in French teachers, why has Ontario not already done so? One has to wonder, but there is clearly no acceptable answer because there are no francophone teachers.

Even if those who settle here are francophone and do not need to be francized, the government is still losing sight of the problem of anglicization and language transfer toward English. That problem will only get worse if services are not offered in French, as is currently the case. Francophone immigration in and of itself will not resolve the problem, particularly since the government's target of 4.4% francophone immigration, which has been met only once in 20 years, is insufficient to ensure that there is no language transfer toward English and that the demographic weight of francophones in Canada is maintained.

Business of Supply

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are talking about immigration. Of course, there are many different ways we can have newcomers come to Canada and be part of those immigration levels.

In fact, currently, there are many migrant workers who are already here in Canada, including undocumented individuals. At the bare minimum, we are looking at at least half a million individuals who are in that category. They are already here. They are already contributing in many ways.

Would the member support the call for the regularization of these many newcomers who are already in Canada and for that to contribute to immigration level numbers?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, first things first.

The fact that there are so many newcomers whose status is irregular right now only proves that the immigration system does not work, and yet the Liberals want to put more people into it.

As for the regularization of undocumented workers, people who already contribute to the economy, I think that it is a path we must consider. To deal with the labour shortage, which is a multifactorial problem, we must have a multifactorial approach to finding a solution. That means, for example, that seniors should be able to work if given adequate tax incentives, that we should recognize newcomers' credentials, and that we should encourage people who have stopped working to return to the workforce. There are many solutions. We can consider automation—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saint-Jean, whose tone is just as composed as that of the member for Repentigny. That is music to my ears because today we are talking about a very important topic.

This is a subject that we need to be able to talk about calmly. In the last few days, as it happens on a regular basis, there have been slip-ups, particularly when it comes to implications that it is racist to ask for an immigration policy, planning and debate.

With all due respect, I urge my colleagues from all parties to avoid characterizations and all these unnecessary attacks. I am specifically directing this comment at the NDP and the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie who, for days, if not weeks, has been meeting with immigrants and portraying Quebec as a community that does not wish to welcome them and that should not be trusted. That is a fairly extreme attitude.

We have been talking about the Quebec-Canada agreements all day. The government has set a line. We know that the Liberal members have been briefed and that they have a list of talking points. They keep saying that Quebec controls its immigration. One member even told us that Quebec should pull up its socks, meaning that this is our fault.

However, it is true. In the past, there has been meaningful dialogue between Quebec and Ottawa. First, there was the Cullen-Couture agreement under the Lévesque government. The reason was that the federal government was worried about a referendum. Then, there was the McDougall-Gagnon-Tremblay agreement in 1991, which was signed in the wake of the Meech Lake accord and implemented just before the referendum. What was the reason? It was not because the federal government was being thoughtful. It was because the federal government was worried about a referendum.

These agreements were established based on power relationships, and Quebec is losing power, both in its demographic weight and in its weight here in the House. That is why these agreements, which were forced by history, have been breached over the years via funding to promote the English language in Quebec and the official languages policies. Today, the federal government is openly violating these agreements with its extremely high targets that go against the initial spirit of the agreements.

I have been listening to the speeches by the Liberal members, including ministers and cabinet members. It seems as though they either do not understand Quebec's situation, they do not want to understand it or they understand it but other Liberals do not want to listen. Let us ask John McCallum about it. He disagreed with the targets and he was shown the door, albeit indirectly. He is a renowned, published economist and academic, and he said that the Century Initiative's targets did not make any sense.

I am willing to accept that some people do not understand. Gullibility is a forgivable fault. Nevertheless, when I hear a minister or the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell say that since Quebec controls all its immigration, it should stop whining, pull up its socks and do its job, it is absolutely unacceptable.

I assume that the vast majority of people in the House passed first-grade math. When there are two targets, like when the Government of Quebec sets the target for economic immigrants at 50,000, say, and Ottawa says the total target will be 110,000, the higher number prevails. If Quebec does not change its targets and Ottawa raises its own, the number of immigrants will increase. The higher number always prevails. This is basic math. That was the basis of the Quebec-Ottawa agreements, which established certain immigration categories and gave Quebec more control and the right to opt out of certain programs with full financial compensation over time. This arrangement was supposed to continue. Originally, in the spirit of these agreements, this safety valve was not supposed to be left to the federal government. At the very least, in the spirit of these agreements, Quebec was supposed to be consulted. What is the point of telling Quebec that it can set its own economic immigration targets when the feds are going to set a total target that is three times higher and therefore pick the final number? That makes no sense.

I do not doubt the intelligence of the Minister of Immigration. I hold him in high esteem. I do wonder if it is not a show of bad faith to say that to us, especially when he tells us that this does not come from McKinsey. Now, it is coming out in today's newspapers. I understand they are not quick thinkers; this has taken months. They tell us that the 100 million population idea is not a McKinsey policy.

Business of Supply

We were being told that we were conspiracy theorists, so we thought that perhaps they had asked themselves some questions, that they had gotten answers, and that perhaps their targets made sense. We took their word for it, and so we asked the question.

• (1755)

Considering that the committee that is actually chaired by Dominic Barton set the targets, we asked them if they had done any studies, if they had looked into what impact this will have on the workforce. Analyses have been produced by Pierre Fortin, a renowned economist in the Quebec government. He is not a conspiracy theorist. Did they even consider what effect this will have on public services, child care, education, the capacity for integration?

We asked them about their studies, and we realized that we were asking them questions that they themselves had not even considered. In the answers to our questions on the Order Paper, we realized that there were no studies. This may not be McKinsey policy, but when you take the McKinsey policy, put it on the table, do not ask for studies, do not ask any questions, but then implement it, now I would say I am not a super-smart guy, but that sounds like the McKinsey policy to me. It seems like a no-brainer to me.

When you rely on chambers of commerce, consultants and the business community, who have real complaints about the labour shortage, and you forget about the collective aspect and fail to ask questions about the collective aspect, this does raise some questions, even though they may think differently from us. However, they did not even think of asking any of these questions. We have the proof.

Now we are conspiracy theorists. We are joining conspiracy theorists like John McCallum, a minister and economist who was silenced; Pierre Fortin, a renowned, published economist and former president of the Canadian Economics Association; Benoît Pelletier, a former Liberal minister and professor at the University of Ottawa who says that the targets make no sense in a context where Quebec is a national French-speaking minority in North America; and Gérard Bouchard, who said that the federal government has no understanding of Quebec's intercultural model and that it was not considered.

