



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

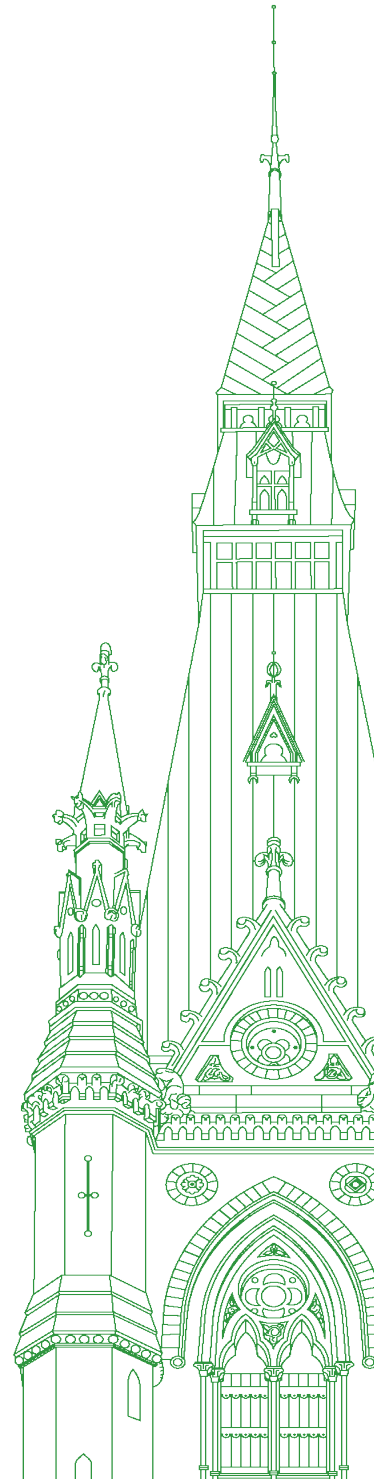
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 197
Monday, May 15, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 15, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-282, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ) moved that Bill C-282, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management), be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Luc Thériault moved that Bill C-282 be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, on June 13, 2022, I introduced Bill C-282. In a month, it will be one year. On November 16, 2022, I delivered my introductory speech at first reading. On February 7, 2023, I delivered my final reply to conclude the debate at second reading and on February 8, the result of the vote was the following: 293 for, 23 against. That is what we call a resounding majority.

With that vote, parliamentarians in the House signalled to supply managed farmers that they would never again be sacrificed at the altar of free trade. The government was finally going to walk the talk. I felt confident that this bill would be passed by the end of the session. Was I being overly optimistic? Time will tell.

There was just committee work left. When a party wants to hold up a bill, it can filibuster. That is what representatives from the Conservative Party quietly did in committee.

The bill contains one clause. If we agree with the principle, the clause in question does nothing but implement its intention. Simple, accurate, concise, this bill gets straight to the point. It adds to the

mandate of the Minister of Foreign Affairs the obligation to fully respect supply management by removing the minister's ability to negotiate these principles in future international trade negotiations.

The minister will therefore be unable to sign a treaty that would have the effect of increasing the tariff rate quota applicable to products subject to supply management or reducing the applicable tariff when imports exceed the applicable tariff rate quota.

What impact will Bill C-282 have in concrete terms? The first commitment the government makes in negotiating a treaty is signing it. By signing the treaty, it indicates that it is satisfied with the text and commits, and I am using the word "commits" deliberately, to do what is necessary for it to be implemented.

By preventing the government from signing, should there be any breaches of supply management, Bill C-282 prevents it from introducing an implementation bill allowing for the treaty's ratification and entry into force. Unless the matter returns to Parliament during the negotiations and before the treaty is signed and Parliament is requested to amend the law, supply management is completely protected.

Basically, with Bill C-282, supply management is taken off the bargaining table from the outset. It is a powerful tool to increase Canada's bargaining power in trade negotiations. This bill does not disarm the government. On the contrary, it strengthens it.

Let us keep in mind that Bill C-282 has become necessary because the loopholes that have been created are preventing the system from working effectively by undermining the integrity of its constituent principles, namely, price, production and border controls.

For those who are unfamiliar with the concept, supply management is a key strategic tool for preserving our food self-sufficiency, regional development and land use. I will get back to this later. It is also a Canada-wide risk management tool designed to protect agricultural markets against price fluctuations.

The system is based on three major principles, three pillars. I am convinced that my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé will talk about his three-legged stool.

Private Members' Business

• (1105)

The first pillar is supply management through a production quota system derived from research on consumption, that is, consumer demand for dairy products. The Canadian Dairy Commission distributes quotas to each of the provinces, which, through their marketing boards or producer associations, sell these quotas to their own producers to ensure that production is aligned with domestic demand.

The second pillar is price controls. A floor price and a ceiling price are set to ensure that each link in the supply chain gets its fair share.

The third pillar is border control, and that is where fair trade agreements and the successive breaches that producers have had to deal with come in.

Supply management is a model envied around the world, especially in countries that have abolished it. Dairy producers in countries that dropped supply management are lobbying to have it reinstated. Increasingly, American dairy producers are questioning their government's decision to abolish supply management for their sector in the early 1990s. Indeed, for almost a decade, the price of milk in the U.S. has been plummeting, and small U.S. farms are no longer able to cover their production costs. This price level is usually attributed to overproduction. Each year, millions of gallons of milk are dumped in ditches. In 2016, more than 100 million gallons were thrown away. In 2018, Wisconsin lost more than 500 farms a week.

Of course, there is another argument that could be made against Bill C-282. Some people might think that since producers and processors have finally been compensated, sometimes after waiting more than four years, and are satisfied, concessions can be made from one agreement to another by compensating people afterwards.

Of course, no amount of compensation, no temporary one-off cheque, will cover the permanent structural damage and losses caused by the breaches in the free trade agreements. Supply management is not perfect, but the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, especially in allowing all links in the chain to produce and to have fair and equitable incomes for everyone in the entire production chain. That is important.

The question we need to ask ourselves is this: Do we want to protect certain segments of our agricultural industry from foreign competition while abiding by the rules of the WTO agreements?

The answer is yes, especially since the supply management system follows those rules. Every country in the world protects its sensitive products. It is true for the U.S., with its sugar and cotton. It is true for Japanese rice. It is also true for Europe. It is not against the WTO's rules, so let us do it.

Bill C-282 is not partisan, and neither is my approach in defending and promoting it. We simply needed to enshrine in law the good intentions repeated in Parliament for years.

During each trade negotiation, the House was unanimous in insisting that we keep the supply management system. It did so on November 22, 2005, in its negotiations with the WTO. It did so on September 26, 2017, in its renegotiation of NAFTA. It did so on

February 7, 2018, this time for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the CPTPP. In every case, the House was unanimous, which means that government members, both Conservative and Liberal, agreed.

After that, things went awry. In the case of the CPTPP, CUSMA, or the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, and CETA, or the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, the government ended up portioning off parts of the market. That is why we came up with Bill C-282 after Bill C-216 died on the Order Paper.

Although the Bloc Québécois is introducing this bill, it is not ours alone. It expresses the will of most parliamentarians. It expresses the will of our farmers, especially Quebec's supply-managed farmers, but also those all across Canada who have adopted this system.

• (1110)

In fact, I know that they are listening to us, and I would like to say hello. This bill is theirs as much as it is ours.

Along with my colleagues from Berthier—Maskinongé and Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, I went to meet our producers and consumers. We found an agriculture sector that was more mobilized and optimistic than ever, convinced that we would succeed, and determined to defend and promote supply management at all costs.

We also met people who want to keep the supply management system because it has proven to be effective in terms of food autonomy and food security, especially so during the pandemic. Consumers see that they have access to sufficient, high-quality supplies at competitive prices. They want to shorten the distance between farm and table. They want farms run by people and not megafarms that run on overproduction and waste. I repeat that 100 million gallons are thrown out in the U.S. It is inconceivable.

In fact, if U.S. producers want to return to a supply management system, it is because their model based on overproduction favours only megaproducers and they are losing farms run by actual people, meaning that quality goes out the window. Do we want milk full of hormones from megafarms?

Consumers see the beneficial impact of supply management on sustainable agriculture, land use and the regional economy. Our producers deserve not to feel threatened every time a free trade agreement is negotiated. They want predictability. They want to be able to plan for the future, ensure their succession and maintain their quality standards. Is that too much to ask?

Private Members' Business

In conclusion, Bloc Québécois members are team players. Protecting and promoting supply management and the result of the vote on third reading are not only the work of the member for Montcalm. I want to point out the remarkable work and dedication of my colleague and friend, the member for Berthier-Maskinongé. I would also like to point out the excellent work of my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. He did a remarkable job in committee as spokesperson for international trade. Let us say that he honed his patience at the Standing Committee on International Trade.

I must also mention the unconditional support of the entire Bloc Québécois caucus, who not only stand behind me, but also and especially beside all supply-managed agricultural producers. At the end of this debate at third reading, I see that the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and the rest of the NDP support Bill C-282. I thank the Minister of Agriculture for her unequivocal support and, by extension, that of her government. This type of support is invaluable. There is still some doubt among the 23 Conservatives who voted against Bill C-282 in principle on second reading. I take nothing for granted, but time is of the essence.

All we need is another election for Bill C-282 to suffer the same fate as Bill C-216. This bill needs to be studied by the Senate, and could be delayed by senators who want to imitate the Conservative members who delayed the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-282 in committee. Let us remain optimistic and assume that, considering what a majority there is in the House, our wise Senate will make the right choice.

The time has come to act. Every country protects the key sectors of its economy before engaging in free trade negotiations.

After all the motions that have been unanimously adopted by the House and all the expressions of good faith, followed by all the broken promises by successive governments of all stripes, if we truly respect the farmers who feed us, we have to put our words into action and pass Bill C-282, to ensure that not one more government will take it upon itself to sacrifice, on the altar of free trade, supply management, our agricultural model and the men and women who feed us.

• (1115)

[English]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for bringing forward this very important piece of legislation. All members on this side of the aisle firmly believe that the agriculture and agri-food sector is a critical component of the Canadian economy. My community of Windsor-Essex is an agricultural powerhouse. There are 4,500 acres of greenhouses across Windsor-Essex, producing vegetables and employing over 15,000 workers, so I have been following this bill very carefully. How will his bill contribute to strengthening Canada's food security?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, this has already been clearly demonstrated. During the pandemic, when supply chains were broken, did anyone hear about a shortage of dairy, poultry or eggs, for example?

These sectors actually helped guarantee a reliable source of food for our citizens. That is one of the strengths of the model. These three pillars, which I am sure the member for Berthier—Maskinongé will talk about later, create a balance between production, fair and equitable prices, and the necessary border controls, so that is a plus.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, when this bill came to committee in the previous Parliament, government officials came and talked about their concerns with the bill.

Mr. Forsyth said this:

If we were to end up with this bill as it is written, I think very much that we would start with a much smaller scope of negotiations with various partners. It wouldn't be unusual for them to say "That's fine. Canada has taken these issues right out of play. We will take issues that are of interest to Canada right out of play." Then you're talking about negotiating from a smaller pie, as it were.

I wonder if the member would comment on how he sees Canada negotiating other free trade agreements "from a smaller pie" as a result of this being taken off and how that would affect the prosperity of Canada going forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, because I could not always be there in committee, I read all of the exchanges that took place as it conducted its work. I was a little surprised to see the Conservative members exclaiming that the public servants' arguments in defence of Bill C-216 were very good.

I am somewhat experienced when it comes to politics, and I know that when a government is moving in one direction, it is very rare that the public servants who come to testify in committee say anything in opposition to the government.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Montcalm for the honourable mention. Of course, I look forward to offering my full support to this bill. I am really glad that during his remarks he talked about the three pillars of supply management. I was with him in the 42nd Parliament when we saw one of those pillars, import controls, systemically undermined by three successive trade deals. I would like my hon. colleague to expand on how, after all those promises to defend supply management, Bill C-282 is a legislative guarantee to really show that supply management is now being protected in law, because we can no longer trust the word of government as we have been let down three times in the past.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, all too often, parliamentarians on the government benches have told us, hand over heart, that they are in favour of promoting and defending supply management, yet they always want to keep an ace up their sleeve when they sit around the free trade negotiating table.

Why are they always keeping supply-managed producers as that ace up their sleeve? Why sacrifice them? Why sacrifice this agricultural model that works?

With this bill, no government could go back on its word between signing the agreement and implementing it.

[English]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity that the member for Montcalm has provided me to once again reaffirm the government's support for Canada's supply management system and for this important bill. I want to start by thanking the member for Humber River—Black Creek for reporting the bill back to the House following its review at the Standing Committee on International Trade.

In conducting its review of the bill, the committee heard from over 40 witnesses and received 15 written briefs. The committee heard substantial evidence that Canada's supply management system is a model of stability. It provides a fair price for farmers, stability for processors and high-quality products for consumers, Canadians, and has done so for over 50 years. Numerous witnesses expressed how supply management is a pillar of rural prosperity. It sustains farming families and rural communities.

The great contribution of supply-managed sectors to our economy is undeniable. In 2021, the dairy, poultry and egg sectors generated almost \$13 billion in farm-gate sales and accounted for over 100,000 direct jobs in production and processing activities.

This government has consistently reaffirmed our unwavering support for Canada's supply management system, including in the context of international trade agreements. This support was clearly demonstrated during the negotiation of the new NAFTA, the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA. Canada faced significant pressure to dismantle the supply management system, and I cannot stress enough how hard we had to resist and defend it, and defend it we did. Despite this intense pressure, we succeeded in ensuring that all three pillars of the supply management system remain firmly in place: production controls, pricing mechanisms and import controls.

More recently, we demonstrated our support for Canada's supply management system during the negotiation of the Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement, which did not include any new access for cheese or other supply-managed products, despite significant pressure from the United Kingdom.

Moreover, the government has publicly committed, and I stress this, to not provide any new market access for supply-managed products in future trade agreements. This policy has been clearly

and publicly stated by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Looking into the future, Bill C-282 makes our commitment to continue to preserve, protect and defend all three pillars of Canada's supply management system even stronger.

Furthermore, the government believes that ensuring greater involvement of the public, stakeholders and parliamentarians in Canada's trade agenda strengthens the defence and promotion of our broader economic interests, including supply-managed sectors. As such, we have increased transparency in the conduct of trade negotiations and we have enhanced reporting obligations to Parliament for all new trade agreements. In November 2020, we updated the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament to provide additional opportunities for members of Parliament to review the objectives and economic merits of new trade agreements.

Furthermore, our government will continue to preserve, protect and defend our supply management system in the context of any challenge by our trading partners. We are confident that we, Canada, are fully compliant in the implementation of our trade obligations, and we will vigorously defend our interests.

• (1125)

Let me reiterate the government's unequivocal commitment to maintain supply management as a pillar of strong and sustainable rural prosperity into the future. This matters. It matters to Canadian farmers. It matters to Canadian farmers in my region of Windsor—Essex.

We have tens of thousands of workers who work to drive our agricultural sector. Whether it is greenhouses or on the farms, this is absolutely critical to my region and also to Canadian farmers from coast to coast to coast. It is also important to Canadians. This is the foundation, as we heard today, of Canada's food security.

Bill C-282 is aligned with our commitment. For this reason, we support it. The government is fully committed to defending the integrity of supply management, while also continuing to pursue an ambitious trade agenda.

Mr. Kyle Seebach (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak to Bill C-282. On the Conservative side, we absolutely support supply management. We always have been.

In my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, there are many supply-managed farms, both in dairy and, of course, in eggs and poultry. I take the opportunity to visit those farms on a regular basis. The last break week, I visited dairy farms in my riding and I talked about the bill and the incredible contributions that they made not just to my riding of Dufferin—Caledon but all across Canada.

Private Members' Business

That being said, I really do have concerns with respect to the bill and a big part of it is that the bill has turned into a gigantic wedge issue with all the rest of the folks in the agriculture sector. Every agricultural sector outside of supply management has said it does not support the bill. These people are concerned about what the repercussions will be to their sector in any future trade agreement.

Why are they thinking that? When we take something off the table in a negotiation, then our negotiating partner will automatically take something off the table as well. If we are taking supply management off, and that is something our negotiating partner is interested in, it will take something off the table that Canada is interested in, and we end up with trade agreements that are less ambitious, less broad in scope and therefore have less economic prosperity for Canadians.

This is an example of who came to the committee to say they supported supply management. There are agricultural colleagues, our friends and neighbours, who are against this bill, such as the Canola Council of Canada; the Canadian Canola Growers Association; the International Cheese Council of Canada; the National Cattle Feeders' Association; the Canadian Cattle Association; CAFTA, which is the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance; Cereals Canada; just to name a few. They have all said that they think this bill will damage their opportunities to export their products around the world. They spoke very forcefully against the bill at committee.

What the bill has accomplished, to a large extent, is to pit one farmer against another, and that is truly unfortunate.

Government officials have also spoken against the legislation. When the bill was before the previous parliament it was Bill C-216, and there were several questions that were asked with respect to it. I will quote one section.

Mr. Doug Forsyth said:

If we were to end up with this bill as it is written, I think very much that we would start with a much smaller scope of negotiations with various partners. It wouldn't be unusual for them to say "That's fine. Canada has taken these issues right out of play. We will take issues that are of interest to Canada right out of play." Then you're talking about negotiating from a smaller pie...

That is exactly the concern I have raised. Canada is a free-trading nation. We rely on free trade, as 60% to 70% of our GDP comes from trade. We are a trading and exporting nation, and agricultural products are a huge bedrock of our exports. When every other agricultural sector is saying that it is concerned about what this is going to do with respect to its ability to export its products around the world and in negotiations for other free trade agreements, we should listen.

One of the things I tried to accomplish at committee was to have extra meetings to have trade experts come to say what they thought the impact of the bill would be with respect to negotiating future trade agreements, and the committee received letters from trade experts.

This is a snippet from a letter from Robert de Valk, who said:

Remember what Canada had to pay in 1989 to keep supply management off the table when the Canada-US Trade Agreement (CUSTA) was completed – increased access. Now all our trading partners can rightfully ask for compensation. The bill, unfortunately, may have the unintended consequence of putting the supply management sector in focus early in any future negotiations.

• (1130)

When we talk about future negotiations, our free trade agreement with the United States and Mexico, CUSMA, is under review at six years. We are three years away from that. With this bill passing, what happens if the United States says that it wants some additional access in supply managed industries? Under this bill it would be absolutely impossible. Then what happens? Are we going to blow up our entire free trade agreement with the United States and Mexico because of this legislation? These are the unintended potential consequences of the legislation.

At committee, I also asked government officials if we would have been able to successfully renegotiate NAFTA, which became CUSMA, if supply management was off the table? This was the answer, "Madam Chair, I was not a part of the negotiating teams for either of those negotiations. However, the stated policy of the Canadian government during both of those negotiations was that" supply management was off the table and that they would "make no concessions. Therefore, having ultimately determined that such concessions were necessary, I can only conclude that failing to do so would have put the deal at jeopardy."

This is what we would be looking at if we pass legislation like this. We are potentially putting other trade deals at jeopardy with respect to one sector of the Canadian economy. I find this absolutely troubling.

However, if we take away the challenges with future deals and if we take away the challenges with the review of CUSMA, or USMCA, whatever we want to call it, those are big, extraordinary challenges as a result of this.

Let us look at it in a broader context. Our largest trading partner is the United States, with 70% of our trade going to the United States. We have two major trade irritants with the United States right now.

First, on softwood lumber, \$8 billion worth of duties have been collected as a result of the softwood lumber dispute. This has been going on for eight years, with no progress at all on resolving it.

Second, country of origin labelling for beef is percolating in the United States again. It would have devastating impacts for Canadian cattle.

If we go to the United States and say that we want to try to resolve these things, I think it will say, especially with beef, that we have just protected an entire swath of our agricultural sector and it will want to know why the United States can not go forward with its country of origin labelling.

The bill would give the United States a hammer to hit us with in negotiations, to try to resolve the trade irritants that we have now. These are the unintended consequences of passing this legislation.

Private Members' Business

We can support supply management without the legislation. Our country has done it. In all the free trade agreements we have around the world, there is only a couple where access has been granted on supply management. When that access was granted, Canadian producers were compensated financially.

When we look at the statistics on farm gate proceeds, for example, with respect to dairy, actual production of milk has gone up despite access that has been granted. Therefore, farm gate receipts have gone up despite access being granted.

If access is granted, we could compensate those who are affected. Also, because the Canadian population is growing, the Canadian economy is growing, so they still produce more, sell more and make more money. The system as it is exists very well. It is not, as we keep hearing, the first thing on the negotiating table in a free trade agreement. It is the absolute last thing. It is the only thing that would get done, because if we did not, we could not get a deal.

Imagine, if this bill was in place when we were trying to renegotiate NAFTA with the United States and the United States demanded more access in supply management. It is very interested in it, because we have disputes under USMCA with respect to how it applies tariff-reduced quota in the dairy sector. We know it is important to the United States. We would not have a deal, and government officials very clearly said that.

The intention of the bill is good. We should protect supply management. I understand why farmers are nervous and frustrated, because the government has not negotiated good deals, like CPTPP. The original TPP granted less access in supply management. The Liberal government came along and gave up so much more in CPTPP. However, the bill would have unintended consequences that would not be good for Canada and the Canadian economy.

• (1135)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise, not only as the NDP's agriculture critic but also as the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and for all of the supply-managed farms in my beautiful riding to offer my full-throated support of Bill C-282. Just as a quick review for people to catch up, this bill is seeking to amend the existing statute, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act.

A quick reminder is that the act, in one of its important sections, spells out the powers, duties and functions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. For example, the act specifies that the minister conduct all diplomatic and consular relations on behalf of Canada and foster the expansion of Canada's international trade and commerce, etc. Bill C-282 would add a new clause into that act to specify that the minister must not make any commitment on behalf of the Government of Canada that would have the effect of increasing the tariff rate quota or reducing the tariff that is applicable to goods in that category, which are two very important aspects. I will lay out reasons why.

First of all, I want to say that I am proud to be a member of a party that has long stood by our supply-managed farmers and continues to do so up to this day. We absolutely recognize that supply management as a system protects our family farms and our rural

communities and protects and promotes hundreds of thousands of jobs. Its economic impact in communities like mine is huge. It rests on three pillars; I have heard the expression "the three-legged stool". Of course, we know that with a three-legged stool, if one is to affect any one of the legs the whole system collapses and they are all necessary to stand up and maintain the system.

Those three pillars are production control, pricing mechanisms and import control. Under supply management, we have a national marketing agency that determines the production amounts for each commodity and sets production quotas for each of our provinces. We also know that our supply-managed producers are guaranteed a minimum price for their products. Those provincial marketing boards allow them to negotiate the minimum farm gate prices with the processors of their products.

The third pillar, which is the key theme of today's discussion, is import control. The way we regulate import control is through tariffs on foreign imports. Tariffs are applied whenever foreign imports in a supply-managed sector exceed the allowable quantity and then they are subject to a massive tariff that essentially makes them uncompetitive. For each of our main products, whether in dairy, eggs, poultry or turkey, successive trade deals have whittled away at that important pillar and now we do allow import of some foreign products in each of those categories up to a certain amount, after which they are subjected to a high tariff.

The system has proven itself time and time again over decades of use. It offers important stability for producers, processors, service providers and retailers. It allows our federal and provincial governments to avoid subsidizing those sectors directly. That is in strict contrast to our competitors both in the United States and in the European Union.

I need to underline this point: Supply management protects the taxpayer because we avoid subsidizing the industry. It allows farmers in those sectors to actually make a good income and to innovate and invest in their respective farms. That is in stark contrast to the wild price fluctuations we have seen south of the border in the United States, in particular, where overproduction has led to dire economic circumstances for many of the farms, particularly in the dairy sector. The same goes for the European Union. That is where taxpayer funds are used to directly subsidize those industries. That is in stark contrast to the system that we have here in Canada whereby supply management allows the system to survive without that direct intervention.

I know some of the criticisms out there. We have heard it time and time again, particularly from the OECD, which has said that supply management stifles innovation. However, we know that is not true.

Private Members' Business

• (1140)

In many of the farms I have visited in my own riding, particularly the dairy operations, the technology in use in those operations is state of the art. It is that way because the farmers who operate those systems have had the guaranteed income and they know they can make the investment by betting against future incomes. They have been able to innovate, they have been able to invest; they have been able to make their operations world class and the envy of many nations around the world.

I talked about the economic impacts. I referenced the economic impacts in my own riding. If we look country-wide, for example, in 2021, Canada had 9,403 dairy farms. Production and processing of dairy products contributes to 221,000 jobs and nearly \$20 billion to Canada's GDP every single year. The same year for poultry and egg farms, we had 5,296 farms. Production and processing of poultry and eggs contributes more than 100,000 jobs and over \$8.5 billion to Canada's GDP. Therefore, the economic impact of this sector is significant and it matters to many communities.

Now, let us look at how Bill C-282 fared at the international trade committee. I do want to take time to recognize my fellow NDP colleague, the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, who helped shepherd that bill through committee on my behalf. That was some great work on his part to get the bill to this stage. That committee had six meetings. About 45 witnesses came forward and testified. As a result of that testimony there were a number of amendments proposed to the bill. None were successful, so ultimately the version of the bill that we see before us today is the same that the House gave voice to at second reading.

I want to outline some of the testimony that we heard at committee because I have heard other members reference this.

One of the important testimonies that we heard was from Mr. Tom Rosser, who is the assistant deputy minister of the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food. He said:

The Government of Canada is working hard to ensure that the supply management system remains strong and that producers and processors operating in the system remain productive and sustainable.

Bill C-282 would protect these sectors from additional market access concessions in the context of future trade negotiations, and as such is fully consistent with existing policy.

We had Mr. Keith Currie, someone I have become very familiar with and worked with over the years. He is now, of course, the president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. He said:

Canada's three most recent trade agreements have had a considerable impact on supply-managed farm families and the system that supports them. It's our hope this new legislation will encourage Canada's negotiators to look to other negotiating strategies that do not place one agriculture sector against another, and instead focus our energy on issues that unite us, such as reducing non-tariff trade barriers.

The interesting thing about this bill as I wrap up here, is that the vote on sending the bill back to the House was an interesting one because both the Liberal and Conservative caucuses were split. We had the Liberal member for Nepean vote against sending this bill back to the House and we had a Conservative member from Oshawa and a Conservative member from Dufferin—Caledon also vote against sending this bill back to the House. It is interesting to see the splits that exist in both the Liberal and Conservative caucus-

es. I am very curious to see the final vote on this bill when we come to third reading.

I understand, of course, that there were a number of objections raised to the bill about this being a non-tariff trade barrier, that it constrains Canada's ability to negotiate the best possible deal, but I will again say this. We have been let down successively three times back in the 42nd Parliament. I was there. Despite the government's promises that it was fully in support of supply management, three successive trade deals undermined that important pillar of import control. I see this bill as just pretty much a legislative guarantee that, despite a government's best intentions and words, this bill is going to insert a legislative guarantee in an important act to ensure that our supply management sectors enjoy that solid protection.

With that I will conclude and again reiterate that New Democrats will support this bill. I would like to thank the member for Montcalm for bringing it forward. I look forward to seeing its successful passage to the other place.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am going to take a deep breath and start my speech at the end. I am sick and tired of hearing members claim that they support supply management and then telling us, in the same 10-minute speech, that no one supports this bill and that members should not vote in favour of it—

• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will ask the member to start his speech again because his microphone was off.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I was saying that I was going to take a deep breath before I spoke, to try to curb my emotions, and that I was going to start my speech from the end. I am sick and tired of hearing members claim that they support supply-managed farmers, that they think they are important, that they want to protect them and that they are committed to looking after them, but then refuse to actually protect them. They are talking out of both sides of their mouth. They cannot say they are going to protect farmers and not do it.

Then they wonder why the public is cynical about politicians. I am so sick of this. Last time, the House voted overwhelmingly in favour of this bill. We cannot expect the same result this time because perhaps not as many members of a certain political party, by which I mean the Conservative Party, will vote for it. However, I know there are some Conservative members who believe in supply management, so I would ask them to stick with us and vote with us. I know they understand that this is a good bill.

The government needs to stop sending farmers mixed messages by saying it will protect them and then not doing it. Neither farmers nor voters believe that anymore. I have some news for everyone: That strategy is not going to work anymore. It worked for decades, but not anymore. People want action. Supply management means the three pillars and a bunch of other things, but it is mostly about the vitality of our regions. This protects small businesses.

Private Members' Business

I believe it was the member for Dufferin—Caledon who said in his speech that other farmers wanted to export and did not support supply management. We in the Bloc Québécois support all farmers, and we support their choice of marketing model. We do this out of respect for the people who get up every morning to feed us.

The government cannot tell these people that it is spoiling them and that it respects them and at the same time say that it is afraid that if it has to renegotiate CUSMA and this bill has passed, it will not be able to give them any more. That is the pretext it uses for not voting in favour of the bill while still saying it will protect farmers. Come on. Does the government really think anyone is going to fall for that?

Seriously, I do not know how those people opposite sleep at night. Maybe it is by ignoring others and repeating their own talking points over and over in their heads. This bill is essential. It is important and extremely simple. It will exclude agricultural products that are subject to supply management.

I heard the member say that he was afraid that supply-managed agricultural products would be excluded during negotiations. That is exactly what this bill will do. He should not be afraid: That is the whole point of the bill.

We will adopt this bill because we are in the majority, and I expect the same thing to happen in the Senate. We will collaborate with our colleagues in the Senate to explain the merits of this bill to the other members and explain how badly farmers need it.

If the government continues to say that it is going to protect supply management and help farmers, but that it can hang onto them to use as a bargaining chip, that means that it is going to put them on the table during future negotiations. It already lopped an arm off our farmers, but next time, it will be a leg. How can they keep farming after that?

A supply-managed market is a balanced market in which the quantity produced and the price are controlled. According to carefully targeted market studies, in order to obtain a stable, reasonable price and a high-quality product, it is essential to control what comes in from outside. That is the third pillar, the third leg of the stool that the member from Montcalm was talking about earlier. The government needs to stop cutting off this third leg, because the stool will fall over. It will not work anymore.

What I am hearing from the Conservatives this morning is that they clearly intend to eliminate the supply management system, but little by little. They want to do it by lying to agricultural producers, saying that they love them and want to protect them, but they will lay them on the sacrificial altar as soon as they get the chance. I suspect the Conservatives' plan is to take away the system that our farmers put in place, to steal the value of their quotas. Do members know how much quotas are worth?

What the member for Dufferin—Caledon told supply-managed farmers across Canada, including those in his riding, is not to worry because they will quietly disappear. They will become pro-free trade and pro-big businesses converts.

• (1155)

What he does not understand, so I will explain it to him, is that all the small family farms come together to form one big company. That big company is created through solidarity, through joint marketing. This way, small businesses are assured of a stable, recurring income that they can use to innovate and make constant investments.

It is often falsely claimed that this encourages inefficiency, but that is not true in the least. Our farmers have lowered their greenhouse gas emissions in recent years. They have done amazingly well. They are still investing. However, by continuing to take market share away from them, the government is telling them that maybe they should stop making investments. It has the opposite effect. Basically, the government is telling them the same thing the member for Dufferin—Caledon was telling supply-managed farmers earlier. It is telling them to hurry up and sell their quotas while they are still worth something.

I apologize for not being as calm and collected as usual this morning, but when I hear things like this, I am outraged. It is baloney, it is pure nonsense. Members say one true thing and the opposite. It is preposterous. Farmers and the public are fed up with all this bullshit. We need the truth.

Oh, I cannot say that word. It just slipped out. I apologize.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the member to be good enough to apologize.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, farmers and the public are sick and tired of getting messed around, to put it more politely and, I think, more acceptably.

I have said it again and again, but promises have to be backed up by action. This has happened more than once. How many motions have been adopted here? How many motions have been adopted in Quebec's National Assembly? They were always unanimous. In subsequent negotiations, however, market share was lost.

The member for Dufferin—Caledon talked about other agricultural sectors. This morning, I would like to speak to all farmers and let them know that I will protect all agricultural sectors. I hope they know it. If they are not convinced, they are welcome to contact me so that we can discuss the matter. As far as future negotiations and market developments go, I will respect their decision on export-oriented marketing. I believe in it.

I recently went on a trade mission with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to two different places to talk about international trade. I was there to represent farmers who want to export. However, this does not mean I have to work against the interests of my supply-managed farmers. Quite the contrary. I think both realities can coexist. In fact, they have done so very well since the 1970s. The problem is that the existing system is under attack.

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

BILL S-5—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That in relation to Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the third reading stage of the said bill; and

That fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at report stage and on the day allotted to the consideration at the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before this House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

[English]

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

• (1205)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, we find ourselves in a situation, with increasing frequency, where the government seems completely unable to manage its agenda. While members of the House want to be able to debate legislation and bring their concerns to the floor of the House of Commons on behalf of Canadians, the government seems unwilling or unable to allow that debate to unfold. Here again, we have the government using the sledgehammer of time allocation. It does not matter if the official opposition agrees or does not agree with the bill; the government does not even want members to have their say.

Why is it with this, just like with the government's failure to appoint an interim or permanent Ethics Commissioner, that Canadians always pay the price? Canadians want members to be able to debate, and Canadians want officers of Parliament to be appointed in a timely way. In this case, we find ourselves unable to do that. Why is this the case?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to speak about the extensive study and debate, and indeed, amendments that have been proposed and deliberated on, for this particular piece of legislation.

It is time to get serious. I look forward to the vote. If anyone has an issue with my speech, I invite them to respond. I am willing to take feedback and even chat to anyone who wants to contact me. I would be glad to. It is vital to walk the talk. That is key. Some members are accusing us of being divisive, but nothing could be further from the truth. I just proved it. They are the ones who are being divisive by claiming that the bill will hurt other sectors. I do not believe that.

The WTO rules allow each state to protect certain key sectors. The United States does it, and so does Japan. Many countries do it, and we have the right to do it.

Some people have mentioned softwood lumber and things like that. Rolling over is not going to get us more respect. We need to stand up for ourselves.

Speaking of softwood lumber, I would like to remind this House that Quebec changed its public forest management system and it should not be affected by its American partner. Maybe the rest of the country needs to follow suit. Maybe Canada needs to take a stand.

I am asking members to support the bill. I am also asking members to stop using doublespeak. If they are against the bill, they should own that and say so.