These people sure must be serious conspiracy theorists. We are joining conspiracy theorists like Alain Bélanger, a demographer who says that 90% of immigrants need to adopt French if we want the vitality of the language to endure. We are joining conspiracy theorists like Statistics Canada. Choose whatever indicator you like, Mr. Speaker. We do not mind. Whatever indicator we pick leads to an analysis that tells us that French is in decline.

We are joining conspiracy theorists like the 125 members of the National Assembly of Quebec, from all parties, whether they are nationalists, sovereignists or federalists. As for Québec Solidaire, we are not so sure what they are.

We are joining conspiracy theorists like all these people. When everyone, except for the Liberal government, is a conspiracy theorist, I would like to know which of us lives in an alternate universe. I am trying to understand. I am trying to see the logic.

What we are asking for is a structured plan. When we tell them that, they respond that there is a labour shortage. They tell us that these new targets will address the labour shortage over a period of 77 years. If I am told that there is an urgent problem and that we will have the same policy for 77 years, it makes me doubt that the government can fix this problem.

Finally they tell us that they actually have three-year targets. They tell us that we have long-term problems, but then 77 years is changed to three years. Either they do not have a long-term vision for society, but instead are thinking of a series of short-term fixes with a series of minority governments, or they are telling us that they will never fix the problem. I find that very troubling.

I would tell my colleagues from the other parties that I believe that immigration is a great asset, and I see the proof in my daily life. It is so important that it deserves a higher level of debate, where we can discuss numbers, policies and long-term integration without resorting to name-calling or Quebec-bashing, as we saw today and as we see too often.

As members know, the Century Initiative is far from being the idea of the century. It is the idea of centuries past, and it reminds us of how the position of francophones in Canada has been diminished. It is part of our collective memory, and it reminds us that the respectful integration of immigrants takes place when there is respect for Quebec, consultation of Quebec, full authority for immigration, and, ultimately, independence.

• (1800)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a Quebecker, I would like to thank my colleague. We definitely do not have the same point of view.

In my community, which is not that far from his, there are many francophones and many new immigrants from western Africa and Haiti. The percentage of these immigrants has increased significantly. Why are these people settling in Quebec? It is because they have the right to continue speaking French, living in French, going to school in French and seeing their family grow in French. These people play such a significant role in building the vibrant province and country I call home, and I believe that is a good thing.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that, because for me it is obvious.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I will use this excellent question from the member for Hull—Aylmer to give a shout-out to all the African and Maghrebian students who have come to Quebec and whom I taught and helped with their integration. I can attest to the fact that they need guidance and support to integrate our culture and our society, which is generous and wants to benefit from all their skills while giving them every opportunity that all Quebeckers have.

That being said, I think the member did not listen to my speech. What I can tell him is that we can have different visions, I agree. However, with all due respect, Quebec was never consulted on this file. Forcing a different vision on us does not make anyone democratic.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

• (1805)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division on the motion stands deferred until Monday, May 15, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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.): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:20.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-319—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair is now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the deputy House leader of the government on April 19, 2023, regarding Bill C-319, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act (amount of full pension), standing in the name of the member for Shefford.

In a statement concerning Private Members' Business on March 30, 2023, the Chair invited members to make arguments regarding the need for this bill to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[English]

In her statement, the deputy House leader of the government noted that Bill C-319 would increase the amount of the full pension for Canadians aged 65 to 74 by 10%. This increase is not provided for by the Old Age Security Act. She argued that, as a result, this charge against the consolidated revenue fund is not authorized by the act or any other.

[Translation]

The increase in the amount of the full pension that Bill C-319 would provide to all pensioners aged 65 or older would raise public spending for purposes not currently authorized by the Act. Consequently, the Chair is of the opinion that the bill infringes on the financial prerogative of the Crown and needs a new royal recommendation if it is to receive a final vote in the House at third reading.

Private Members' Business

The House will soon take up the second reading motion for the bill, which can be put to a vote at the conclusion of debate on that motion.

I thank all members for their attention.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ) moved that Bill C-319, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (amount of full pension), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce my first bill today, Bill C-319. The summary reads as follows:

This enactment amends the *Old Age Security Act* to increase the amount of the full pension to which all pensioners aged 65 or older are entitled by 10% and to raise the exemption for a person's employment income or self-employed earnings that is taken into account in determining the amount of the guaranteed income supplement from \$5,000 to \$6,500.

For years, the Bloc Québécois has made the condition of seniors one of its top priorities. Seniors were the people hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. They were among those who suffered the most and they continue to suffer the negative consequences of the pandemic, such as isolation, anxiety and financial hardship.

That said, I do not want to paint an overly gloomy picture today. Instead, I want to present seniors as a grey force consisting of people who want to continue contributing to our society. They built Quebec, and we owe them respect.

Bill C-319 is designed to improve the financial situation of seniors and is structured around two parts. In my speech today, I will first address the part of my bill that deals with increasing old age security, or OAS, and then I will address the part that deals with increasing the qualifying threshold for the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS. I will end my speech by explaining a bit more about the impact inflation has on the financial health of seniors.

To begin, the first part aims to eliminate the current age discrimination. In the 2021 budget, the Liberal government increased old age security benefits for seniors over the age of 75. This delayed and ill-conceived measure has created a new problem—a divide between seniors aged 65 to 74 and those aged 75 and over. Seniors are not taking it lying down.

The Bloc Québécois opposed this discrimination that would create two classes of seniors. Naturally, today's insecurity, economic context, loss of purchasing power and exponential increase in food and housing prices do not affect only the oldest recipients of OAS; it affects all of them. This measure misses the mark by helping a minority of seniors.

Private Members' Business

In 2021, there were 2.8 million people 75 and over compared to 3.7 million between the ages of 65 and 74. This opinion is shared by FADOQ and its president, Gisèle Tassé-Goodman, who had this to say about the measure: “In principle, there is a good intention to provide financial assistance to seniors, but, in reality, people under 75 who are eligible for old age security get absolutely nothing.”

To date, nothing has been done to address this injustice, and this bill seeks to end this discriminatory measure. It is not true that the one-time vote-seeking cheque of \$500 for people 75 and over in August 2021 will be of any help. Seniors even feel that they have been used.

With Bill C-319, the Bloc Québécois is proposing a 10% increase to old age security starting at age 65 for every month after June 2023. For example, at present, this increase would raise the benefits paid to single, widowed, divorced or separated persons from \$1,032 to \$1,135.31 every month. As for the amount paid when both spouses are retired, it would increase from \$621.25 to \$683.35 per month. You do not live in the lap of luxury with that amount. You certainly do not go down south, and you do not stash your money away in tax havens.

Second, with inflation rising sharply and quickly and with the shortage of labour and experienced workers, the Bloc Québécois remains focused on defending the interests and desire of some seniors to remain active on the labour market and contribute fully to the vitality of their community. This is why the Bloc Québécois has long been calling for an increase in the earnings exemption for seniors.

Back in 2021, during the last federal election, the Bloc Québécois platform proposed to raise the exemption from \$5,000 to \$6,000 in order to allow those who are willing and able to continue working to do so without a significant reduction in their GIS benefit, which is derived from old age security.

Given the exceptional transformation in Canada's demographics in recent decades, there are now more people aged 65 and over, and they now outnumber children under 15. It is vital that we adjust our public policies so that older Quebecers can maintain a dignified quality of life in the manner of their choosing.

In fact, Employment and Social Development Canada released a document entitled “Promoting the labour force participation of older Canadians — Promising Initiatives” in May 2018, following an extensive pan-Canadian scan. The document identifies the harmful consequences of ageism in the workplace and the challenges faced by seniors. These include a lack of education or training, health issues, and work-life balance issues due to a lack of workplace accommodations. The study then proposes a number of measures to facilitate the integration of experienced workers and encourage their participation in the workforce.

• (1810)

Socializing in the workplace is beneficial for breaking out of isolation. Life expectancy is steadily increasing, and more jobs are less demanding than in the past.

I find it hard to understand the choices the Liberal government has made since it came to power. At best, the Liberals have taken half-hearted or ad hoc measures, as we saw during the pandemic.

Currently, old age security payments are not enough to weather the affordability crisis and the dramatic price increases for housing or intermediate housing resources.

Six years ago, in June 2017, the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance published a report on the financial impact and local considerations of an aging population. Everyone agrees that the economic situation of households has deteriorated significantly with the pandemic, and that sudden inflation is hurting Quebecers and Canadians. The committee's findings and proposed solutions at that time could not be clearer. It recommended:

That the Government of Canada, in collaboration with its provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners, put measures in place to increase labour force participation of underrepresented groups and to better match labour demand with labour supply in order to mitigate the negative impact of population aging on the economy and on the labour market.

As previously mentioned, modest sums have been granted to date and one-time assistance was offered during the pandemic in June 2020. We appreciate these efforts, but we are clear about the indirect effects of this hastily put together aid. Nevertheless, small and medium enterprises are increasingly stressed out as they desperately look for workers, and about the closure of many shops and the decline in some areas.

We believe that the tax contributions, the tax incentives and the income exemption rates on the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement do not entice older people to return to work because they will be denied hundreds of dollars a month.

Let us not forget the sad irony of Liberal measures such as the Canada emergency response benefit and the Canada recovery benefit, which were considered income during the health crisis. In the end, they took away significant sums of money from the most fragile and least fortunate in the population. This aberration was finally corrected by the government in February 2022 after several months of representations by the Bloc Québécois to the Minister of Seniors when Bill C-12 was tabled.

At the time, Bloc Québécois researchers found that GIS recipients who received CERB lost 50 cents of the supplement for every dollar they received, so a tax rate of 50%, almost double that of the richest people in society. However, at the time, no one informed affected taxpayers of this dramatic impact on disposable household income. During the study for this legislation, the Bloc Québécois pointed out that this major injustice is both harmful and absurd. The FADOQ network called the situation a tragedy.

Let me get back to what we are suggesting. The exemption on earnings and miscellaneous income would increase from \$5,000 to \$6,500 per year. That would leave an additional \$1,500 in the pockets of all claimants aged 65 and older. Compared to the 2021 proposal, then, the current bill suggests an additional \$500, for a total of \$6,500, to offset the deteriorating economic situation. The goal of these two measures combined is to increase both the monthly base amounts and the annual working income. We believe that this will help seniors deal with inflation and the current hardships. It is the least we can do, to allow millions of people who built our communities to live with dignity.

Third, I want to talk about the impact of inflation. Do not forget that old age security is taxable. The OAS and GIS amounts are revised in January, April, July and October, ostensibly to reflect the cost of living. These benefits were indexed annually until 1973. At that time, inflation was very high, particularly for fuel and food, and officials felt that quarterly indexing would better protect against unexpectedly large price increases during the year. By the summer of 2020, however, even FADOQ had decried the fact that these increases will not even buy a coffee at Tim Horton's.

The consumption habits of seniors differ from those of the rest of the population. As a result, they experience different inflation. Statistics Canada studied this difference in 2005. It found that seniors spend proportionately less on transportation, gasoline or a new car, but much more on housing and food. For every \$100, they spend \$56, compared to \$45 for all other households. Surely we all agree that housing and groceries are not luxuries.

What is the impact of that inflation? From 1992 to 2004, the average annual inflation rate was 1.95% for senior-only households, compared to 1.84% for other households. Again, seniors are harder hit.

• (1815)

I will refresh the Liberals' memory. On March 19, 2022, the Liberal member for Etobicoke North moved motion No. 45. If the Liberal Party and the Green Party are consistent with their support—14 members from these two parties jointly supported this motion—then Bill C-319 should be adopted.

I will read the text of the motion, because it is worth it:

That:

(a) the House recognize that (i) seniors deserve a dignified retirement free from financial worry, (ii) many seniors are worried about their retirement savings running out, (iii) many seniors are concerned about being able to live independently in their own homes; and

(b) in the opinion of the House, the government should undertake a study examining population aging, longevity, interest rates, and registered retirement income funds, and report its findings and recommendations to the House within 12 months of the adoption of this motion.

On June 15, 2022, 301 members finally voted in favour this motion, while 25 voted against. Out of the 326 members present, only 25 members from the New Democratic Party voted against this motion.

Seniors living on fixed incomes are having a hard time making ends meet because their daily expenses are increasing faster than their pension payments. Old age security, or OAS, is adjusted to inflation every three months, while the Canada pension plan, or CPP,

is adjusted every January. However, OAS and the CPP are not enough for some people to make ends meet.

People are feeling the shock of the 10.3% year-over-year increase in the cost of food, as reported by Statistics Canada in the year leading up to September. Food prices rose faster than the generalized cost of living index, which rose 6.9% year over year in September, also according to Statistics Canada.

I met with some representatives from the Salvation Army this morning who told me that they too have noticed, like many other support organizations, that demand for food has doubled, and that a large portion of the demand is from seniors. It is inconceivable that this permanent increase in the OAS, which is the first since 1973, so the first in 50 years, is not indexed to inflation. We hope that this will help seniors who, as we have seen, are turning more and more to food banks.

Let us remember that, in the summer of 2021, one month before the election, the federal government handed out \$500 cheques to seniors who were eligible for the old age security pension to supposedly help them with affordability issues related to the pandemic. However, it is going to take a lot more than an ad hoc approach. We really need to focus on the long term.