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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*[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, during the debate on business of supply pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) later today:

- (a) the time provided for consideration of the Main Estimates in committee of the whole be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 16 periods of 15 minutes each;
- (b) members rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with one or more other members; and
- (c) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. Agreed.

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

Hearing none, the motion is carried.

(Motion agreed to)

Government Orders

There were 105 written briefs to the Senate committee, 50 hours of study of the bill, the oral testimony of 80 witnesses, over 306 amendments tabled between the Senate and the House committee, and 38 clauses amended as a result of this careful deliberation.

This bill has had extensive and robust debate and study, and now it is time for us to move so we can protect the environment for generations to come.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, to hear the Conservatives complain about time allocation is incredibly rich given what we saw from the Harper government. When a government bill was being debated in the House for the very first time, the Harper government would give notice of time allocation on that same day. The Conservative Party has no leg to stand on when it comes to this particular issue.

Ultimately, this bill started its journey in the Senate. We are now at third reading. We are at a stage where members have acquainted themselves quite well with this bill. I think it has some very important aspects, and I am proud of how our team was able to strengthen the bill.

For this particular bill, with the ways the New Democrats strengthened it, it is important for the House to arrive at a decision so members can make their opinions known on it. Could the minister expand on some of the reasons for this?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite and the NDP for their very thoughtful collaboration on this piece of legislation. It has been extremely important to hear the perspectives of all members, but we appreciate the thoughtfulness of the proposed amendments and the collaborative way in which the party opposite has worked with the government to strengthen the approach.

When we pass this legislation, the outcomes we are all hoping for are better protections and a healthy environment for all Canadians. There are many stories across the country where Canadians' environmental protection has not been considered. In fact, as Minister of Indigenous Services, I have many examples I can and will share through this time period.

There are examples of communities with drinking water that has been irreversibly damaged and contaminated. There are long-standing health conditions relating to environmental contamination; this not only results in ongoing suffering and premature death but also millions, if not billions, of dollars spent to try to ameliorate that contamination.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, moments ago, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes was talking about things that Canadians want in terms of democracy and people having the ability to represent their constituents in debate.

Something else that Canadians want is an opposition that actually does its job; they want an opposition that comes into the House of Commons and does not only criticize and attack individuals all day long, but instead, tries to improve legislation and policy. They want an opposition that respects the fact that once a debate has gone through its natural course, it should eventually be voted on

and not used as a bargaining tool to try to move absolutely anything in this House along.

Can the minister comment on the extensive work that has been done to this point? How much has taken place? Why is it important to move this piece of legislation forward now?

• (1210)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, there was more debate on this bill than there was for the budget implementation act. As I mentioned earlier, we had 105 written briefs, 50 hours of study of the bill through the Senate committee, the oral testimony of 80 witnesses, over 200 amendments tabled through the Senate, an additional 106 amendments tabled through the House committee, and 38 clauses out of almost 70 clauses amended. This really does show the level of debate.

The government was listening. There were reasonable and thoughtful amendments that were proposed by members opposite and supported by the government. Each day, Canadians across the country are having their environment degraded by the release of toxic chemicals. Extreme health hazards, which have very detrimental effects, are also being created in a number of other ways.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is kind of bizarre. We agree with this bill. We have indicated that we will support it. However, we are back at a place where the government cannot manage the proceedings of this place. If it could manage the clock and the calendar better, then we would not have the closure that we have here today. We talked about how this place should work. There is a belief I have and hold dear, which is that the more we can debate and ask questions about a piece of legislation coming through here, the better it is.

How does the minister justify moving closure on a bill that could be improved even more if we had the debate that is prescribed in this place?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me say how happy I am to hear that the official opposition will support this bill. This is very important and should be celebrated, because this bill is about protecting the health of Canadians and it is about moving forward, as the member opposite mentioned, thoughtfully but also with a certain speed at which Canadians expect us to move.

This bill was introduced in February 2022. Since that time, there have been extensive study, interventions, amendments proposed, amendments deliberated upon and amendments accepted. Canadians, of course, expect thoughtful debate, which all that I just mentioned demonstrates, I believe, but they also expect this place to act. They expect us to take that study and that debate and implement law that would protect the right to a healthy environment, an environment free from contamination.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask specifically about the amendments at report stage. The David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice, Environmental Defence, Breast Cancer Action Quebec and the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment have all written to the government and urged members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to support these amendments at report stage. They are also urging us to pass this legislation, so I am glad we are moving forward and will have support from parties to pass it.

Government Orders

I am wondering whether the member supports both the amendment I have tabled, to ensure “tailings ponds” is added back into the Environmental Protection Act, and also the amendments on genetically modified organisms. I would love to hear her thoughts.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I know that this member has had a lot of input on this legislation, which is in a very robust form as a result of the many deliberations and studies, and the amendments proposed, including by the member opposite. For me, as Minister of Indigenous Services Canada, ensuring that people have the right to water and land that is uncontaminated is top of mind. I know this legislation would get us a long way in that direction.

There is nothing more tragic than meeting with a community that has no access to the freshwater body right next to it. Let us take Tataskweyak Cree Nation, for example, where the lake the people have lived beside for generations is now poisoned, for lack of a better word, and in fact is causing a number of health concerns in the community. Children are no longer allowed to swim in the lake. They routinely find dead wildlife in that lake. We can do better, and this legislation would bring us a long way toward that goal.

• (1215)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I always find it interesting to hear the NDP chastising the opposition on how the opposition should function. Actually, it was the government saying that we should be doing something different, and then it was the NDP actually supporting the government. Some things are mixed up. The only party in the House that understands its role right now is the Conservative Party in opposition.

I would just like to bring Canadians back to 2015 and the way the Prime Minister came to power. This minister was part of that government of sunny ways. Do members remember that saying? Everything was going to be different. These guys were going to be open, they were never going to invoke closure and they were going to have a whole different way of doing business in Parliament.

I have a really simple question for the minister. What happened to the sunny ways?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for reminding us of a great year, 2015, when the Liberals were elected and we saw a return to government that was really about the protection of people's environment. It was about making sure everybody has a fair chance to succeed. I am happy to say to the member that I believe this legislation and the process of getting to the place where we are today have been very collaborative.

In fact, the NDP is right. Collaboration is what Canadians expect of us in this place. Of course it is a place for rigorous debate. Of course it is a place for us to air our thoughts about how we strengthen legislation to get to its goal, how we protect Canadians' right to a healthy environment and how we strengthen everybody's chance to have a healthy and fulfilling life and path. This bill and, I believe, this motion for closure actually demonstrate the robustness of that debate. February 2022 is when this legislation was introduced. There have been 105 written briefs, 50 hours of study, 80 witnesses' oral testimonies, over 306 amendments introduced and, indeed, 38

clauses out of 70 amended. This shows the level of debate and collaboration we have been able to achieve in this place.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to highlight the fact, which I really appreciate, that the minister opposite said that the NDP is right. I love to hear that and I would love to hear it some more.

Some of the report stage amendments in the bill are actually looking to require the government to engage in indigenous and public consultations in regard to the introduction of new living organisms, including those genetically engineered, which my colleague was asking about. I do not think the minister had a chance to answer, and I would really like her to respond to that as well.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, first of all, as it would happen, most of us are right at least once in a while, and I am always happy to give credit where credit is due.

In terms of indigenous consultation, I want to reflect on Natan Obed's remarks at the Inuit-Crown partnership committee meeting, which I had the incredible, immense honour of attending over the past week in Nain, Labrador. Indeed, President Obed said that no government has done more for indigenous persons than this one has. This reflects the ongoing work and commitment of the Prime Minister, and indeed the government, to place reconciliation at the forefront of what we do, and to ensure that, as we proceed through the House, we are including indigenous voices, consulting indigenous peoples and strengthening law that makes it a requirement for indigenous voices to be consulted and indigenous rights to be respected. The UN declaration that was passed through the House last year is a testimony to that, and I look forward to the action plan that my colleague, the Minister of Justice, will be bringing forward.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister has spoken quite a bit about water contamination in indigenous communities, including one in my riding, Grassy Narrows, which the minister knows quite well. The community has been advocating for a mercury treatment centre for decades. There was a lot of relief and excitement, shortly after 2019, when there was an agreement reached to see this treatment centre come to fruition, but we still have not seen action, all these years later. There are now concerns that there are delays because of rising construction costs and the bureaucracy of government.

I would like to give the minister an opportunity to shed some light on the process that has played out in terms of the mercury treatment centre in Grassy Narrows, and to ask her if she can tell us definitively when the government will keep its promise and deliver that treatment centre for the people of Grassy Narrows.

• (1220)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, it is great to hear the member opposite get up to advocate for an indigenous community in his riding, and I have spoken with him a number of times about communities in his riding. It is important that we advocate for the most vulnerable communities.

Government Orders

Grassy Narrows is a perfect example of why we need speed in passing this legislation. We cannot have any more situations like the one in Grassy Narrows. We cannot have any more situations where people are being contaminated, often without their knowing. We can look at how, just recently, Imperial Oil is affecting the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Mikisew Cree First Nation. These are tragedies that are preventable, and that is what this legislation would attempt to get at, which is to protect the right to a healthy environment for all Canadians, no matter how remote.

On the subject of the Grassy Narrows treatment centre, I am pleased to report to the member opposite that I met with Chief Turtle and his consulting group last week, and that we do have a path forward to address the ongoing need for the treatment centre.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, just so Canadians understand what we are debating right now, this is a matter of moving forward with legislation that everybody in the House, to my understanding, supports, including the Conservatives. We have had an incredible amount of debate, both here and in the Senate, in regard to this piece of legislation.

To be completely honest, the outrage that we normally get from the Conservatives when it comes to a time allocation motion is extremely lacklustre with respect to this one. It is almost as though they are just coming out and doing what they always do, but they do not even have the energy or the passion for crying foul when it comes to an affront on democracy that we are used to seeing in these circumstances.

Can the minister confirm whether she believes that the amount of debate to this point has been exhaustive and extensive, and that it is now time for the House to come to a vote on the matter?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I could repeat the numbers that I have given over the last minutes, but I will just say that I do believe that we have had rigorous debate on this piece of legislation, which, by the way, Canadians are waiting for.

We have heard a number of members raise different environmental disasters. In fact, the bill would attempt to prevent those, and it would recognize the right to a healthy environment. It would strengthen the foundation for the management of chemicals and other substances. There have been 38 clauses amended, out of nearly 70 clauses, and this is over a long time period.

Canadians do expect rigorous debate in this place; I know that and I hear that from my constituents. However, they also expect us to act, and that is what today is about. Today is about taking that debate and putting it into motion so Canadians can have confidence that this place is doing the work they expect of it.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the minister's bringing up the idea of it being time to act.

I have a simple question for the minister. Would the bill prevent the dumping of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence River so we could have a clean water system at the St. Lawrence?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I am happy to hear the member opposite talk about the many different ways environments can be degraded. As I said, in a nutshell, this act would recognize a right to a healthy environment and strengthen the foundation for the

management of chemicals and other substances. It would impose a duty on the government to protect that right and to uphold related principles.

I will just say that many of these tragedies we are talking about are decades old, yet people are still living with the environmental impacts to this day. I was speaking with people in Grassy Narrows last week about the ongoing contamination of water and about the life that many of the residents have, in living with mercury poisoning. These are conversations that should alarm us all and compel us to act quickly, and that is what today is about.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, today is a day of contradictions.

I just heard the minister say that the public expects us to engage in debate, while at the same time, we are presented with a gag order.

We support the bill. Our issue is not with the bill. Our issue is with the debate, with our ability to give bills deeper consideration and potentially enhance them.

Once again, what is the rationale underlying this time allocation? Why is the opposition always being silenced? I would like the minister to give us a clearer explanation.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, on the contrary, this has been a robust debate with opportunities for all members of the House to have their say, whether through debate or through participation on committees. In fact, in the House, for example, 106 amendments were tabled and 38 clauses out of 70 were accepted. It shows the level of debate, that there were over 306 amendments in total between the Senate and the House of Commons and that so many of those amendments were accepted.

This is an example of the House doing its due diligence in studying this legislation. Now it is time to act.

● (1225)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister for talking about how there really is no time to waste on this. I wanted to raise my hands to the member for Victoria for wanting to do something more around labelling. Yesterday, the news in British Columbia was talking about breast cancer. One in eight women in this country will go through breast cancer, and it is coming earlier and earlier. Now, early in their 40s, more women are getting breast cancer. For years, the government has allowed corporations to hide which toxic substances are in the products we all use. We need mandatory labelling of hazardous substances.

My question to the minister this. When will the Liberals stop siding with big corporations and start protecting human health?

Government Orders

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for talking about the need to have stringent requirements for corporations to not pollute the environment, which not just our generation but also the generations to follow will rely on. This is an important part of that. This legislation would recognize the right to a healthy environment and impose a duty on the government to protect that right and uphold related principles. It would require ministers to develop an implementation framework within two years and to conduct research to support the protection of the right. The legislation is expected to support strong environmental and health standards now and in the future, and there would be a ton of opportunity, through this legislation, to strengthen the rights to a healthy environment and to strengthen the foundation for the management of chemicals and other substances that have deleterious health effects for so many Canadians.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government has become well known for making a promise and then delivering something completely different from what it had promised. I think we could see the Prime Minister as the Harry Houdini prime minister, holding up something here, and then, poof, with some sleight of hand, delivering something completely different. I think there are many Canadians who are starting to see behind the veil and understand that those magic tricks are not really so magical after. In listening to the minister today, responding to some of the questions that she had been asked previously, I see that played out very clearly in front of our eyes.

I would like to follow up, in two parts, on some of the things we have already heard about. The government is one that came in saying it would never implement closure, or time allocation. Just so Canadians understand what that means, it means cutting off debate and taking away the voice of a member of Parliament to be able to voice their constituents' concerns. That is what the government is doing, and it has done that dozens, in fact hundreds, of times. I wonder if the minister could actually answer that question.

I also heard a member ask whether the bill would do anything to prevent the dumping of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence, and I did not hear an answer. I heard the minister talk about everything else, which is a very typical Liberal way to approach things: to talk about everything else in order to deflect from the fact that the Liberals are not doing things that Canadians expect of them. Maybe the minister could actually try answering the question. Would the bill prevent raw sewage from being dumped into the St. Lawrence?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I will note that the member opposite's party is expected to support this bill. That is an indication of how important this is to all constituents across the country. Canadians, regardless of the party and the member of Parliament who represent them in their riding, want stronger protections for the environment. That is what the government has consistently delivered.

In fact, we are the only government that, for example, has imposed a price on pollution, something that the member opposite's leader now opposes.

Canadians know that the climate is changing. They know we have significant challenges ahead, and this is an important piece of legislation that will protect the rights of Canadians to a healthy environment. I think Canadians expect us to act quickly.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I take note that this debate on a time allocation motion about an environmental protection act really has nothing to do with the issue the Conservatives keep raising.

The only thing they can talk about, when it has to do with the environment, is Montreal and what it does with its sewage system. If they really wanted to help Montreal, perhaps they would talk about helping Montreal with infrastructure to upgrade the capacity, so it is no longer put in those types of situations.

That seems to be the go-to when it is anything related to the environment. We are talking about a piece of legislation that will significantly overhaul the way we look at environmental protection in our country for generations to come. I am wondering if the minister can talk about, and I know that she already has, and highlight some of the specifics of what this legislation will do to improve the quality of life of Canadians for generations to come.

• (1230)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, after travelling around the country visiting with indigenous communities over the past two years, the most heartbreaking aspect is visiting a community that has seen a significant degradation of its environment related to industrial activity.

We do not have to look very far. These are communities in northern Ontario. I know some members have never been there, but when one visits the community, one sees environmental pollution, and one could say environmental racism. There are people living there, and they have a right to a healthy environment, just like everyone in Montreal, Toronto, Windsor and Thunder Bay does, for that matter.

This legislation is important. It is important to make sure that we do not have an out-of-sight, out-of-mind perspective when it comes to environmental rights. This legislation helps to get us there.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister spoke about the need for the government to listen to indigenous communities. The AFN wrote to the government and provided recommendations.

The first recommendation was to include the words “future generations” in the protection of the right to a healthy environment. We heard the same recommendation from indigenous leaders at committee. Giving future generations a right to a healthy environment is not only a critical step forward to protect human health and the environment, but also an important way to listen and act on the recommendations from indigenous leaders.

I tabled an amendment to reflect that request, but the government voted it down. I am wondering if the minister can speak to why.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, the record of the government on environmental law and protections for the future generations is something that all Canadians have noted. In fact, our environmental plan is about protecting the future generations.

Government Orders

It is about our part as Canada to reduce emissions, transition to a clean economy make sure that everybody has an opportunity to benefit from that clean economy. We have to do so, even though those conversations are hard. That is what this debate has been. This has been hours and hours of debate, more than there were for the budget implementation act. This has been about extensive study, many written submissions and many oral submissions.

I look forward to working with the member opposite and, indeed, all parties, to make sure that, as we implement this legislation, we breathe full life into it, so that every Canadian can see themselves reflected.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I have been listening, I have heard there “is no time to waste”, that we have a right to a clean environment and that this is “a duty”.