Other than the increase to index it to inflation, the full OAS for seniors aged 65 to 74 remains unchanged. It is \$666.83 a month. With that low monthly income, it is not surprising that Canada has the generation of retirees facing the greatest inequities and injustices.

Since the 2019 election, the Bloc Québécois has been calling for the government to increase the old age security pension for seniors as of age 65 and has been calling the government out on its discrimination and ageism against seniors aged 65 to 74, so this bill is a logical extension of our position.

In closing, I would like to thank Gisèle Tassé-Goodman from the FADOQ, Pierre-Claude Poulin from the Association québécoise de défense des droits des personnes retraitées et préretraitées and Diane Dupéré from the Association québécoise des retraités et des retraitées des secteurs public et parapublic for their support of this bill. Like me, they are just the mouthpiece for seniors whose stories they hear every day. I would be remiss if I failed to mention all of the seniors groups from all over Quebec who also sent me messages of support. They think that Bill C-319 is the least we can do to give seniors a little help and bit of fresh air.

One last thing: I wish the House would realize the importance of this bill, which is not a luxury, but a necessity. It is just common sense to help seniors age with dignity. Based on the feedback I have received so far, even from seniors outside Quebec, all I have to say is let us work together. Similar motions have been passed many times, including the Bloc Québécois motion calling for an increase in OAS as part of our opposition day. Only the Liberals voted against it. They were the only holdouts. This time, I am reaching out to them. I am asking them to eliminate the injustice they created and vote with us in favour of Bill C-319.

Private Members' Business

Once again, this is a matter of dignity for seniors.

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first met the member when I was moving a bill through the House of Commons, Bill S-211, on sickle cell awareness. I know she cares. She is a good MP, and she cares about people.

She talks about supporting seniors, yet Bloc members have voted against seniors in the House for years. They voted against taking the age of eligibility for retirement benefits from 67 to 65 years of age. They voted against that.

I would ask the member why she felt that seniors should have to work two more years to access the benefits they deserve and which they contributed to for decades. It surprises me that someone who cares so much about seniors would vote against seniors on a regular basis.

• (1825)

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague is misleading the House, because the Bloc Qu b cois has never been against rolling back the retirement age from 67 to 65. What does he mean? Really, we are not in the least questioning the idea of setting the age at 65. We have never questioned that idea. I do not know if my colleague is misleading the House or confusing us with the Conservatives, who had raised the retirement age from 65 to 67, which caused an outcry and led people to ask that it be brought back down to 65.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague and friend, the hon. member for Shefford, for all the work she has done in defending the rights of seniors in the House of Commons during this Parliament. No other member in the House defends seniors' rights as much as my honourable and esteemed colleague from Shefford, especially not the parliamentary secretary, even though it is his job to defend them.

I would like to ask my colleague what she has done since she was elected to the House for the first time. Can she remind us of all the work she has done with various groups, leading up to this bill she introduced to defend seniors' dignity in the House?

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, do I have 15 minutes? I see that I do not.

All joking aside, I am not the only one. I could name all my colleagues in this place who advocated for seniors along with the Bloc Qu b cois. I was given the first questions when the Bloc Qu b cois arrived in the House in December 2019. At the time, the Bloc Qu b cois was already challenging a government idea that we considered ridiculous, but above all unfair. It wanted to increase old age security, but only for those 75 and over. That was the start.

After that, every time I would look to my colleague from Joliette sitting behind me. In January 2020, we met with groups of seniors as part of the pre-budget consultations before the pandemic hit. We came back to the House in April, because the government an-

nounced that it would help everyone. The Bloc was the only party to tell the government that it had forgotten about seniors. Finally, they got a cheque. They received a small one-time cheque because the Bloc came to the House to hammer home the message for more than two months until an announcement was made.

Every time a budget was presented, the Bloc Qu b cois asked in its pre-budget submissions for this injustice to be corrected. That is not to mention the countless questions that I asked the successive ministers for seniors from 2019 to 2021 and since my re-election in 2021. We keep asking the same questions, and we have often raised this subject in the House. The reason we have come back today with this bill is that we want to exert additional pressure on the government. I hope that this time will be the right time. I hope that the government will support this bill and remedy the situation. We are reaching out and giving the government an opportunity to correct this injustice.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l' le, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have often raised that point, which our colleague does a great job of defending. The government often responds that pensions are like that all over the world. However, I have some information here about the net pension replacement rate. According to estimates of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, the average net pension replacement rate was 50.7% of pre-retirement income in Canada in 2018, while the average for OECD member countries was 57.6%. The EU average was 63%. That means that seniors in Canada are worse off relative to the average for other OECD countries. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree. In the OECD, we could be doing a lot more to support seniors. Things are not going to improve, because the indexing method and model mean wages are going up faster than the OAS.

By the way, I think that the Conservatives are being rather quiet. I want to remind the House that there is a cost to leaving seniors in poverty. If we do not increase OAS, seniors are forced to make tough choices at the end of the month. Take for example a woman who came to see me at my office two weeks ago. Because she wanted to eat, she was unable to buy a prosthetic device for her foot. These are the types of choices people have to make. At the end of the day, it is their overall health that will deteriorate and will cost the public purse and our health care system.

To help seniors, there also needs to be an increase in health transfers. The Liberals should have thought of that, if they really wanted to take care of issues affecting seniors.

• (1830)

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-319. I would like to thank the member for Shefford for sponsoring this bill.

Private members' bills play an important role in focusing parliamentary attention on issues of concern to Canadians. Last spring, for instance, we had bills on mandatory immunization, employment insurance for adoptive parents, school food programs and, just recently, a bill to amend the Criminal Code for vulnerable adults.

Seniors are the backbone of Canadian society. They are our parents, our grandmothers and our grandfathers. They are our mentors and loved ones. They are our former teachers, our bosses and our leaders. Seniors built our amazing country and they deserve to live out their retirement without worrying about their financial security. I want to speak today to all the measures our government has delivered that support Canadian seniors.

Increasing old age security by 10% for seniors over the age of 75 was the right thing to do, because it was delivering targeted support to those who need it the most. We know that the older seniors get, the more likely they are to experience higher costs due to the onset of illness or disability and increased health-related expenses. The facts and data support the government's decision, because here, on this side of the House, we, unlike some of the other parties in this place, make decisions based upon data and facts.