We have to uphold the principles of a clean environment for Canadians and our indigenous people, for sure. I am confused that this legislation did not come until February 2022, and it has taken this long and multiple amendments to what clearly must have been a sorely lacking piece of legislation.

It is important that we get to spend the time we need to make sure that it is done right. I would ask the member how it is that this has suddenly become a priority and, unfortunately, came in as such a weak bill in the first place.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member referred to “our indigenous people”.

The member for Winnipeg Centre has raised this point a number of times in the House, requesting members to not use possessive language. Indigenous people do not belong to the members of the House, so I would ask the member to use different language.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, it is not possessive language. It is recognition of—

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is debate. This has been requested by an indigenous member of the House.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to answer this question. There was, weirdly, an imposing premise in the question that, one, it took the government too long to get here and, two, the government was rushing through this legislation.

Let me just address this. Unlike the previous Conservatives government under Stephen Harper, which introduced water legislation on a first nation without any consultation with first nations people, the Liberal government takes its time to ensure that it hears all perspectives before tabling important legislation like this.

I am thrilled to support this legislation, and I know that many others in this House are. I am thankful for the time today.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forth-

with the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

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.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 321*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Dubourg	Duguid
Dzerowicz	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis

Government Orders

Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Kelly	Kmieć
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Lametti	Lamoureux	Kurek	Kusie
Lapointe	Lattanzio	Lake	Lantsman
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Larouche	Lawrence
Lebouthillier	Lightbound	Lehoux	Lemire
Long	Longfield	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Liepert	Lloyd
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Lobb	Maguire
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Martel	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Martinez Ferrada	Mathysen	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)	McLean	Melillo
McGuinty	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Michaud	Moore
McLeod	McPherson	Morantz	Morrice
Mendès	Mendicino	Morrison	Motz
Miao	Miller	Muys	Nater
Morrissey	Murray	Normandin	O'Toole
Naqvi	Ng	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Noormohamed	O'Connell	Pauzé	Perkins
Oliphant	O'Regan	Perron	Plamondon
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski	Poilievre	Rayes
Qualtrough	Robillard	Redekopp	Reid
Rodriguez	Rogers	Rempel Garner	Richards
Romanado	Sajjan	Roberts	Rood
Saks	Samson	Ruff	Scheer
Sarai	Scarpaleggia	Schmale	Seeback
Schiefke	Serré	Shields	Shiple
Sgro	Shanahan	Simard	Small
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Soroka	Steinley
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh	Ste-Marie	Stewart
Sorbara	Sousa	Stubbs	Thériault
St-Onge	Sudds	Therrien	Thomas
Tassi	Taylor Roy	Tochor	Tolmie
Thompson	Turnbull	Trudel	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen	Van Popta	Vecchio
van Koeverden	Vandal	Vidal	Vien
Vandenbeld	Virani	Viersen	Vignola
Weiler	Wilkinson	Villemure	Vis
Yip	Zahid	Vuong	Wagantall
Zarrillo	Zuberi— 168	Warkentin	Waugh
		Webber	Williams
		Williamson	Zimmer— 142

NAYS

Members

Aitchison	Albas
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Jeneroux

PAIRED

Members

Aboultouf	Blois
Drouin	Duclos
Ehsassi	Falk (Provencher)
Généreux	Hoback
Jones	Liepert
McKay	Savard-Tremblay— 12

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

I wish to inform the House that, because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, Government Orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

Government Orders

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and support this legislation, Bill S-5. I understand, from what I have been told, that all members of the House recognize its value and are in favour of supporting it. As the House will know, it is a substantive piece of legislation.

It has been a long time since we have seen substantial changes to our environmental laws, which is the essence of what Bill S-5 would do. In many ways, it would make substantive changes that would modernize the law and make a very powerful statement to all Canadians. They have a right to a healthy environment. The essence of Bill S-5 is about ensuring that Canadians recognize they have a right to a healthy environment.

What is interesting is the process that has brought us to where we are today. The legislation has been thoroughly debated in different committees, both at the Senate and at the House of Commons, and it has already had a substantial number of amendments. During the years I was in opposition, it was rare to see amendments, unless of course they were government amendments, but when we think of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, there is a serious problem. The interpretation is not working. Perhaps some headsets are not working properly. Can that be checked?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The interpretation seems to be working.

[*English*]

However, there was a lot of noise in the House, so maybe we can try to keep the noise down so we can all listen to the proceedings.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I was referencing the fact that what we have today is very solid legislation. In good part, it is because of all the efforts that have been put into making this legislation what it is today. We could go back to the department and the consultations of hundreds, if not thousands, of Canadians and different stakeholders, all contributing to the original legislation, which went through the Senate. The idea was that by having it go through Senate we would get it passed in a more timely fashion.

The Senate did a fantastic job, as did the House of Commons and colleagues who sit on the standing committee for the House. I referred to the numerous amendments that were proposed.

The Prime Minister has indicated that when we bring in legislation and if there are things we can do to give strength to the legislation as a government, we are open to doing that. It does not have to

be a government amendment, and Bill S-5 is a clear demonstration of that. Members from all political parties contributed to the debate and dialogue and listened to the presentations, and many amendments ultimately were accepted. When I started my comments, I was pleased to recognize that members on all sides of the House, like the Senate, would be passing the legislation.

As a parliamentarian over the years, I have seen more people becoming concerned about our environment and what we are doing about it. It is a legitimate concern among Canadians, and it is a growing concern.

When we think about the legislation, we can talk about the toxic substances in the environment. We can talk about how the legislation would set up a better regime for the management of chemicals, or how it would modernize that, or how it would put in place a system that would allow for the science of today to be applied in many different ways with regard to our environment and the types of policy decisions being made. We ultimately will be passing and environmental protection law. All of this will have a significant impact, but it is not just this legislation.

For many years now, we have taken an approach to deal with the environment from both a legislative perspective and a budgetary perspective. Let me give some examples.

When people think of our environment, they often think of plastics. How often do we see plastic grocery bags hanging from trees? It is quite a bit. We can talk about the banning of single-use plastics as an example of a government action that has been received quite well among the public. We can talk about how, through a budget, we were able to support and incentivize people to purchase hybrids or electric vehicles.

We brought in other legislation that made a very powerful statement about net-zero emissions by 2050 and then have regulations to support that, not waiting a year for reports, much like in this legislation. There would be mechanisms put in place to ensure there is a higher sense of accountability. I like the fact that if individual Canadians have specific concerns, a procedure would be in place to allow them to elevate that concern to the government, with some expectation that at least it would be taken into consideration.

● (1325)

When we put everything together and talk about the types of things that we have seen, such as the expansion of land under conservation, the expansion of the number of national parks, bringing in legislation of this nature and supporting the environment through budgetary measures, it has been made very clear that the Prime Minister and the Liberal government have been genuine in ensuring that we pass on a healthier, cleaner environment to future generations by putting together a framework that would enable it to continue on.

Government Orders

• (1330)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order, but I hope that you stop the clock so the member gets his entire round of questions and comments. We would not want to miss a moment of that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The clock has stopped.

[*Translation*]

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House,

(a) Bill C-45, An Act to amend the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts, and to make a clarification relating to another Act, be disposed of as follows:

(i) the bill be deemed concurred in at report stage, as amended, upon the adoption of this order;

(ii) the bill be ordered for consideration at the third reading stage later today after the taking of the deferred recorded divisions,

(iii) when the bill is taken up at the third reading stage, one member of each recognized party be allowed to speak for not more than 10 minutes followed by five minutes for questions and comments,

(iv) at the conclusion of the time provided for this debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the bill shall be deemed read a third time and passed; and

(b) the order adopted earlier today under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3) still apply to the proceedings on Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, and that today's proceedings on the bill count as the further sitting day allotted for debate at report stage.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary's moving the motion will please say nay.

[*Translation*]

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

FIRST NATIONS FISCAL MANAGEMENT ACT

(Bill C-45. On the Order: Government Orders:)

May 12, 2023 — The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations — On or after Tuesday, May 16, 2023 — Consideration at report stage of Bill C-45, An Act to amend the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, to make consequential amend-

ments to other Acts, and to make a clarification relating to another Act, as reported by the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs with amendments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Accordingly, Bill C-45, an act to amend the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, to make consequential amendments to other acts, and to make a clarification relating to another act, as amended, is deemed concurred in at report stage.

(Bill, as amended, concurred in)

* * *

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, several years ago, the environment committee made recommendations regarding national standards for clean air and clean water. Why have these two important elements in protecting the environment been ignored as Bill S-5?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not know all the details in the legislation to the degree that I could actually give a specific answer to the member. However, when we talk about Canadians having that guarantee of environmental rights, I suspect there are ways to take into consideration a wide variety of environmental issues related to what the member has said.

Again, maybe the member was at the committee or is going into details with which I am just not quite familiar enough.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North spoke about the committee process in his speech.

He might know that our colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, proposed 24 amendments at committee, none of which were supported. The member spoke about the right to a healthy environment. Several of those amendments would have enhanced that right.

Rather than simply considering the right to a healthy environment, one of the amendments would have ensured that the bill would protect the right to a healthy environment. It would have given the opportunity to ensure companies that did not adhere to that right would pay damages for doing so.

What does the hon. member have to say to this?

• (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that when the Green Party moved the amendment, it was not like members voted against it; it was deemed out of scope. When an amendment is out of scope, we cannot expect it to pass.

Government Orders

The member can be encouraged that many amendments were accepted at the Senate and House of Commons levels, and they were not just government amendments. The government was open to amendments, but there is an obligation when a member introduces an amendment that it be within the scope of the legislation. From what I understand, the chairs at that time did not think it was within the proper scope of the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear some more details, specifically about whether this bill does anything to guarantee a healthy environment.

How does the member explain the fact that this bill is primarily technical, despite the seriousness of the climate crisis? It is really too bad that the bill's sponsor did not have the guts to consider what might happen after Bill S-5 passes.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would be inclined to disagree with the member. If we look at the legislation, it would establish a framework that could ultimately be complemented by regulations, which could address some of the concerns she may express during the third reading of Bill S-5.

I believe it enshrines the principles of Canadians to have a right to a healthy environment, and that is a strong and positive step forward.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was part of the committee that studied this. The environment committee spent hours looking at this technical legislation.

The hon. member has zeroed in on one of the cruxes of the legislation, which is the right to a healthy environment. Something we discussed at length was toxicity and how to limit that on animals that could then become part of the food chain. There are also animals being tested in laboratories. We need to get away from the toxicity that harms animal health and therefore our health.

Could the hon. member talk about why it is important to have a healthy environment?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, one cannot underestimate the importance of Canada in contributing to the world food chain in the future. That is why it is so critically important that we get this issue right. I appreciate the comments. I suspect it will be an area we will talk a great deal about into the future.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, the environment is on all our minds these days as we see images of more than 100 wildfires raging in my home province of Alberta. Thousands of people have had to flee their homes. The provincial government has declared a state of emergency.

As I mentioned in my S.O. 31 last week, such situations as these remind us that the circumstances people endure may be uncontrollable, but we can definitely control our response to them. Canadians understand the need to work together. I am thankful to those across the country who have travelled to Alberta to assist the firefighting efforts.

One of the biggest strengths of our nation is the willingness of Canadians to come together in a crisis. We support each other because that is the Canadian way of doing things. On behalf of everyone in Alberta, I want to thank those from other provinces and territories for standing up to fight the wildfires.

With the environment on our minds, we turn to consider an environmental bill, Bill S-5, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. What is the big rush with this bill? Suddenly, the government is in a hurry to pass this legislation; it has come to the point where the government has to limit debate. I find this somewhat amusing. It introduced pretty much the same bill during the last Parliament, but that one failed to pass because the Prime Minister thought an early election was more important.

Protecting the environment is something Liberals talk about a lot. We have heard them talking about setting targets for carbon emissions. We do not hear them talk about how the government has never met a target that it set for itself. Talk is easy. Doing something seems to be more difficult.

Bill S-5 is the first major overhaul of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act since the 1990s. Much has changed since then in our understanding of the environment and climate change. The bill is long overdue; however, given the lack of priority the Liberals have given this issue in recent years, I am surprised they feel it is important to limit debate.

When one looks at the legislation, one cannot help but be disappointed. The bill is not really about environmental protection; it is about updating the rules. There is no doubt that many environmental rules need to be updated. Those on toxic substances come to mind. So much can change in 20 years, but there is nothing new here besides vague and undefined promises.

Many pieces of legislation that have come before this House highlight the stark differences in the visions of Canada put forward by the Liberals and the Conservatives. Conservatives put people first, seeking to make the lives of ordinary Canadians better through sensible financial policies. We understand that the government is not supposed to magically create jobs; rather, it should create an environment where the private sector sees opportunities to create jobs.

This bill recognizes that every Canadian has the right to a healthy environment. It would require the Government of Canada to protect this right, but it would leave it up to the minister to develop an implementation framework and tell us how the right to a healthy environment would be considered in the administration of CEPA.

Government Orders

Several years ago, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development made recommendations regarding national standards for clean air and clean water. I would have expected them to be included in this legislation. Maybe the minister will get around to including them in the implementation framework, but it would have been nice to have them included so that we could see what the government is planning and make some suggestions for improvement, if needed, in the House.

With all due respect to the minister, I am curious as to what is considered a “healthy environment”. In many ways, the concept goes far beyond the scope of this legislation. Does it include the air we breathe? It most certainly does. What about access to clean drinking water? That goes without saying, although I suppose some communities under drinking water advisories would warn us that such a right has not been extended to all Canadians. Is a healthy environment access to affordable, healthy food? If so, where are the provisions to deal with the inflation the government has created? Yes, the bill would deal with toxic chemicals and with obvious environmental hazards, but there is so much more that needs to be done. I will admit to being a little concerned as to what the minister thinks a healthy environment is, and I hope that, when the definition finally comes, it will be science-based and not sprung out of ideological dogma.

● (1340)

As I have mentioned here before, the current government has a habit of making pronouncements highlighting its environmental plans, then not following through. I hope that, this time, its members really mean what they say. Certainly, the legislation is long overdue. We know so much more about the environment, climate change and the need for action than we did 20 years ago.

It is certainly time to modernize Canada's chemicals management plan. I would suspect that, given rapid advances in industry, we may want to take another look at the plan in a few years. As a nation, we need to be proactive, making sure the environment is properly protected rather than waiting for an industrial accident that could cause harm to the environment and to the Canadian people. The risk-based approach to chemicals management proposed in Bill S-5 makes sense to me.

Last week, I spoke in this chamber regarding Bill S-6, which is an attempt to reduce the mountain of governmental red tape that Canadians face. It seems that, everywhere we turn, there are more regulations. It is almost as if they were breeding.

It is important to have regulations regarding the environment. We need to ensure that our air is fresh and our water pure, not just for today, but for future generations. We hold the environment in trust for our children and grandchildren. Sometimes, though, regulations are unnecessary; they add to the mountain of red tape without achieving what they are supposed to achieve. This is why I am please that Bill S-5 sets out to remove unnecessary red tape from our environmental regulations.

We need protections, but they should be necessary ones. Given the limited scope of the bill, I would not be surprised to see more environmental regulations from the government. Chemicals management and toxic substances are not the only areas of environmental protection that are concerning Canadians.

In this House, we are all committed to protecting our environment, although we sometimes differ as to what the best approach would be. Canada remains the envy of the world for our clean water and clean air, as well as the natural beauty of our country. Our responsibility as parliamentarians is to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same healthy environment that we have today. If we can leave our planet and its environment healthier than it was when our parents passed it on to us, then that will be a fitting legacy.

Revisions to our environmental protection laws are long overdue. Perhaps the government has not acted quickly enough, but it is acting. Perhaps the provisions of the bill do not go as far as some would have liked, but the bill is a beginning. It is not the all-encompassing legislation that some would have hoped for. It is a modest beginning that addresses a need. At least it is a start.

● (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one cannot help but ask a question of a Conservative when they stand up and talk about the environment. I am glad that the Conservatives are going to be supporting this particular piece of legislation, but there are many within the Conservative Party who are challenged when it comes to recognizing such things as climate change. There are some who are finding it challenging to review and look at what they told their constituents or voters back in the last federal election, when they said that they were in favour of a price on pollution.

Given his current leader's position on the issue, could the member indicate what he would say to his constituents, having told them in the last election that he supports a price on pollution?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I thought the hon. member did not want us to talk about the environment from this side. That is my first impression of his question. On the other hand, I thought we were talking about clean air, clean water, toxic substances and so forth; I also thought I was talking about red tape and regulations. Canadians need fewer regulations, less taxation, less red tape and more action. That makes sense; on this side of the House, that is what I believe we need to do in order to move forward with a very balanced and good plan to protect the environment.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am really confused as to what my colleague wants here. He talks about how important it is to have a clean and healthy environment, as well as how Canadians expect and want that. However, he says we need fewer regulations for that clean environment. How do the Conservatives expect us to maintain a clean and healthy environment without regulations in some form that will keep companies like Imperial Oil in check when they spill toxins into rivers? How are we supposed to do that without regulations to make sure that our children and our children's children will have a clean and healthy environment here in Canada?

Government Orders

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, there is a different way of looking at things and dealing with things. We are very much more practical on this side of the House. This is a style of management that different parties have. We need less regulation. We have too many regulations, and we need to look at that; we need less ideology in terms of looking at everything, especially the environment.