Let us turn to the numbers to get an idea of how our government's plan has been effective in ensuring that taxpayer dollars are hard at work supporting those who need it most. In 2020, 39% of seniors aged 75 and over received the guaranteed income supplement, compared to 29% of those aged 65 to 74. There are also more women in the over-75 age group than men, and there are more Canadians with a disability in that age group as well. According to the Canadian Survey on Disability, in 2017, 47% of seniors over the age of 75 had a disability, compared to 32% under the age of 75. This evidence tells us that seniors over the age of 75 are more likely to be in vulnerable circumstances. This means that they are more likely to need additional support, so that is exactly what the government delivered.

Conscious of the facts, our government made the responsible decision to make a historic increase to the old age security pension for seniors aged 75 and older. Let us be clear: This was a huge win for seniors. This change represented the first increase to OAS in 50 years. This policy has helped approximately 3.3 million seniors. They received more than \$800 extra over the first year of the increase, and the benefit, of course, is indexed to rise with the cost of living, so it will continue to go up.

However, we did not stop there. Since 2015, we have implemented a range of targeted actions that have not only contributed to the lowest poverty rates among seniors in Canadian history, but also positioned Canada as a country with one of the lowest poverty rates in the world for seniors. In fact, one of the very first things the government did after we were elected was reverse the reckless Conservative plan to increase the age of retirement. We immediately lowered the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS, from 67 back to 65, allowing Canadians to retire sooner. This put hundreds of thousands of dollars back in the pockets of Canadian seniors. Bill C-29 was the budget implementation act in 2016. When we look at the voting record, the Conservatives voted against it and the Bloc voted against it. That is where the vote was for the return from 67 to 65 in 2016.

Private Members' Business

We also raised the guaranteed income supplement by almost \$1,000 a year, which helped nearly one million vulnerable single seniors. We know that many seniors want to continue to work past retirement. That is why we extended eligibility for the GIS earnings exemption to include self-employment income and increased the exemption by over 40%, to enable seniors who wished to continue working to do so. On top of all this, we are ensuring that those benefits keep up with the cost of living. In fact, over the past year, OAS and GIS have actually increased by 7.1%, while CPP and QPP have increased by 6.5%. We are proud of our record, which shows that, year after year, we have strengthened seniors' financial security, while lifting hundreds of thousands of seniors out of poverty.

Of course, there is much more work to do. That is why we are bringing the largest expansion of health care in 60 years by providing uninsured seniors access to high-quality dental care. I sincerely hope that the member across the way who is moving the bill will vote for our budget so that she can support seniors with dental care.

• (1835)

We are always better when we work together. I encourage members across the way, including the Bloc, to work with us to support seniors in Quebec and across Canada. However, time and time again, Bloc members are choosing politics over supporting seniors. We can just look at the voting record, and I'll give a few more examples. I just mentioned dental care for seniors, but they have also already voted against the early stage of the budget, and I assume they are going to vote against the budget when it is ready to be voted on. There was also lowering the age of retirement, with Bill C-29, the Budget Implementation Act, in 2016; strengthening the GIS; and our OAS increase that supports the most vulnerable seniors. These are things that they voted against.

However, people should not worry. While opposition parties are playing political games, we are going to stay focused on delivering real results for seniors from coast to coast to coast.

Canada's population is aging. Seniors are the fastest-growing demographic, and we need to be thoughtful in our approach to supporting them. We will continue to be proud of the record that we have in supporting seniors.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country. Today, I'm speaking on Bill C-319, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act.

Private Members' Business

First, let me start by saying that our seniors deserve our respect and gratitude. They have worked hard to build our country, serve our country standing up for democracy and freedoms, raise families, start businesses, contribute through their careers over decades, volunteer, and serve and contribute to our communities in so many ways before and during retirement. We all owe them a debt of gratitude for all that they have done over their lifetime. We also need to fully recognize the cost of living challenges facing our seniors now, including the affordability of retirement.

As they age, seniors can face many challenges, including financial insecurity, health issues and social isolation. I hear increasingly from seniors who are deeply concerned about their ability to maintain the quality of life they expected when they were younger. That is why Conservatives are committed to ensuring seniors are top of mind when considering policies that will affect what was supposed to be their golden years.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2019, over 1.6 million Canadian seniors were living in low-income households. That's more than 15% of the senior population. That was even before 40-year record-high inflation and the unprecedented increasing of interest rates, eight times in one year, by the Bank of Canada. Not all seniors have paid off their mortgages, and this is creating a crisis for many. Many seniors are struggling to make ends meet, and many are forced to choose between paying for necessities such as food, fuel, shelter and medication. I hear this all the time in my community.

One senior I know who lived on the edge of town had to sell his home because he simply could not afford to heat his home and the gas to drive his vehicle. It was heartbreaking for him. I just talked to him the other day, and he said he was depressed. Of course I encouraged him to reach out to seek help as I was genuinely concerned about him. Another reached out to me to say he cannot afford to visit family and his quality of life has diminished. Another said he cannot afford to replace his vehicle.

One key part of this legislation proposes to increase the guaranteed income supplement earnings exemption. To be clear, this will not help everyone. However, this increase would help seniors, who are able to and want to, continue to work while keeping more in their pockets than they would have been able to because their earnings would have been clawed away. By increasing the GIS earnings exemption, we can help to alleviate some of these challenges for some people and ensure that more of our seniors are able to sustain, and for some, perhaps enjoy a more comfortable and secure retirement.

Conservatives believe that seniors who have worked hard and contributed to our society throughout their lives deserve to retire with dignity and financial security. However, many seniors are struggling to make ends meet and are facing the cost of living crisis.

Made-in-Canada inflation by the high-tax, high-debt, high-spend Liberals has hit some seniors the hardest. There are many people in our society, but some seniors, especially those on fixed incomes, are among those hurting the most. They are forced to choose between a warm home and a full fridge. Food banks usage across the country, including in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country, is up over 30%. I heard from a senior recently from my community who

said he usually donates to the food bank and now he cannot believe that he is a client.

Liberal financial policies have led to higher inflation. This has been stated by the former governor of the Bank of Canada and by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Seniors' retirement income is simply not keeping up to the pace of this cost of living crisis, which is cutting into the savings of seniors. High inflation rates, interest rate hikes and the tripling of the carbon tax, which affects the price of groceries, gas and home heating, are the real record of the Liberal government on seniors. It is the responsibility of the government to reward work, especially the work done by seniors.

Conservatives oppose severe clawbacks of seniors' GIS benefits for those who are able to, want to and choose to work. Increasing the earnings exemption is only fair at a time when so many seniors need cost of living relief and a sense of connection with their community.

● (1840)

Many seniors feel increasingly isolated in their own towns and cities, and some have struggled with financial insecurity because of the record inflation. According to a survey by the National Institute on Aging, 72% of Canadians aged 70 years and older became more concerned about their financial well-being in the last several years.