• (1350)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to get some things straightened out. The member talked about there being no definition of clean air or clean water in this legislation; it is sort of open to interpretation. Running with the track record of the government for the last eight years, the government has actually made more red tape and made things more confusing to anybody who really wanted to do something better for the environment. This is coming from a government that actually charged hospital administrators a carbon tax to heat their own hospitals during a pandemic. I wonder if the member across the way can comment on why he is looking for more clarification on this bill.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, first of all, there are no definitions in the bill; they are leaving it up to the minister. It is as though the government hopes that, within the framework, the minister is going to put together the proper definitions of clean water and clean air, as well as what other environmental protections look like.

It seems that, so far, the government has only one gear, and that is carbon tax. It taxes Canadians more and hopes to change their behaviour. This is not working. This is just really adding levies on the shoulders of Canadians, taking money away from Canadian families at a time of inflation. By the way, the carbon tax is also contributing to inflation. We need to reduce it rather than adding fuel to the fire, as the government is doing.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill S-5, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, after having had the pleasure of working on it for over 15 meetings on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA, is Canada's most important environmental law. CEPA is focused on preventing pollution, managing toxic substances, and protecting the environment and human health. The powers created by CEPA are firmly recognized as a valid exercise of the federal government's criminal law power. It not only protects us from harmful chemicals, but is also the instrument that was utilized to ban certain single-use plastic items.

CEPA also has a key function in the management of greenhouse gases. The regulation-making authority under CEPA allows the federal government to control the fuel efficiency standards for light duty vehicles and the methane emissions from oil and gas. It will also be the tool used for the forthcoming zero-emissions vehicle mandate, the clean electricity standard and, perhaps, the cap on emissions from oil and gas.

Members can see why this is an important law, but it has not been updated for almost 24 years. The Harper government did not

bother to review or update it over the course of the Conservatives' mandate, but it is obvious that much has changed over this period, and our knowledge of chemicals and the environment had greatly progressed. This much was affirmed through the extensive study that was done by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development from 2016 to 2017. Many of the recommendations in this report were incorporated into legislation, which was first tabled before the 2021 election and now again in Bill S-5.

I want to thank the members of that committee, including my former colleague, Will Amos, who did important work to get us where we are. I also want to thank the many individuals who have worked on this over the years, including organizations such as the David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, and Canada's own UN special rapporteur on human rights and the environment, Dr. David Boyd. It is quite a marvel that both industry and environmental NGOs agreed on the overall framework of this bill and signed a letter to that effect before it was tabled last year.

Bill S-5 is an extremely technical bill, and so I will not get into all of the intricacies of it, but I do want to mention a few highlights.

Bill S-5 would make several major advancements, including, for the first time ever, recognizing a right to a healthy environment in Canadian law. Many of my own constituents, including Lisa Brasso, have been advocating for this right for some time through the Blue Dot campaign, where I was an early signatory during the 2019 election campaign. Since Bill S-5 was tabled, we strengthened this right at committee such that the right will no longer need to be balanced against other factors, and it now incorporates the principles of environmental justice, non-regression and intergenerational equity.

Through an amendment I introduced at committee, the act will now expand this right to include a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. This will bring Canada into alignment with internationally accepted definitions, which we voted for at the UN in July of last year. In this respect, "clean" refers to the fight against pollution; "healthy" refers to ecological balance; and "sustainable" refers to the nexus between the environment and development. This is critical in the act, which is most responsible for advancing sustainable development, so that we practice domestically what we preach internationally.

Statements by Members

Bill S-5 would also take major steps forward in advancing transparency and accountability so Canadians can have confidence in how chemicals are being managed. It would refocus departments on planning for assessing substances of highest risk first; provide dedicated timelines to reassess these priorities; provide an avenue for the public to request that a minister assess a substance when new data about a substance becomes available, which would require a response in 90 days; require that reasons be given if the final risk assessments of chemicals exceeds two years; require annual progress reporting and timeline reporting; and strengthen provisions around confidential business information.

Bill S-5, for the first time, would assess the potential impacts of chemical substances on vulnerable populations and the cumulative effects that toxic substances may pose to vulnerable populations. It would ensure that we assess the relative vulnerability that individuals, such as pregnant mothers and children, may have to certain chemicals as well as populations that may be more persistently exposed to a substance.

This will dovetail nicely with the legislation we have also recently passed through this chamber, which will require a national strategy on environmental racism and environmental justice. I want to thank my former seatmate, Lenore Zann, for tabling this, and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for reintroducing it after the last election. It is important that we make progress on this because environmental racism is not just a historical blight. We continue to see this today, with the most recent example of the Kearn project tailings leaks and their cumulative impacts on first nations downstream.

● (1355)

That is why I invited Imperial Oil and the Alberta Energy Regulator to appear at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to answer for what happened and why they kept the affected communities in the dark. Big oil and what affected communities widely pan as an industry captured regulator, or in the case of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, a “complete joke”, are convinced that they can pull the rug over Canadians' eyes and people will move on. However, the federal government is stepping in to investigate the company and has gathered all implicated parties to figure out long-term solutions to the entire monitoring and notification system.

It also bears mentioning the related amendment the NDP has proposed. The NDP is trying to make the case that we need to specifically list tailings ponds to have the ability to get information on them under section 46, the information-gathering provisions of CEPA, but this flies in the face of the fact that we already have this ability through powers rooted in subsections (c), (e), (f), (h), (i), (k), (l), and a new proposed subsection we added in Bill S-5 to cover activities that may contribute to pollution.

There is a related agreement with Alberta on oil sands monitoring that is rooted in these powers, but the problem in this case is that Alberta inexplicably violated its duty to notify the federal government. I do ask my NDP colleagues to read the full legislation first, to understand how it addresses information on tailings, rather than simply pressing Ctrl+F and typing “tailings” before providing misleading amendments that there is such a gap. To do otherwise, I

believe, is an insult to Canadians' intelligence, and it takes time out from other measures that may actually make the legislation better.

I want to take a few minutes to discuss how Bill S-5 could have been improved. For example, I am disappointed that the legislation will only require the that the right to a healthy environment be considered in the administration of the act, rather than require the protection of it. While I have confidence in our minister to bring in a robust system to protect this new right, there is a risk that future governments and future ministers may roll this back.

Second, the committee also narrowly rejected an amendment I proposed that would have required the minister to take measures to protect the right to a healthy environment where ambient air quality standards are exceeded as part of the implementation framework. I think this is a major missed opportunity. Canada is one of the few developed nations that does not have mandatory ambient air quality standards. The federal government's own 2016 assessment showed that poor air quality costs Canada at least \$120 billion and 15,000 deaths per year, making this an obvious action for us to take to save lives and avoid major health costs. I was encouraged that the minister committed that the implementation framework will clarify how the right to a healthy environment lens will apply to the clean air agenda, but this could have been made explicit in the legislation.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

WOMEN IN SCIENCE

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to congratulate the students at our Canadian post-secondary institutions on their convocations, including those at Dalhousie in Halifax.

In particular, I want to recognize my daughter, Monica, who is receiving her doctorate in philosophy, a Ph.D., in chemical engineering, specializing in fire dynamics. As a member of the Standing Committee on Science and Research, I know the importance of research and having strong women in science.

Statements by Members

Monica is the mother of two young children, aged two and a half years and two months. She is a skilled soccer player, a coach and a mentor to many. She earned her doctorate by working hard for many years, as well as continuing her lab research through COVID and while pregnant. I am so proud of her accomplishments. Monica's story is inspiring, and I proudly share it to encourage all girls to strive to achieve their dreams.

[Translation]

I want every girl out there to keep her dreams alive and trust and believe in herself. We support our girls.

Congratulations, Monica. We love you.

* * *

[English]

FOOD ALLERGY AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is Food Allergy Awareness Month.

Food allergy is a medical condition directly affecting more than three million Canadians, including 600,000 kids. Living with food allergies is not a choice. It is not without significant challenges. This is a chronic medical condition defined by its unpredictability, life-threatening potential and absence of a cure.

It is not without hope. Thanks to organizations such as Food Allergy Canada, great strides have been made to inform the public, 50% of whom will be touched by a food allergy in some way, and improve the life for families directly impacted. I want to acknowledge the parents, grandparents, caregivers, coaches, educators and non-profit organizations for their continued advocacy and support to improve the quality of life for those living with food allergies.

* * *

INDIAN ARRIVAL DAY

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Indian Arrival Day is celebrated on various days in May in many countries, including Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Grenada, Fiji, Mauritius, Suriname, and many other countries commemorating the arrival of people from the Indian subcontinent to their respective nations as indentured labourers brought by European colonial past authorities.

Last week, an international conference on indentureship was organized in Fiji by Global Girit Institute. Canadians who have come to our wonderful land from all of these countries continue to mark this day. They have worked hard to preserve their history, their culture and their heritage, which also benefits future generations of Canadians.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the contributions of these Canadians to the socio-economic development of our country and for strengthening our rich, multicultural fabric.

[Translation]

JEAN-PIERRE GÉLINAS

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Jean-Pierre Gélinas of Louiseville, who recently received the Gaétan Blais award.

This committed volunteer is involved with a whole slew of organizations, including the Louiseville Optimist Club, Noël du Pauvre, Knights of Columbus, the Centre d'action bénévole de la MRC de Maskinongé, minor baseball, the Louiseville buckwheat pancake festival, the Maison du commis-voyageur, the Comité ZIP du lac Saint-Pierre, the Organisme de bassins versants des rivières du Loup et des Yamachiche, the Office municipal d'habitation de Louiseville, and many other causes. He is also the one who created volunteer appreciation night in the first place.

Clearly, Mr. Gélinas knows what we are talking about when we say that volunteer work changes the world. I thank him for giving so generously of his time. I offer him my sincere congratulations on his strong sense of commitment. It is caring people like him who make the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé such a great place to live.

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**20TH ANNIVERSARY OF CANADA-AFRICA
PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION**

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 20th anniversary of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, which I have the honour of co-chairing with Senator Amina Gerba.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who, over the years, helped our association be active and present both here in Canada and on the international stage, including the association's founders, the late MP Mauril Bélanger and retired senator Raynell Andreychuk.

The association's 20 years have been filled with meetings with African delegations visiting Canada, bilateral visits to 34 African countries and to the pan-African Parliament, 31 reports to the House and Senate, and many intercultural learning activities.

• (1405)

[English]

I invite all members to come celebrate 20 years of Canada-Africa and Africa Day this coming Thursday here on the Hill with the African community here in Canada.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the important work that we do as members of Parliament is only made possible with the support of dedicated staff. Today, it is an honour for me to pay tribute to Sonja Hansen ahead of her upcoming retirement.

*Statements by Members***HOUSING**

Starting her career on the Hill in 1979, she has remained a constant in these halls, outlasting MPs, leaders, prime ministers and even some political parties. Since I was first elected, I have been fortunate to benefit from her experience and expertise. Her work ethic, commitment to excellence, and the speed and care with which she tackles any task are only outmatched by her thoughtfulness and sense of humour.

While she will be greatly missed, I wish her a happy and healthy retirement. I hope that all members in this place will join me in thanking Sonja Hansen for her decades of service and dedication to Parliament and all Canadians.

* * *

PORTUGUESE CANADIANS

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 13, 1953, 70 years ago, the first boatload of Portuguese migrants reached Pier 21 in Halifax. This marked the beginning of what would become large-scale immigration from Portugal to Canada.

In the ensuing years and decades, tens of thousands of Portuguese came to escape poverty, a dictatorship and the colonial wars they did not want to participate in. By this year, Portuguese Canadians are approximately 500,000 strong. There are Portuguese communities right across Canada and over 125 Portuguese social clubs. Their volunteers work tirelessly to promote the Portuguese language, culture and traditions.

Portuguese Canadians are leaders in all sectors of our economic, political and social life. The Portuguese Canadian Walk of Fame highlights Portuguese Canadian leaders for outstanding achievements. This past weekend, the following four were added: Jack Oliveira, Jose Carlos Teixeira, Ema Dantas and Antonio De Sousa.

They and all Portuguese leaders serve not only as an inspiration to the Portuguese community, but to all Canadians. *Parabéns* to the community. Here is to 70 more successful years.

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DAVE KERWIN

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 6 of this year, Newmarket lost a true community builder. Dave Kerwin was deeply focused on his community. He led a life of giving back to the place he called home, punctuated by his 39 years on Newmarket council.

His passion for the arts, support for the renovations to the old town hall and his support of Visual & Performing Arts Newmarket, are but a few of his remarkable contributions. Dave's smile and his genuine concern for the people who came into his life will be memories to cherish. Our town has benefited from his passion and commitment to everything that was Newmarket.

While we will miss this remarkable man, we do not need to go far in our community to find memories of his contributions to the people and the town we love to call home. His legacy of community builder, friend and loving family man will live on in the history of Newmarket.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is in a housing crisis and the government is unwilling to admit it. We are not building homes fast enough and the ones that do get built are more out of reach than they have ever been. It is leaving an entire generation of young people feeling like home ownership is no longer a possibility.

Since 2015, mortgage payments have doubled, rent has doubled and the required down payment to buy one's first home has also doubled. In some places, like Orillia, prices have gone up almost 300%. We are now projected to build fewer homes this year than last year. In fact, Canada has the fewest homes per 1,000 residents than any G7 country. The government's approach has been heavy on communication and light on results.

What is the government doing now? It has a fancy new account that will take five years to max out, and the government is now supporting banks to unilaterally extend amortization to well over 40 years. This is going to keep house prices high and out of reach for many young Canadians. We need a government that will admit we are in a housing crisis and focus on results.

* * *

● (1410)

TAIWAN

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years, the world has suffered from the unprecedented crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am pleased to say Taiwan is one of the few places in the world that has successfully stemmed the spread of the coronavirus.

Sadly, despite its efforts, Taiwan is still effectively locked out of full participation in the World Health Assembly. Taiwan, as a responsible member of the global community, has always been committed to promoting public health and has contributed significantly to the international efforts to control and prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Taiwan's experience and expertise in managing the pandemic could have been invaluable to other countries, especially those in the region.

Taiwan's re-entry into the World Health Assembly would not only benefit its citizens, but also the global economy. It is time to focus on what is truly important: the health and well-being of all people, regardless of nationality or political affiliations, and allow Taiwan access to the WHO.

*Statements by Members***NATIONAL POLICE WEEK**

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we enter National Police Week with the troubling reality that nine officers have been murdered in Canada since last September. With that backdrop, I cannot help but reflect on the deep meaning behind this year's theme: "Committed to Serve". The oath officers proudly take is to do just that, to serve, despite the risks. The communities' expectations, hopes and trust are embodied in those three simple words.

Recently, I came across my old badge and uniform and looked back on my 35 years as a police officer with a touch of nostalgia, realizing the privilege to serve my community, alongside an incredible group of fellow officers who were equally committed to serve well. The camaraderie, sense of purpose, unwavering dedication to duty and the tremendous responsibility and honour to have public trust are the memories that stay with me, but, more importantly, it is the knowledge that our work made a difference, that we were there when people needed us most.

This week, let us honour these beacons of hope, these steady hands and guardians of justice, for they are the police committed to serve.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is time for solutions.

The Conservative leader stands for the common sense of the common people united for our common home: Canada. How will he bring home a country that works for those who have done the work? He will bring home lower prices by ending inflationary deficits and scrapping the carbon tax on heat, gas and groceries; he will bring home powerful paycheques by lowering taxes and clawbacks to reward hard work; he will bring homes that workers can afford by firing the gatekeepers and freeing up land to build; he will bring home safety by ending catch-and-release of repeat violent offenders; he will bring home freedom from foreign interference and woke government censorship.

It is time to bring home solutions.

* * *

ORLÉANS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was a busy weekend. I had the pleasure of attending the Mother's Day high tea event on Saturday, which was organized by my fellow Rotarian members of the Rotary Club of Orléans. The event was significant and symbolic, with the aim of honouring the women who have played important roles in our lives.

[*Translation*]

I wish them a happy Mother's Day.

[*English*]

Also, summer is among us and it means it is the time to garden, plant flowers, grow vegetables and much more. I had the pleasure to join the incredible team at Just Food in my community to offi-

cially open a new greenhouse and pavilion, thanks to funding from the Canada community revitalization fund. These much-needed spaces will become host to a weekly farmer's market.

* * *

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a gay man of a certain age, the fight against HIV/AIDS will always have a higher profile for me, even though this disease now equally affects intravenous drug users and indigenous people alongside gay men. The government adopted the UNAIDS strategy for eliminating HIV in 2016. We know what to do.

Other countries are making rapid progress. In Australia, from 2020 to 2022, new cases dropped by 39% and it expects to successfully eradicate HIV by 2030. Instead, in Canada, new cases of HIV increased by 26%, the sixth year in a row of mounting new cases. The government made promises to do the right thing, but it has failed to make investments in community-based testing and treatment, investments costing less than \$100 million annually, but investments that are crucial to make this goal a reality.

Budget 2023 fails to make any new investments in the elimination of HIV and continues the stagnation of funding that began in 2008. What in the world is the government waiting for? The time to act is now. We can eradicate HIV and AIDS in Canada if we act.

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● (1415)

[*Translation*]

JEAN-CLAUDE BEAUCHEMIN

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely honoured today to speak about one of the great patriots of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, who will be honoured on National Patriots Day this weekend by the Société nationale des Québécois et des Québécoises de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue et du Nord-du-Québec. I am speaking of Jean-Claude Beauchemin, mayor of Granada and later mayor of Rouyn-Noranda. Jean-Claude Beauchemin has always been driven by the desire to help the least fortunate.

He founded La Maison, a rehabilitation centre that helps those living with physical disabilities or a pervasive development disorder. I would also like to highlight his work with youth, in particular the creation of La Soupape youth centre and the Rouyn-Noranda municipal youth commission. I should also mention his commitment to culture, which has made Rouyn-Noranda the cultural capital that it is today thanks to the many festivals created under his tenure.

Mr. Beauchemin has spent his life laying the foundation for the nation of Quebec as a political adviser to premiers Jacques Parizeau and Bernard Landry.

I would like to say to Jean-Claude that Abitibi-Témiscamingue, his homeland, will forever recognize him as one of its greatest patriots. I give him my word that I will continue for a long time, as I hope he will, to work towards establishing our future country, Quebec.

* * *

[English]

PASSPORTS

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were shocked and disappointed yet again by the Liberals. The Minister of Immigration announced a new Canadian passport, and it was less than inspiring.

The Liberals erased an iconic image of Vimy Ridge, which was truly a nation-building event in our history, and replaced it with a squirrel eating a nut.

Instead of the grit, perseverance and journey of hope that inspired our country, which was represented by an image of Terry Fox, they replaced it with an image of a young boy with an uncanny likeness to the current Prime Minister jumping into Harrington Lake.

To show the current government's true commitment to feminism, it replaced feminist rights pioneer Nellie McClung with a picture of a man and a wheelbarrow.

The pages of our passport should tell the story of Canada as it happened, not filled with woke Liberal virtue-signalling.

I hope common sense will prevail within the NDP-Liberal coalition. The government must reverse course and return the symbolic moments that unite our country back into the pages of our passport.

* * *

MAYORS' COUNCIL ON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are joined today by mayors from metro Vancouver, who are here as members of the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation, to discuss public transit, the support our government has provided and where there are still important gaps to fill.

As the former director of communications for TransLink, metro Vancouver's transportation agency, I have seen the benefits of municipal planning and the planning function that TransLink provides for major roads and public transit.

In our Fleetwood—Port Kells riding and across Surrey, the municipal, provincial and federal partnership is aligning land use and transportation planning with housing developments, especially along the new SkyTrain line being built through our riding with a significant federal contribution. This is all to ensure our citizens have access to high-quality transit close to where they live.

Our discussions with the mayors will be important and, based on the quality of regional planning, will ensure convenience and liv-

Oral Questions

ability will be supported as one of North America's best transit systems keeps pace with our future.

The Speaker: Before we go to Oral Questions, I would like the attention of members.

We just finished a session of Standing Order 31s, which allows individual members to give a story of something going on in their riding, sometimes joyous and sometimes sad. During the sad times, sometimes we hear laughter because someone is not paying attention. I am sure it is not being done intentionally to hurt the feelings of anyone. Sometimes we hear some talking while someone is giving some good news.

I want everyone to pay attention and listen to the S.O. 31s. They really do mean a lot to each and every one of us and to the people back home. Therefore, for the rest of the session, when an S.O. 31 is being given, please listen and be thoughtful.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sometimes with the current government, we do not know whether to laugh or cry when it comes to the way it spends money. The minister said in her fall update that the budget would be balanced in 2028. In her budget, she said it would be balanced never. Weeks before that budget, the minister said that deficit spending fuels inflation and interest rate hikes; then she added \$60 billion of that fuel to the inflationary fire, at a cost of \$4,200 per family. Why will the minister not get off the backs of hard-working Canadians and get rid of the inflationary taxes and deficits that they have to pay?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to relentlessly talk down Canada and the Canadian economy, but on this side of the House, we believe in Canada and we know that Canada has the best economic performance of any country in the G7. Let me give some facts to back that up.

After we tabled the budget, S&P reiterated our AAA credit rating. That makes Canada one of only three countries in the G7 with an AAA credit rating—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister herself said in the fall that she would balance the budget in 2028, but in this budget, she said that it would never be balanced. Weeks before that budget, the minister said that deficit spending fuels inflation. Then, she added another \$60 billion of deficit spending at a cost of \$4,200 per Canadian family.

Why do Canadians have to pay for the minister's flip-flopping and incompetence?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to refer to the figures and to understand that Canada has the strongest economy in the G7. Let me provide some facts to back that up. For example, in the first quarter of this year, Canada's economic growth was 2.4%. Canada has now recovered 129% of the jobs that were lost during the pandemic, while the United States has recovered only about 115%.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can see that the minister and the Prime Minister are totally disconnected from the daily reality of ordinary Canadians. We understand why the minister left the country and has avoided questions since the presentation of her highly unpopular budget. She goes to American universities instead of going to talk to real people here in Canada. In fact, she is the one who said that deficits would fuel inflation and that she would bring in a rule to save one dollar for every dollar spent.

Where is that promise in their budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I was very proud to be in Japan at the G7 finance ministers meeting. It is important for Canadians to understand that Conservatives seem to think that Canada's Minister of Finance should not attend international meetings. If that is what the Conservatives think, they should tell Canadians the truth.

As for the Canadian economy, we have the strongest economy in the G7 thanks to the hard work of Canadians and our government.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really impressive that the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister are attending really important meetings in Japan and the United States with really important people around the world. We are talking to the common people right here in Canada who cannot pay their bills. One in five is skipping meals because they cannot afford the inflationary carbon tax on food; 1.5 million are eating at food banks, and some are asking for help with medical assistance in dying because they cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves. The minister admits deficits caused this inflation, yet she added \$60 billion more of them. Why does she keep boosting prices while she travels abroad?

• (1425)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be really clear on what the Conservatives are insinuating. The Conservatives are trying to insinuate today that there is something elitist, that there is something that goes against the interests of regular Canadians when Canadian leaders attend G7 meetings. I want to ask Canadians, do they think it is wrong for the Prime Minister to go to a meeting with the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of the U.K., the Prime Minister of Japan?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no, we just wish he would remember that the real people who pay the bills actually live right here in Canada, the common people here in this land. These are the people Liberals forget about when they are jet-setting around the world. When the Deputy Prime Minister is over in the States giving speeches at fancy American universities, she is forgetting about the people who are paying 12% more for food because of her carbon tax, forgetting that nine in 10 young people cannot afford a home because she has driven up interest rates so much with her deficits, and forgetting the seniors who cannot fill their fridges because food has become too expensive.

Why will she and her Prime Minister not get back on the ground in Canada and stand up for the people who do the work here?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, someone who lives in government-provided accommodation in a multiroom residence with a chef and a chauffeur and someone who has been on the public payroll his entire professional life should not suggest that our government is acting against the interests of Canadians when we attend meetings of the G7. We are proud to represent Canada at the top table in the world and we are going to continue to do that.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps sinking further and further into the quagmire of Chinese interference.

What concrete action has he taken? Did he launch the independent public commission of inquiry that everyone is calling for? No, he did not. Did he implement the Bloc Québécois's proposals, including a permanent investigative body? He did not do that either. What did he do? He announced byelections.

Every day for months now, we have been talking about China interfering in our elections. Instead of taking concrete action to combat interference, he calls byelections. Is that a joke?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take the issue of foreign interference very seriously.

To protect our democratic institutions, we established independent panels that worked well in the last two elections. Now we very much look forward to receiving the recommendations from Mr. Johnston, a former governor general who was appointed by a Conservative prime minister.

Oral Questions

Those recommendations, along with all the other initiatives we have already put in place, will ensure that we continue to protect all our democratic institutions.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by choosing to call a byelection now when it very well could have been held in the fall, the Prime Minister is showing that the priority, for him, is not countering Chinese interference in our democracy, investigating the recent election, protecting the upcoming election or ensuring public confidence in our democracy. For him, the priority is measuring the political fallout from his much-publicized inaction on the issue of Chinese interference.

Why is the Prime Minister once again unable to place the interests of democracy above those of the Liberal Party?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what our government is going to do.

We will ensure that the public interest is always protected. Our government has taken concrete action to counter foreign interference in our democratic institutions.

I share my hon. colleague's concerns about the need to ensure that byelections will, like the 2019 and 2021 elections, be protected from foreign interference. We have put measures in place and we will continue to strictly enforce them.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are 2,500 jobs at stake in the Windsor region because the Liberal government has not followed through on commitments it made to ensure that the plant being built by Stellantis for the NextStar batteries goes to completion. We have already heard from the mayor of Windsor, who has raised alarm bells and written directly to the government. The unions are deeply concerned.

All other levels of government have done their part, so when will the Liberal government follow through on commitments, get this plant built and ensure those jobs are protected?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes in good-paying jobs in the auto sector, and we have shown that time and again. We showed that when we fought for and secured a NAFTA deal that protected our auto sector. We showed that when we fought for and secured Canada's being carved into the U.S. EV incentives, which protected our auto sector. We showed that with the historic VW investment, which creates an auto sector for the future, and we are showing that in Windsor, but we are going to fight for the best deal for Canada, and we are proud of that too.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that answer was little comfort to the workers in Windsor. We need a deal that actually goes through and builds that plant.

[Translation]

The cost of rent has skyrocketed across the country. For example, in Laval, it now costs \$2,000 to rent a two-bedroom apartment. That is a massive increase of 26% in one year. It is clear that the government does not understand the impact that this crisis is having on ordinary Canadians.

Will the Liberals finally take action to address this crisis and help people with their rent?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the importance of being there for vulnerable renters. That is why this government introduced the Canada housing benefit, a revolutionary measure that puts money directly in the pockets of renters and moves with them when they move from one unit to another. We topped up that Canada housing benefit with a top-up to the Canada housing benefit. We will be there for renters. We will keep building more affordable rental units across the country, and we will be there for vulnerable renters all the way.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was up huffing and puffing last week, less than a week ago, about the Stellantis project, and now we find, six days later, that construction on the \$5-billion facility has halted because of his incompetence. We see the same thing with the Trans Mountain pipeline, which is now 300% over-budget, many years past due and still not complete.

All the Prime Minister does is wrap our industry in red tape, weigh it down with taxes and engage in total incompetence. Why is it that he can never bring it home when it comes to jobs, paycheques and industry for our country?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, coming from a leader and a party that are on record opposing the historic, transformational VW investment made by our government, that question is frankly ridiculous. I will tell the House who could not get TMX built: It was the members opposite. I will tell the House which government is going to get that pipeline built: Our government is going to get the job done, like we did on NAFTA, like we did with VW and like we will do with—

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

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the most historic transformation is going to be when the Conservatives replace the current incompetent government.

My question is for the finance minister, who refuses to show up at the finance committee for two hours to answer basic questions about her failed budget. She misled Canadians, blowing through all fiscal restraint she promised by driving struggling households \$4,200 further into debt, because she threw \$60 billion of inflationary fuel on the fire she started. She spent more airtime bragging about her budget at Fenway Park than she has at the finance committee.

Will she end her inflationary spending and show up to work, or does she think budgets balance themselves?

• (1435)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really looking forward to appearing before the finance committee, as scheduled, tomorrow. Of course, it will require the Conservatives to end their frankly childish temper tantrum to give me the chance to appear, but I do really look forward to it, and the reason I look—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to wait for silence on all sides. While someone is answering, I would ask everyone not to shout them down. That is almost like bullying in a schoolyard.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, one might say that shouting down a woman speaking in the House is a childish temper tantrum. One might say that, but I do look forward to appearing before the committee tomorrow as I have always been scheduled to do.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are grateful that the finance minister has finally returned to Canada. She said, “inflation and higher interest rates are really challenging for a lot of people. This means that...one of my principal responsibilities...is not to pour fuel on the flames of inflation. So fiscal responsibility is really important.” Those were the words of the finance minister just nine weeks ago. She cannot bring herself to answer basic questions about why the budget is the exact opposite. She has gone into hiding, trying to distance herself from her own government.

Canadians want to know if she is going to answer the question. If not, will she get out of the way so that Conservatives can just take over?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is not going to let Conservatives get away with ridiculous and transparent efforts to mislead Canadians. The fact is that the presence of Canadian ministers, and this week the presence of our Prime Minister, at a G7 meeting, is doing our job for Canadians, and Canadians know it.

When it comes to the budget, do colleagues know whom I trust to rate our fiscal responsibility? The rating agencies and S&P reaffirmed our AAA rating.

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will welcome the finance minister back to Canada again, but here are the actual facts. Every Canadian family will now pay \$4,200 more per household for her spending spree. Housing prices have doubled. Food bank use is at record highs. Canada accumulated debt faster than almost every other advanced country, but our economy underperformed compared to nearly all its counterparts, and we have the lowest projected GDP-per-capita growth of any advanced economy for the next 30 years.

Why does she continue to spread this falsehood? We cannot spend our way to prosperity, so will she keep running away from questions or will she just get out of the way?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can tell, when the personal attacks are increasing, that it is proportional to the lack of ideas that actually help Canadians.

When we look at housing supply, we are the party that has enabled more Canadians to access affordable housing, as well as to access the dream of Canadian home ownership through the first-time homebuyer tax-free savings account, a 1% tax on vacant, non-Canadian, non-residential real estate. We are also building more housing supply through the housing accelerator fund.

Throughout all these measures, they vote against them and then come here and pretend that they care.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to know one thing. When will this government really understand the problems that directly affect them every day?

When she was in Japan, Washington or elsewhere in the world, did the Minister of Finance think about the 1.5 million Canadians who are using food banks? Did she think about the fact that one in five families have to trim their budgets to put food on the table? We are talking about basic necessities. Did she think about the people who have been paying twice as much in rent or on their mortgage payments over the past eight years under this government? That is the daily reality for Canadians.

When will the government finally get in touch with Canadians' reality?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I have a question for the Conservatives.

Are they considering an isolationist policy for Canada? Are they proposing that Canada not attend G7 meetings? With regard to Washington, are the Conservatives proposing that we not attend meetings at the White House? Is that the Conservatives' policy?

On this side of the House, we understand that Canada exists in an interconnected global economy and we must—

• (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

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FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister of Finance has a short memory.

Just a few short months ago, in November, she was very proud to table the economic update and said that she could see the light at the end of the tunnel and would have a target for balancing the budget. That was in November.

Just one month ago, she tabled her budget, and there was nothing. There was nothing about balancing the budget. Even worse, two weeks ago her party gave her a slap in the face. Her party wants nothing to do with balancing the budget.

The Minister of Finance, who was so proud in November to say that we were headed towards balancing the budget—

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a big difference between our government and the Conservatives. The difference is this. Yes, we are proud of Canada and we are proud of Canada's economy. On the fiscal front, I want to point out that S&P reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating after we tabled our budget.

I believe that Canadians are intelligent enough to believe S&P rather than the Conservatives' anti-Canadian rhetoric.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has accused the Bloc Québécois of scaring people when it comes to the Century Initiative.

It is this government, not the Bloc Québécois, that is scaring people. The government is calculating its immigration thresholds without taking into account the capacity of Quebec and the provinces to receive immigrants and provide them with housing, health care, child care, the school system and French language learning. Unilaterally increasing thresholds puts too much pressure on the provinces.

Will the government recognize that a target of 500,000 newcomers per year is too high?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Bloc Québécois wants to know how to protect Quebec's demographic weight, I urge its members to read the Canada-

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Quebec accord, which has been working for three decades. If they want to know what our plan is to reverse the decline of French, I urge them to read the new action plan for official languages. If they want to know what our plan is to support francophone communities across Canada, they need to read the press release on how we reached the 4.4% target for francophone immigration.

Anyone can look it up on Google.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleague to come up with a new version. Immigration is a kind of wealth, not only economic, but human as well. It helps us redefine who we are and learn new ways to live side by side. It opens our minds to new ideas and new perspectives. However, immigration depends on integration to succeed.

With its target of 500,000 immigrants by 2025, the federal government is overshooting even the mark set by the Century Initiative. At this rate, it will reach 100-million population target sooner than 2100. Quebec will not be able to maintain its political weight or to integrate this many newcomers into French society.

Will the minister consider lowering his immigration targets?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois must think the government has some kind of crystal ball.

Our immigration plans are based on the next three years, not the next 75 years.

The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has been very clear. His decision is based on what he believes to be the best immigration policy for Canada, based on the needs and capacity of Quebec and Canada.

We will always be there to welcome immigrants.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): That may be, Mr. Speaker, but we need to do it properly. When it comes to immigration, the Liberals cloak themselves in virtue and lofty sentiments. They talk about a host society, about welcoming millions of newcomers, but the immigrants who are here are often forgotten and suffer intolerable delays.

La Presse reported that a request for documents that should take 20 days took a year. La Presse also shared the story of a father who cannot travel to his sick son's bedside because he does not have a refugee travel document. It is tragic.

Instead of dramatically increasing thresholds, what is the minister going to do to shorten the inhumane processing times in his own department?

Oral Questions

• (1445)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to answer that question. I want to be very clear. We have made significant progress in reducing backlogs and improving services for our clients. Let us look at the numbers. We have reduced the backlog by over half a million. We finalized 5.2 million applications last year, twice as many as in 2021.

We set the bar very high when it comes to providing quality services in Canada.