Labour force participation of seniors can bring value to organizations through experience and mentorship, help with succession planning and, maybe for some, mitigate social isolation, if seniors want to, are able to and choose to work. The Liberals' choice to disincentivize work also comes during a countrywide labour shortage. A recent Auditor General's report on pandemic programs clearly laid out how, as restrictions were lifted, the programs continued disproportionately and disincentivized work. "Help wanted" signs have become all too frequent a sight, as small businesses and not-for-profits become desperate for the manpower needed to provide their goods and services.

Now, more than ever, is not the time to punish work. Working should be rewarded, and this is common sense. Why tax away a senior's income if they are able to and want to work? Seniors are integral in sharing their knowledge and expertise with younger workers through mentoring programs, internships or other training opportunities. This can help develop the skills of the next generation of workers.

On this side of the House, we are committed to standing with seniors, and we believe that this increase to the GIS earnings exemption is a step in not taking their ability to earn an income if they are able to, choose to and want to, and without it being taxed away.

In closing, I want to reiterate our commitment to our seniors and to ensuring that they have the financial security and support they need to enjoy their retirement years. We believe increasing the guaranteed income supplement, the GIS, earnings exemption is one step in reaching this goal. This would help seniors who are able to, choose to and want to work, such as having a part-time job, which can keep more of their money in their pockets without affecting other benefits. This increase would help ensure that low-income seniors have additional income to meet their basic living expenses, again, if they want to, are able to and choose to work. It would reduce the impact of clawbacks. Why are we punishing seniors?

As Canada continues to face a labour shortage, the government cannot continue to be a gatekeeper of economic recovery. We must make sure that work is rewarded and encouraged, not punished, if people want to work and choose to work. I also recognize the value of intergenerational connections and the importance of seniors remaining active and engaged in their communities. That is why Conservatives support policies that encourage seniors to share their knowledge and skills with younger generations through work mentoring, as well as through volunteering and community programs.

In conclusion, we are committed to honouring and supporting seniors in Canada. We will continue to work towards policies that promote financial security, that do not penalize seniors and that promote meaningful connections for our valued seniors.

• (1845)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, I am honoured to rise for the people of Timmins—James Bay to talk about a very important issue. That is the situation facing senior citizens in this country and the systemic failure to ensure that those who built this nation are able to retire and live in the dignity they deserve.

I was just speaking today with the head of the Cochrane food bank. We are attempting to get supplies of food up into Fort Albany First Nation, which has been under evacuation because of flooding. They tell us the shelves are empty. If we go into the grocery stores in northern Ontario, the bins where people used to fill up with food are nearly empty. The cost of living crisis is hitting seniors more than anyone. They have nothing to show for it, other than these incremental increases that might buy them a Tim Hortons coffee but are not going to put food on the table at this time.

We have to look at the larger picture in terms of the absolute failure we see when seniors need us. They are the people who raised us, built our society, brought us up from being children to adults; however, when need us, we are not there. I look at what happened with COVID in the privatized long-term care facilities and the absolute squalor that elders were left in and died in. It was so bad that the army was sent into Quebec in order to try to keep people alive. We send the army into disaster zones; we should not be sending them into facilities that are run by provinces to protect and to look after senior citizens.

Private Members' Business

We saw this in Ontario, where the death rates in the privatized care homes were staggeringly high. Afterwards, Doug Ford built this iron ring of protection around all those investors so that they would not be held accountable for failing to keep seniors alive during the pandemic.

I was talking to a widow today who needs to get her teeth fixed. She has a right to have dignity. She should not have to get plates put in. She wants to have her teeth fixed, but it is an \$8,000 bill. We have the Conservatives filibustering and trying to stop seniors from getting dental care. The Bloc Québécois members are supporting the attack on senior citizens in this country getting dental care. I cannot think of anything more shameful than that.

I do not know if the Bloc members or the Conservatives ever knocked on a door, but when I knocked on door after door, I talked to seniors, who said to me that they cannot afford to have their teeth fixed. Some people might think this is not that important, but it is so important for their dignity and their sense of health. This is why New Democrats pushed for a national dental care plan that, this year, includes senior citizens. The Bloc members and the Conservatives can fight this all they want, but we will make sure that by the end of this year, we can phone those widows back. We can tell them the \$8,000 bill they are facing that they cannot afford to pay will be paid. They deserve it, and they deserve better.

We are very interested in Bill C-319 and this issue of fixing the shortfalls in the pension, but obviously, it would not go far enough. I remember just a few years ago when Stephen Harper flew to the World Economic Forum in Davos, where he announced that Canadian seniors had it a little too good. He was going to increase the age of eligibility for the old-age pension. He did not bother to tell Canadians that. He went to tell the world's elites at the World Economic Forum. He went to tell Klaus Schwab, to whisper in his ear, that Canadian senior citizens were getting too good a deal, and he was going to raise the age.

The Liberals ran on it, saying that they were going to fight that. They said, "We are going to make sure that we restore the age." Then what did the Liberals do in their budget? They created two classes of senior citizens. They told all our senior citizens aged 74 and under, "Tough luck, get by, it is not too bad." They told them they had their health, and they said they were going to give a small incremental increase to those aged 75 and older.

Private Members' Business

Just before inflation hit, I was underground in a gold mine in Timmins. That is tough work, and I met a 70-year-old man working the jackleg drill. People have to be in the best health to run a jackleg drill, because it does massive destruction to the body. He told me that at 70 years old, he had to go back underground to work the drills because he could not afford to look after his sick wife.

• (1850)

That is the situation in Canada. To say that, because he is under 75, he does not need a top-up to his pension is an insult. It is also an insult to say that if we just top up those at 65 to where they are at 75, it will get them through in a time of high inflation, because it is not going to get them through. Any senior citizen will tell us that. What we need are much broader systemic changes to deal with an aging population and the way that we have failed. Certainly, the issue of access to dental care is an important first step.

We also need a housing strategy that works. It is not a housing strategy when the member for Stornoway, who lives off the taxpayer's dime with his personal chef, goes on about how all the gatekeepers have stopped any building. He is attacking the municipalities for being gatekeepers. That is not going to get us housing. What we need is seniors housing. We need a national plan to build seniors housing that is co-operative, reasonable housing. The Liberals promised that. We have never seen so many promises about housing, but where are they? We have not seen it. That is a systemic failure.

With respect to the inability of people to feed themselves at a time of high inflation, and the pitiful amount of money they get in old age security, is a broader, more systemic issue that has to be addressed. We have to rethink the CPP. We have to look at the ability of people, while they are working, to add to their own old age security funds so that, if they are working and saving, that fund will go with them wherever they retire. That is contrary to the member for Stornoway, who by the way has a 19-room mansion. He calls it a tax. Investing in pensions is not a tax. The Conservatives keep saying that because they do not want to put the basic funds in place to have a proper pension.

We need to look at a properly funded pension system, so I look at Bill C-319, and we will certainly support it going forward. It is an incremental step, a baby step, along a long path, but it does not get us there. What gets us there is saying that we cannot live as a society with values when seniors are out on the streets begging, which I see on Elgin Street now. There are senior citizens and widowed grandmothers begging on the streets because they cannot pay their outrageous rents or the cost at the grocery stores, as there is not enough in their pensions. I think we need a broader discussion, one that is across party lines, on how we reform CPP so people can make investments into a public pension, not a privatized RRSP. I know a lot of people who have tried to put money into RRSPs and have told me they will never be able to retire because it will never be sufficient, so we have to address those shortfalls.

We have to send an important message now to senior citizens to admit that Canada has failed them, and is failing them, but that it is not going to continue to fail them. At a time of high inflation, high costs, high rents, high medical costs and the need for access to either pharmacare or dental care, Canada needs to do for them what

they did for us. They held us in their arms, raised us and took on immense sacrifices so we could be the society that we are today.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since there is no question and comment period at this time under the rules of debate in the House, some of my colleagues push the envelope and sometimes say outrageous things.

Having said that, I would first like to recall the purpose of the bill:

This enactment amends the Old Age Security Act to increase the amount of the full pension to which all pensioners aged 65 or older are entitled by 10% and to raise the exemption for a person's employment income or self-employed earnings that is taken into account in determining the amount of the guaranteed income supplement from \$5,000 to \$6,500.

The goal is to prevent this from having an impact on the guaranteed income supplement. Since its arrival in the House in the 1990s, the Bloc Québécois has fought hard for the guaranteed income supplement. We wanted to ensure that more and more Quebec seniors were entitled to it. We realized that people did not know they were entitled to it. We toured Quebec to raise awareness and encourage them to apply.

When we first came to the House, even though we were not a recognized party, we did a review of what was happening with the guaranteed income supplement. Once again, we found that many seniors who were entitled to it were not receiving it.

When we presented our budget expectations in 2016, my colleague from Joliette and the member for Repentigny met with the Minister of Finance at the time, Mr. Morneau. They told him that anyone entitled to the guaranteed income supplement should be automatically registered to receive it. That was the Bloc Québécois's doing. He told us that we were right and that he would implement this system in 2018.

Again, just last year, in my constituency office, I met with seniors who were entitled to it but were not receiving it. There are still people who fall through the cracks.

Private Members' Business

That said, as recently as April 6, 2023, Michel Girard, a long-time financial columnist who everyone knows, stated that 409,860 people aged 65 and over live on less than a livable income. That is incredible. That is 53% of people living alone who do not have a livable income. Over the years, seniors have become impoverished. We must fix this, especially in light of the post-pandemic inflationary context.

The underlying objective of this bill is the social autonomy of seniors. I have often had the opportunity to speak about the autonomy of seniors, but I want to remind members that seniors' autonomy is not limited to their physical autonomy. Naturally, some people lose their autonomy with the loss of mobility. That does not take away their autonomy.

Autonomy is also not limited to seniors' social autonomy. However, it is society that often impacts the social autonomy of seniors. What is social autonomy? It is the income and the place they are given so they can continue to work in society. Ageism does exist.

- (1900)

People approaching retirement have made an absolutely remarkable and phenomenal contribution to society, and yet the closer they get to retirement, the more they are progressively excluded from decision-making places. In fact, if it were not for advocacy groups like the FADOQ network and the Association québécoise de défense des droits des personnes retraitées et préretraitées, seniors would be in bad shape. I commend them for their work, and I also commend my colleague from Shefford, who has shown remarkable leadership on this issue. She was able to bring all the networks together to finally get the government to listen to reason. At least I hope so.

Senior's autonomy is not limited to their mental autonomy, in other words their cognitive ability. Many prejudices exist about that. It is believed that 20% of seniors may have cognitive impairments. Some studies in the literature say that among these 20%, 10% of the disorders are reversible, if the people are well cared for and if we do not reduce their capacity to act. Isolation necessarily creates long-term cognitive impairments.

Seniors who live at or below the poverty line are the most precious members of our society. The older one gets, the more one acquires that which society cannot do without, which is moral autonomy. Moral autonomy refers to a human being's capacity to make a just and fair decision while making sure that their decision-making capacity, their practical judgment, is accurate. That does not happen at 20 or 30 years of age. It is acquired over a lifetime. Society therefore needs to make room for seniors because they are the ones who can show us the way forward, if we listen to them and we do not push them aside as if they were unnecessary, and if we do not undermine their income and their livelihood.

Everyone knows that seniors living in precarious situations eventually become sick. People living with financial worries eventually become sick. From a purely economic standpoint, if we take care of our seniors, if we let them have more of what they need to live, we will inevitably have a healthier, less sickly society. In the end, that will cost much less. What is more, those people will enjoy living. There is nothing more important than to give life meaning. After all, we are all looking for happiness.

I am appealing to every member's sense of honour, justice and equity to make sure my colleague's bill, on behalf of all seniors across the country, including Quebec's seniors, can give them at least the bare necessities. Seniors are wise. That is something all the seniors' rights groups agree upon. What we are asking for is a decent bare minimum so as to give them a little breathing room.

[English]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House to represent the good people of Windsor—Tecumseh, especially on an important issue like the one we are debating here today, so I am absolutely pleased to participate in the second reading debate on Bill C-319.

I would like to begin by thanking the member for Shefford for sponsoring this bill. I think the bill that she has put before us today is an excellent example of focusing parliamentary attention in the right way on an issue that matters to Canadians. Understandably, Canadians care about seniors; they built this country and now deserve to live out their retirement years in financial security. However, it is more than that; these discussions are about improvements that better support everyone who is aging in Canada, which means all of us. The future of aging in Canada is, after all, everyone's future.

My colleague has already explained why Bill C-319 does not flow from the demographic evidence that we have, and has shown that it would work against us in a few ways. I would like to use my time to talk more generally about all the ways the Government of Canada has supported seniors financially over the past eight years, as demonstration of our ongoing commitment to ensuring seniors live a secure and dignified retirement. We have been working hard to support Canada's fastest-growing age group with the right set of programs and services. With a quarter of Canadians expected to be 65 or older by 2051, we have been working hard on many fronts to plan for the future so government can respond to their diverse needs.