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[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, the finance minister said that she had a red line. She said, “our debt-to-GDP ratio must continue to decline...pandemic debt must be paid down.... This is a line we will not cross.” What happened to that red line? The government has increased the debt by \$4,200 for each Canadian family. Our debt-to-GDP ratio will increase this year, and deficits now extend as far as the eye can see.

Does the finance minister regret making this cast-in-stone, stone-cold promise to Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Canada's debt and debt-to-GDP ratio, let me quote someone whom all members of the House should trust, and that is the Parliamentary Budget Officer. At the finance committee a few weeks ago, he said, “When looking at G7 countries, Canada compares very favourably on net debt-to-GDP.” Furthermore, in his testimony, he described a conversation he had with someone from Moody's, who said that Canada's deficit should make us “quite happy because by European standards that's very low.” That is not me talking; that is the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister and the government have quite a bad track record for making predictions. They told us interest rates would remain low, so we must spend. They told us that deflation was more likely than inflation. When inflation came, they said it would be here for just a little while. The minister assured us the economy would continue to grow, and now it has slowed to a halt. They are always playing catch-up, and Canadians are paying the price. We are now spending as much on interest on the debt as we are sending to provinces for health care.

How can Canadians afford any more of the Liberal government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell members who pays the price for Conservative economic policies. The people who pay the price for Conservative so-called economics are the most vulnerable among us.

Since we formed government, 2.7 million Canadians have been lifted out of poverty. The government introduced the CCB, which has lifted more than 400,000 children out of poverty, and the GIS has helped over 900,000 seniors. We believe in a balance between compassion and fiscal responsibility, and that is what—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: If I could just ask the front benches to maybe set the example for the backbenches, I think that would probably help things quite a bit.

The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister's inflationary budget is costing each Canadian family \$4,200, yet she said, “We are absolutely determined that our debt-to-GDP ratio must continue to decline. Our deficits must continue to be reduced.... This is a line we will not cross.” The finance minister clearly understands that the government's deficits are driving up inflation, interest rates and unaffordability, yet she doubles down on them.

I will give her one more chance today. Will the finance minister finally listen to her own advice and cut this inflationary spending?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the question the Conservatives have to answer. They have to tell Canadians what they would cut. Would they cut the \$200 billion we have invested in the health care system? I sure hope not, because Canadians rely on our health care system and are proud of the federal government that is supporting it. Would the Conservatives cut the \$300 billion we have invested in early learning and child care? Again, I think the Conservatives kind of want to cut that. I sure hope the Conservatives never form government, because Canadian families need the support that we are providing.

* * *

• (1450)

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent report has found that Halifax has become the third most expensive city in the country when it comes to rentals. It has experienced an increase in rental prices of 25% in one year. That is a massive increase in rent.

It is clear that the Liberal government has failed renters. What is it going to do to bring down the cost of rent in our country?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that more Canadians are facing challenges with respect to rental payments.

Although the regulation and rent control issues are under provincial jurisdiction, we on this side of the House believe that we should do everything we can to have the backs of renters. That means building a more affordable rental supply over the life of the national housing strategy, putting money in the pockets of vulnerable renters through the Canada housing benefit, and making sure that we are always fighting hard for more supply and, particularly, a more affordable rental supply across the country, in all communities from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women veterans feel invisible. The Liberal government does not hear their experiences, stories or pain. Virtually no research is being funded about military women's health issues, including mental health. While New Democrats welcome the recently announced mood and anxiety treatment guidelines, the unique challenges of female veterans must be considered.

Will the minister commit, today, to including women veterans in creating these guidelines so that women who bravely served our country could finally be seen?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our priority is to make sure our veterans have the support they need, and we are committed to a gender-based analysis in designing our policy. We take this very seriously, and that is why we created the Office of Women and LGBTQ2 Veterans. That is also why we hosted the first-ever Women Veterans Forum in 2019 and continue it on an annual basis. We will continue to make sure women veterans are treated properly.

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FINANCE

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the great news we received last week that Bill C-46 received royal assent here in the House and a quick but thorough study in the Senate. Can the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance highlight how this bill will help Canadians in my riding of Mississauga—Malton?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Mississauga—Malton for his hard work for his constituents and for all Canadians.

He is right: Last week, Bill C-46 received royal assent. This is good news for his constituents and for the constituents of every single member of this House. It is going to deliver the new grocery rebate to the most vulnerable Canadians who need that support that most and a \$2-billion top-up to support our health care system. That is the Liberal government in action.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister is not answering questions. The OECD calculates that, on her watch, Canada will be the worst-performing advanced economy over 2020 to 2030, and it is on this path until 2060. This means that Canadians' living standards and

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quality of life relative to other countries have declined and will continue to do so. This is due to the finance minister's high-tax, high-debt, high-spend budgets. The Liberal budget right now would add \$4,200 to every Canadian family. When will the finance minister reverse course on her made-in-Canada path to decline for Canadian families?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not a virtual reality creation here. I am standing up in this House and very glad to answer questions about economic policy, which is delivering results for Canadians and which has Canada as the strongest economy in the G7.

Let me share some facts, rather than overheated, torqued Conservative rhetoric. Canada has a AAA credit rating, which was reaffirmed by S&P after we tabled our budget. Canada has the strongest economic growth and the lowest debt-to-GDP—

The Speaker: The member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister plans to spend \$490 billion in this budget but is refusing to show up at the finance committee for just two hours to answer questions. The budget would drive every Canadian family another \$4,200 into debt. Canada has the fifth-highest increase in government spending and the third-largest increase in our debt-to-GDP ratio. Our debt has increased faster than that of almost every other advanced country. Just last November, the finance minister promised to balance the budget by 2028. In this budget, her deficits go on forever and ever. Why is she breaking that promise?

• (1455)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to get up and say it because it makes no sense. The finance minister has said she is there tomorrow, so I do not know why they have not revised their questions. However, I will ask, if they give me the chance—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. government House leader to wait a second until everything calms down and we can hear his answer. The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley wants to hear the answer.

Start from the top, please.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the finance minister is appearing tomorrow, so it does seem ridiculous for her to keep standing and saying she is going to be there.

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However, I do want to come back to their questioning as to why the finance minister of a G7 country would participate in G7 meetings. It may be because we live in an interconnected economy. When the Conservatives were dealing with such issues as climate change, they went to world forums to attack action on climate change and to drag other countries out of doing the essential work of protecting our planet. We talk to other countries' leaders because we understand that we live in an interconnected world.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the finance minister back to the House. However, let us be clear in that what we are asking for is two hours of her time. That is a billion dollars a minute.

We have real problems. According to a university report, we have the third-largest increase in total debt-to-GDP ratio, which has resulted in one of the lowest GDP growth ratios. In fact, going forward, we are projected to be at the bottom of the OECD. Will the minister finally come to the finance committee for two hours to explain why she has broken all her promises?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is typical of the Conservatives that they will not take yes for an answer. The finance minister is going to committee tomorrow, as long as they do not filibuster it.

Let us talk about our economic record. They were talking about the OECD—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt again. It is starting to get a little noisy. I am having a hard time hearing the answer. I am sure the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South is having a hard time hearing a response to his question.

I am going to ask the hon. Minister of Families to start from the top.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it is typical of the Conservatives to not take yes for an answer, as the Minister of Finance is scheduled to go tomorrow. Of course, that will depend on the Conservatives' stopping their filibuster.

Let us talk about our economic record. My hon. colleague was talking about the OECD, but when the Conservatives came into office back in 2006, they ranked 17th when it came to child poverty. By the time they left in 2015, Canada ranked 24th. They fell. I am not going to take any lessons from the Conservatives.

Currently, Canada ranks second in the OECD when it comes to reducing child poverty.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is great news. I look forward to having the finance minister for two hours, as she just said. That is terrific.

What we do not look forward to is the Liberal budget bonanza that is going to drive Canadians \$4,200 deeper into debt per family. What will they get for that? Higher energy costs, higher food costs and a lower standard of living.

Will the finance minister finally come to the finance committee for two hours to explain why Canada's economic growth is predicted to be lower than the growth in Latvia, Chile and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt. I am now having a hard time hearing the question.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. When I try to calm things down, it does not mean you get to throw rocks just because you think you do not live in glass houses anymore. Please, everybody, calm down.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South, from the top, please, so that we can hear the full question. Let us see if we can get through that.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the quieting of that childish temper tantrum.

The Liberal budget bonanza is driving Canadians further and further into debt. Each Canadian family is being driven down, to the cost of \$4,200 a month. What are Canadians getting for it? They are getting higher energy and food costs.

I am going to repeat this question one more time. Will the minister appear for two hours to explain her failed economic record?

● (1500)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we should not be too troubled by not hearing the question from the Conservatives. It is the same nonsensical question we have heard and answered repeatedly. Let me assure everyone that I am looking forward to appearing before the finance committee tomorrow, as I have enjoyed questions today.

As to what Liberal economic policy is delivering for Canadians, I can say this: jobs, jobs, jobs. We have the strongest job market in Canadian history, and that is what matters to hard-working Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Trans Mountain pipeline project continues to be a drain on public money. It is gobbling up money at an alarming rate. When the government bought the pipeline from Kinder Morgan, the estimated cost of expansion was \$7.4 billion. In 2020, the estimated cost was \$12.6 billion and in 2022, it was \$21.4 billion. Today, the estimated cost is \$30.9 billion and Trans Mountain continues to push for more.

When will it end? How deep into debt will the federal government drag the public for the sake of dirty oil?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand how important it is to get a fair price for our resources on international markets. The government has no intention of owning the pipeline for the long term. A divestment process will be launched when the project is farther along.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only is expanding Trans Mountain at our expense an economic failure, it is an environmental disaster. To recoup all the money thrown at this project, the Crown corporation is going to have to ship a lot of oil for a long time. Trans Mountain expects to have a capacity of 890,000 barrels of oil per day after the expansion.

It is going to take a lot of oil days to pay back a \$30.9-billion debt, but who will take care of our environmental debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud of our green industrial plan. This plan is investing \$120 billion into the green transition. It is an historic measure that will protect the climate globally and create good jobs for a generation of Canadians.

We are very proud to be the government carrying out this plan.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety falsely stated that all Beijing-backed police stations had been shut down. He now confirms that new stations may still be operating on Canadian soil.

Minister, words matter. The incompetent minister continues to mislead the House regarding this crucial issue. He has all the intelligence and security agencies at his disposal to get to the bottom of it.

I am just looking for a number. Minister, my simple question is this: How many Beijing-backed police stations are still operating in this country?

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members to place their questions through the Chair and try to use parliamentary language as much as possible. Do not push it to the limit. Just try to be nice and play well together.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by now, I hope my Conservative colleague will have heard the answers, which have been consistent. The RCMP took decisive and concrete action to disrupt the foreign interference activities in relation to those so-called police stations. It will continue to do the same going forward.

The bigger question is about what the Conservatives did on foreign interference when they last held the reins of government. The answer is that they did nothing. On this side of the House, we will

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continue to make the investments and put the authorities in place so that we can protect our democratic institutions.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety said on CTV news yesterday that there could be a number of Beijing-run police stations on Canadian soil, even though he told a parliamentary committee the opposite.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service has intelligence on this. Even the Spanish organization Safeguard Defenders has produced a report confirming the presence of Chinese police stations operating on Canadian soil.

My question is simple. How many Beijing-run police stations are currently operating in Canada?

• (1505)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition needs to listen to the government's responses, including my responses in committee.

As I said, the RCMP is taking decisive action to disrupt the foreign interference activities associated with those so-called police stations. Now it is important to continue to put in place the authorities to protect our democratic institutions.

The Conservatives are the only ones impeding progress on this important issue.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not see how the Conservatives have been impeding things. On the contrary, we are very proactive in the debate. However, the minister just gave us an answer. He said that the RCMP is responsible for this issue.

This should have a simple answer: How many police stations run by Beijing are currently operating in Canada?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supported by federal government initiatives and investments, the RCMP is keeping a close eye not only on foreign interference, but also on all public safety priorities. The Conservatives are the only ones who continue to impede the government's national security priorities. We must work together to protect our democratic institutions.

That is our government's priority.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec announced the largest procurement of electric buses in North America. This project will put over 1,229 electric buses, which will be assembled at the Nova Bus plant in Saint-Eustache, on Quebec roads by 2027.

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Can the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs explain how these historic investments will improve the lives of Quebecers and contribute to Canada's transition to a green economy?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pontiac for her question.

Canadians rely on public transit to get to where they need to be. That is why our government is investing \$780 million to put 1,229 new electric buses on Quebec roads.

This historic investment in partnership with the Government of Canada will, of course, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, support good jobs in Quebec's manufacturing industry and give Quebecers a modern and reliable means of transportation.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, a mother and her child were fatally stabbed in a random attack outside of an Edmonton school. The suspected killer had been released on bail 18 days prior. He had a long history of violence and if he had not been released, this woman and her child would still be alive.

The Edmonton Police Department and police departments across the country are demanding serious bail reform.

Will the Liberal government finally listen and reverse all of its reckless catch-and-release bail policies?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our sympathies go out to the family in question here. Canadians deserve to feel safe, and we are taking measures, in concert with the provinces and territories, to do just that.

The hon. member will notice that there is something on the Order Paper, and hopefully that bail reform will be coming soon.

We have listened and we have worked with our provinces and territories, our provincial and territorial counterparts. We have worked with police associations. We have listened to them, and we have a plan moving forward.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the challenging thing is this. How can Canadians trust the Liberal minister when it is his Liberal government that created the problem, and it is not just us saying this?

If we look at last month, the Victoria Police Department warned the public that a man charged with 10 counts of sexual assault with a weapon had been released on bail. Why was this vile rapist released on bail, we may ask. The Victoria Police Department pointed to Bill C-75, a Liberal bill from 2019, that reformed the bail system.

Again, I am asking if the Liberals will reverse all their reckless and dangerous catch-and-release bail policies and keep Canadians safe once and for all. Will they do that?

• (1510)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I obviously share the hon. member's concern.

Bill C-75 did not fundamentally change the law on bail in Canada. It codified a number of Canada's Supreme Court decisions, and in certain cases with respect to sexual assault made it harder to get bail by adding another reverse onus provision in that particular bill.

We have heard the call with respect to repeat violent offenders. We have heard the call with respect to offences with weapons. We have promised to act. It is a complicated problem, but we are doing it together with the provinces and territories.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we insist on the need for significant changes to be made to the legislation that allows dangerous criminals, even recidivists, out on bail, as my colleague mentioned. The result is that criminals end up on the street instead of in prison. This needs to change.

Will the Prime Minister end the revolving door system that he created, keep criminals in prison and protect our communities for once and for all?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to be safe and to feel safe.

That is exactly what we are doing. Since October, we have been working with the provinces and territories and with our counterparts in justice and public safety to see how we can improve the bail system, especially in cases of recidivism and violent crime. That is exactly what we are in the process of doing. My colleague can look at the Order Paper.

* * *

[English]

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country are watching as wildfires rage across central and northern Alberta. Frontline responders are courageously fighting the fires and evacuating communities. Tens of thousands of Albertans have been forced from their homes.

Could the government update the House on what support it is offering the province in this trying time?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts are with all Albertans during this difficult time.

The Canadian Armed Forces have deployed approximately 300 members to assist with fighting fires, as well as air lifts and engineering supports. We are also making sure to match Red Cross donations.

The Prime Minister is in Alberta today, and we will continue to stand with Albertans during their time of need.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after ignoring 20 non-compliance orders from the Human Rights Tribunal and spending \$10 million fighting first nations kids in court, the government has a new scheme. It is simply ignoring its obligation to pay the therapists who are providing first nations children services under Jordan's principle. The minister's policies are in direct defiance of the rights tribunal ruling and are threatening to put child therapists into bankruptcy. We are talking about the most fragile children in the country.

Why is the government so determined to deny first nations children access to the Jordan's principle services to which they are entitled?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since July 1, 2016, the federal government has approved an estimated 2.56 million products under Jordan's principle. This means that indigenous children are getting the health services they need all across the country.

As the member opposite knows, I am looking into this particular case. We will ensure that providers who provide services can get paid in an acceptable time frame to continue to deliver those services.

* * *

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, in the 2019 federal election campaign, the Liberal government promised to plant two billion trees to capture carbon. It also allocated \$3.2 billion one year later for that purpose.

However, the latest report by the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development indicates that, based on the audit of the first two years of planting and at the rate things are going, the program will not even reach 4% of its goal by 2030.

Cities, provinces and Canadians have the right to know how the goal will be achieved. Where is the \$3.2 billion and where is the plan to plant all these trees?

• (1515)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank the commissioner for his report. When he presented his report, he acknowledged that we are taking this seriously.

Government Orders

Between the time that he carried out his study and when he presented the report, we had negotiated or were in the process of negotiating six agreements for planting more than 260 million trees.

In Vaudreuil, Quebec, the Minister of Environment announced just last week that 275,000 trees had been planted. We are on track to reaching our goal and we will get the job done.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—IMMIGRATION LEVELS

The House resumed from May 11 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Be-
loeil—Chambly relating to the business of supply.