Since 2015, we have restored the age of eligibility for the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement to 65, down from 67. It is worth pausing here for a moment to point out that, in 2012, the Conservatives introduced an awfully misguided policy that increased the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS from 65 to 67. Not only would that have forced seniors in my riding and across Canada to work longer, but it would have robbed them of literally thousands of dollars of absolutely essential supports, and it would have plunged thousands of them into poverty.

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We have a different approach, an approach that is rooted deeply in respect for our seniors. We provided a one-time, tax-free payment to help seniors with extra costs during the pandemic. We worked with provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan, increasing pensions for future retirees. We increased the OAS pension by 10% for seniors aged 75 and over. We increased the GIS by up to \$947 per year for the lowest-income seniors, benefiting close to 900,000 vulnerable seniors across Canada, and we committed to increasing the GIS further by \$500 for singles and \$750 for couples, which will help the lowest-income seniors make ends meet.

The government also included a series of new, targeted measures in the 2022 fall economic statement, focused on Canadians most affected by rising prices. One of those measures is doubling the GST tax credit for six months, putting an average of \$225 extra back in the pockets of our seniors. We are delivering on a \$500 payment to nearly two million low-income renters, many of whom are seniors struggling with the cost of housing. The grocery rebate introduced in this budget will again, no doubt, make a difference in the lives of so many seniors, and I cannot overlook that budget 2023 introduced dental coverage to seniors who need it most.

I am proud of the measures we have taken to improve the overall health and quality of life of older Canadians and our seniors.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1905)

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Nation Anishinabe people, and I do so with humility and gratitude. *Meegwetch.*

I am rising tonight during Adjournment Proceedings to pursue a question that I originally asked in question period on March 10 of this year. It is in relation to the tailings ponds maintained by Imperial Oil, and the Kearl mine is the one in question.

Imperial is owned by Exxon in the United States, and this mining project has been in place for some decades. The question of the suitability of that terrain and the suitability of their plans for holding vast amounts, millions of litres, of toxic effluent in those ponds was a subject of some concern in the initial environmental assessment hearings, which I attended at the time as an intervener on behalf of Sierra Club Canada. There were many promises made in those hearings, and I remember them well. Everything was going to be world-class technology, and Imperial was going to be very careful to make sure that the toxic materials were maintained within containment.

Of course, what I raised on March 10 in question period was that, at that point, we knew for nine months that the Kearl mine had been leaking toxic effluent on the lands and waters of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. At the time, Imperial had been lobbying

for more subsidies from Canada while failing to inform just about anyone that this was occurring. It was discovered in May 2022, and the first nation discovered that this had been going on for some time in January and February of this year, 2023. However, what is really incredible is what we have learned since then.

The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development has heard from Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, from the Mikisew Cree, from Métis and also from the Alberta regulator. We also know now that we are not talking about something in the past tense. Initially, media coverage said that this had been going on for some time, and it is still going on as far as know. The containment in the tailings ponds is not working.

In fact, parenthetically, the CEO of Imperial, Brad Corson, is now the highest paid CEO in the energy sector. His salary actually doubled last year and is now more than \$17 million. However, it was officials from the Alberta regulator who said that the correct word to use was more “seep” than “leak”, as it is seeping out through the sides. The approach that Imperial Oil is taking to this seeping of toxic effluent is to try to capture it through piping and return it to the place where it is leaking.

When I asked when the Government of Canada was going to get tough on these corporate criminals, the response from the hon. parliament secretary, the hon. member for Winnipeg South, was that the thoughts of the government are with the families and the well-being of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and other affected communities and the Minister of Environment was looking at reaching out to the Alberta government and these first nations. In effect, he said that they want to better understand the situation. Well, we better understand it all right now.

The late Dr. David Schindler testified on May 12, 2009, to the parliamentary committee that there was enough evidence to charge Imperial with violations of the Fisheries Act then. What are we waiting for?

• (1910)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take pollution incidents and threats to the environment very seriously, and I am deeply disappointed by this situation, as the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has also said. Our priority remains the health and the well-being of the people of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, the Mikisew Cree First Nation and the Fort Chipewyan Métis Nation, as well as other communities.

Let us talk a bit about the action since the time of that question and answer in question period. Environment and Climate Change Canada enforcement officers have a mandate to enforce federal environmental legislation aimed at pollution prevention and protecting Canada's wildlife and biodiversity. The enforcement has opened an investigation into a suspected contravention of the Fisheries Act at Imperial Oil's Kearl oil sands site. The Fisheries Act prohibits the deposit of deleterious substances into the water frequented by fish or in any place under conditions where the deleterious substance may enter any such water.

Environment and Climate Change Canada continues to make progress in creating a new notification and monitoring working group, which would include the federal and provincial governments, indigenous nations from Fort Chipewyan and the Government of Northwest Territories. From the federal perspective, an enhanced communication protocol must be developed to improve notifications at all steps in the notification process in cases of future environmental emergencies, and officials are working with indigenous communities to collectively establish the mandate and scope of this working group. Their inputs and insights will be critical to ensuring that this group convenes with a direction and purpose that will meet the community's needs.

In general, and I want to underline this point, tailings ponds are regulated at the provincial level, and in Alberta's case, through the Alberta Energy Regulator. We will be exploring further options with Alberta, including how the Government of Canada can support assessing the risks of tailings ponds and broader landscape and tailings management issues of concern.

• (1915)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that my anger at the situation is less directed at the federal government than it is at the province, Imperial Oil and Exxon themselves. When Brad Corson,

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CEO of Imperial, testified at committee, he was terribly apologetic, but he described the problem as a communications failure. It is a pollution failure, and it is a poisoning failure. Moreover, it is going on right now. It has not stopped.

Even in the business of communication, there were three meetings with the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation committee working with Imperial over the course of the summer, and Imperial never told the committee that it was looking into this constant pollution that was happening. It is time to charge them. We get their attention when they realize that they are criminals, that their social licence has been used up and that they must stop polluting the lands and the waters of this country, that province and the territory of the Athabasca Chipewyan and the Mikisew Cree.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, Environment and Climate Change officials carried out inspections at the site after they became aware of the incident on February 7. In addition to the investigation, officers will continue to monitor the mitigation measures taken by Imperial Oil to prevent impacts to fish-bearing water, as required by the Fisheries Act direction issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada enforcement on March 10.

A Fisheries Act direction is a compliance tool that may be issued by enforcement officers when there is an unauthorized deposit of a deleterious substance into water frequented by fish or when there is a serious and imminent danger of such an incident and immediate action is necessary. The department is continuing the investigation.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:18 p.m.)

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