[English]

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1520)

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1530)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 322)

YEAS

Members

Aitchison	Albas
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Bloch	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon

Government Orders

Gaudreau	Genuis	El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Gill	Godin	Fergus	Fillmore
Goodridge	Gourde	Fisher	Fonseca
Gray	Hallan	Fortier	Fragiskatos
Jeneroux	Kelly	Fraser	Freeland
Kmiec	Kram	Fry	Gaheer
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Garrison	Gazan
Kusie	Lake	Gerretsen	Gould
Lantsman	Larouche	Green	Guilbeault
Lawrence	Lehoux	Hajdu	Hanley
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)	Hardie	Hepfner
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert	Holland	Housefather
Lloyd	Lobb	Hughes	Hussen
Maguire	Martel	Hutchings	Iacono
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)	Idlout	Ien
McLean	Melillo	Jaczek	Johns
Michaud	Moore	Jowhari	Julian
Morantz	Morrison	Kayabaga	Kelloway
Motz	Muys	Khalid	Khera
Nater	Normandin	Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
O'Toole	Patzer	Kwan	Lalonde
Paul-Hus	Pauzé	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Perkins	Perron	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Plamondon	Poilievre	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Rayes	Redekopp	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Reid	Rempel Garner	Lightbound	Long
Richards	Roberts	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Rood	Ruff	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Scheer	Schmale	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Seeback	Shields	Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Shipley	Simard	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Small	Soroka	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
Steinley	Ste-Marie	McGuinty	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Strahl	Stubbs	McLeod	McPherson
Thériault	Therrien	Mendès	Medicino
Thomas	Tochor	Miao	Miller
Tolmie	Trudel	Morrice	Morrissey
Uppal	Van Popta	Murray	Naqvi
Vecchio	Vidal	Ng	Noormohamed
Vien	Viersen	O'Connell	Oliphant
Vignola	Villemure	O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Vis	Wagantall	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Warkentin	Waugh	Robillard	Rodriguez
Webber	Williams	Rogers	Romanado
Williamson	Zimmer— 138	Sahota	Sajjan
		Saks	Samson
		Sarai	Scarpaleggia
		Schiefke	Serré
		Sgro	Shanahan
		Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
		Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
		Sorbara	Sousa
		St-Onge	Sudds
		Tassi	Taylor Roy
		Thompson	Turnbull
		Valdez	Van Bynen
		van Koevreden	Vandenbeld
		Virani	Vuong
		Weiler	Wilkinson
		Yip	Zahid
		Zarrillo	Zuberi— 170

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dubourg
Duguid	Dzerowicz

Abouttaif
Drouin
Ehsassi
Généreux
Hoback
Jones
McKay

PAIRED

Members

Blois
Duclos
Falk (Provencher)
Gladu
Joly
Liepert
Savard-Tremblay— 14

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

**AN ACT FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY OF
CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of the motion that 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, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-13.

● (1540)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 323)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeschen	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos

Fraser	Freeland
Gaheer	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Godin	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Johns
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khera	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)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Martel	Martínez Ferrada
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean	McLeod
McPherson	Melillo
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Muys	Naqvi
Nater	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poilievre
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Rood
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Serré

Government Orders

Government Orders

Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shiple	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Thompson	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Warkentin	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williams	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi— 301	

NAYS

Members

Housefather— 1

PAIRED

Members

Aboultouf	Blois
Drouin	Duclos
Ehsassi	Falk (Provencher)
Gladu	Hoback
Joly	Jones
Liepert	McKay
Savard-Tremblay	Waugh— 14

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

[English]

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 25 minutes.

* * *

FIRST NATIONS FISCAL MANAGEMENT ACT

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill C-45 at third reading stage.

Hon. Mary Ng (for the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations) moved that Bill C-45, An Act to amend the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts, and to make a clarification relating to another Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *kwe. Tansi.* Hello. *Bonjour.*

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that Canada's Parliament is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to the First Nations Fiscal Management Act. I would like to recognize the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations for his work on this piece of legislation. I would also like to thank my colleagues on INAN, the indigenous and northern affairs committee, for their careful consideration and study of the bill.

The proposed amendments in Bill C-45 align with the April 2020 report of our committee entitled “Barriers to Economic Development in Indigenous Communities”. We worked collaboratively to achieve the recommendations in that report to champion the economic reconciliation and self-determination by unanimously supporting Bill C-45. Before I continue, I would like to acknowledge the members of that committee for the great work they did and the collaborative work we have done in making sure we passed it with urgency.

Most of all, I would like to recognize the chairs of the first nations-led institutions that put forward the proposed changes to the act and co-developed Bill C-45 with our government. I thank Harold Calla, executive chair of the First Nations Financial Management Board; Manny Jules, chief commissioner of the First Nations Tax Commission; Ernie Daniels, president of the First Nations Finance Authority; as well as Allan Claxton and Jason Calla of the First Nations Infrastructure Institute development board.

The First Nations Fiscal Management Act is an optional piece of legislation, with 348 signatories, and it is an alternative to the Indian Act regime. It is important to key in on the word “optional” because the stakeholders have told us that it is always important to give indigenous communities the choice. They deserve that choice when it comes to their affairs. It is consistent with what we have passed with the UNDRIP Act.

With this act, first nations can assert their jurisdiction in the areas of financial management, taxation and access to capital markets. Bill C-45 was co-developed with the first nations institutions under the act, and responds to what first nations have called for, to improve and expand the current services available under the act, and to establish the First Nations Infrastructure Institute.

Some of these proposed legislative amendments are as follows: modernize and expand the mandates of the tax commission and the financial management board respectively to better reflect the increasing needs for their services; allow the tax commission, the financial management board and the proposed infrastructure institute to collect and analyze data; and establish for the first time ever a First Nations Infrastructure Institute as a national indigenous-led organization that would support first nations scheduled to the act, as well as indigenous organizations and groups, to achieve better and more sustainable infrastructure outcomes. It would very much create a centre of excellence for indigenous infrastructure across Canada, whether dealing with wastewater or greening community buildings.

Government Orders

I would like to provide members with an example of the type of great work the First Nations Financial Management Board can support.

In my riding about 10 years ago, the Membertou first nation in Cape Breton received the board's first-ever financial systems certification, which provided the community with access to long-term, affordable capital to the first nations financial authority. I am not over-exaggerating when I say that this was a game changer for that community and the region of Cape Breton. It allowed the first nations to refinance, freeing up funds to reinvest in business developments. The results have been fantastic. They include an \$8.2-million elementary school, a 90-lot housing development and a \$9.5-million highway interchange that allows access to future commercial developments on land owned by the Membertou.

From this—

• (1545)

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order from the hon. member for London West.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Mr. Speaker, I had some technical difficulties with my voting app. I had my hand up while they were calling the votes, but the Speaker did not recognize me, so I would like to request unanimous consent to have my vote counted as yea for the last vote, which was for Bill C-13.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion, please say nay.

It is agreed.

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

The vote is recorded as yea.

Thank you for that point of order.

Continuing debate, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I will continue. I do not know how my clip is going to go after that, but I hope you will afford me a little time to go back and get myself back to what I was talking about.

• (1550)

The Deputy Speaker: You have five minutes and 29 seconds left. I am sure you can get a great clip out of that one. I will back it up to an even six minutes.

The hon. member.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the First Nations Finance Authority was a game-changer for the Membertou community. This allowed the first nations to refinance, freeing up funds to reinvest in business development, and the results have been fantastic. They include an \$8.2-million elementary school, a 90-lot housing development, and a \$9.5-million highway interchange that allowed access to future commercial development on land owned by Membertou. From this, members of the first nation went on to build the Membertou Sport and Wellness Centre, one of the largest sport-

ing venues on Cape Breton Island, and the Lanes at Membertou, 16 lanes of bowling with state-of-the-art technology.

Perhaps Membertou's greatest feat was the acquisition of the Clearwater fishery. If anyone had told me that the largest economic and commercial investment in Cape Breton would come during my first years of being an MP, I would have said they were joking with me. However, the \$1-billion acquisition of Clearwater, with six other first nations, which were all part of the First Nations Finance Authority, was a game-changer for those communities.

The Membertou Development Corporation is now home to 12 corporate entities. This is in keeping with the remarkable success the Membertou First Nation has had in recent years. Membertou received certification from the International Organization for Standardization, ISO, in 2002, becoming the first indigenous organization to do so in Canada and leading the way for others.

With the support of first nations institutions under the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, incredible change is possible. I want to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and persistence of Membertou's chief, council and their staff.

Moving back to Bill C-45, passing this proposed legislation would allow us to create those differences in other communities, create those successes in first nations communities across Canada, enhance the act and further support first nations communities as they rebuild their nations and advance self-determination.

I encourage all members of this House to join me in supporting this bill and in supporting the first nations institutions under the act, which co-developed the amendments and which are creating such important change for so many indigenous communities across Canada by supporting self-determination and economic reconciliation.

Wela'liog.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am asking for clarification. If my memory serves me correctly, Clearwater was a company or organization that the government just about bankrupted, with over 500 jobs of the people in Grand Banks, when the former fisheries minister took a surf clam quota away from that organization, giving it to a false corporation, one with which the fisheries minister had close family ties. A former Liberal MP and a sitting MP's brother got awarded this lucrative surf clam quota. We got the government to reverse its decision and shuffle that minister.

It was before this hon. member of Parliament's time, but I am just asking if he is indeed referring to the same Clearwater that the government just about bankrupted.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, the biggest part of my speech was talking about the enormous amount of success that communities are seeing while utilizing some of the legislation and the tools that our government has provided.

Government Orders

However, now that we are on the subject of Clearwater, it was great to see, within the first year, a return of record profits. It seems that when first nations communities are able to take over and really show the world what indigenous peoples can do when given the opportunity, that is what we get to see. Chief Terry's words on the national media were legendary. He said, about this deal and this acquisition, "It made us look like geniuses". I am really proud that my government was a little part of that.

• (1555)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I do enjoy working with the hon. member at the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

Regarding Bill C-45, as first nations begin to move toward financial independence, it does not mean that governments are alleviated from their obligations to meet the needs of first nations communities. I wonder if the member agrees with me that while we move toward that, governments will always have obligations to meet the needs of first nations communities.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Nunavut sits with me on the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs and is a very important member of that committee.

I agree with her fully that this does not release the government in terms of its fiduciary obligations to first nations communities. What this gives to communities are tools to get outside of the Indian Act. One of the shirts that I often see when I go to powwows with my son is a shirt that says, "Burn sage, sweetgrass and the Indian Act".

What our government is doing is pivoting from the Indian Act to giving communities options they can opt out of, fully with their own systems, fully with their own autonomy. Our eventual goal is to make sure that we focus on the valuable work that we need to do and the UNDRIP Act, and to make sure that all government departments are consistent with that.

I would like to thank the member for her hard work in making sure that we got Bill C-45 where it is today.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested to hear the speech of my colleague, especially in the area of autonomy and first nations working toward a greater independence and partnerships. My riding neighbours Kahnawake, and in recent years I have been very energized to see a number of partnerships between organizations and companies in Kahnawake and other individuals and organizations. Can my colleague please comment on this approach?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I think we have heard, loud and clear, from indigenous communities at the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and across Canada, that processes work only if they are co-developing the process. The process works only if they are helping lead this process.

With this legislation, we have four organizations in Canada that have been working really hard, for many years, to ensure that we move forward on this. The biggest thing that we have to ensure is that it is optional for communities, that we are not forcing anything on Indian Act communities, that this is part of it only if they choose to be a part of it. That is the biggest part of respecting another nation's self-determination.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, I am running for Prime Minister to put Canadians back in charge of their lives, and nowhere is this more true than when it comes to our first nations, which have suffered for far too long under a paternalistic and overpowering federal government and a so-called "Indian Act", which seems determined and designed to prevent first nations from making their own decisions and controlling their own lives. That is why Conservatives have long called for empowering first nations governments to take control of their land, resources, money and decisions.

That is why we are so happy that the government has copycatted one of our central proposals to make that happen with regard to infrastructure. The Liberals have included it in their budget, and we are pleased that they have carved it off the budget and allowed it to pass through the House separately, expedited as we asked for, so that we can get it done.

Let us talk about what this bill would do.

I just got off the phone with the great Manny Jules. He is the head of the First Nations Tax Commission. He and his family were among the architects of allowing first nations to collect their own local property tax revenues. He has fought his entire life to allow first nations governments and decision-makers to take control of the money that would otherwise go to Ottawa and to allow the local first nations to decide for themselves, rather than relying on the incompetence of the bureaucracy and politicians in Ottawa.

In other words, he told me that he is tired and first nations are tired of being the fastest turtles in the room, because that is how the system of infrastructure finance, he says, has worked, or failed to work, under the existing rules that we are about to change. In the past, a first nation that wanted to build something would have to apply for financing from Ottawa. Sometimes, it takes as long as 10 years for the bureaucrats to wrap their heads around the most basic infrastructure project that other communities would take for granted.

Many of my constituents ask why it is that our first nations cannot have clean drinking water systems in their communities. The answer is that none of us would have clean drinking water if we had to live under the same impossible and incompetent rules that the federal government imposes on first nations. Having to apply to a government that is 2,000 miles away and to deal with bureaucrats they have never met and do not know, who have never been to their community, to sign off on every single detail of every infrastructure plan, of course, is going to prevent things from getting done.

What we need to do is stop stopping and start starting, and to do that, we need to get Ottawa out of the way. The bill before us would do that.

Government Orders

It is a common-sense proposal. Here is how it would work: If a first nation wants to build something, instead of just asking for permission from the bureaucrats in Ottawa, it can monetize its future revenues to build long-standing assets. Let us say they are building a bridge that will last 40 years; they would be able to amortize the cost over the 40-year period and use their annual revenue streams to pay that cost. Of course, they would issue debentures, or debt, like any other government would normally do, and they could pool their risk with other, similar first nations that have similarly high financial and infrastructure standards. This would allow them to make their own decisions about projects today using the future revenues that they will inevitably bring in, which they can guarantee and certify.

That is how things get built. It would also allow public-private partnerships. This would, of course, send the New Democrats into a panic, because they do not want any private involvement in any aspect of our lives, but it would allow first nations to team up with the pension funds and other major investors to build projects that are both profitable to investors and also extremely effective for local communities. It would allow them to build schools, hospitals, water systems, bridges, roads and training centres. All manner of things that we take for granted in the rest of Canada could be built through this. It would also allow them to own the projects and use the assets for leverage for future investments.

This is the kind of common-sense infrastructure finance that we would expect if we were living in any other part of the country, so we as Conservatives support this. We want it to happen as quickly as possible, but we also want to go further.

● (1600)

We believe that the government's paternalistic, anti-development laws, like Bill C-69, are a major attack on indigenous rights by blocking first nations from developing projects that they support, preventing paycheques and preventing revenues for programs that would lift people out of poverty. We would repeal Bill C-69 and allow first nations to build projects with their resources. We would work with them on a new model so they can keep more of the money that comes from those projects.

This is an exciting time, when first nations entrepreneurs are leading the way. Let me give one example of this. Vancouver has become a city held back by government gatekeepers. It costs \$650,000 in red tape for every new housing unit, because the city hall there is run by gatekeepers and the Prime Minister sends more money for gatekeeping. There is no wonder it is the third most expensive housing market on planet Earth. The Squamish people have their own land within the city of Vancouver but, luckily, they do not have to follow the zoning and permitting rules of city hall. They were able to approve, and are now building, 6,000 units of housing on 10 acres of land; that is 600 units per acre. If they were part of the city of Vancouver, they never would have gotten it done.

We can also look at what the Tsuut'ina Nation is doing near Calgary, building incredible business plazas that would still have been tied up in Calgary city hall bureaucracy if it had had to follow the rules in that jurisdiction. What we are seeing across the country is that first nations communities are, increasingly, far better places to

do business than the municipal jurisdictions next to them are. We can imagine what they could do if the federal government in Ottawa would get out of the way and let them get things done.

This bill would do that for traditional infrastructure projects that governments normally run and regulate. Let us imagine allowing for the same with private sector and resource development projects. It would mean more business opportunities for first nations to generate revenues to provide Canada with lower-cost goods and more powerful paycheques for all our people. Now let us imagine further, that, instead of all of the revenue coming from those projects going to Ottawa to be gobbled up by bureaucracy, and forcing first nations to ask for it back, the money stayed in those communities in the first place and they could reinvest it to create a virtuous cycle of more and more opportunity. This is the vision we have: by getting rid of the gatekeepers and getting out of the way of first nations, allowing more local autonomy in decisions about resources, construction, jobs and financial management, we believe that, over the next century, first nations can lead the country in prosperity.

That is the empowering vision that we have, but we have to get back to common sense. It is wonderful that we have one bill, just one bill, with some common sense in it from the government, which proves that even a broken clock is right twice a day. The government should listen to Manny Jules more often, listen to our first nations leaders more often and listen to the people on the ground, the people who know what has happened, the people who have the traditional wisdom. If it did that more often, we would get more bills like this, we would have more paycheques for our people, we would get more built for our country and we would all be better off. It is the common sense of the common people, united for our common home. Now, let us bring it home.

● (1605)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by thanking the Leader of the Opposition for his critics, who did a wonderful job in terms of making sure that we got this, in a timely manner, in front of us to debate. I agree with you; this is quite good in terms of common-sense legislation.

I would have to just kind of correct the member opposite. I know he does not often get up in the House to speak to indigenous issues, but when you use the term "our first nation" it comes across as possessive. Many first nations across Canada have said they do not want to be considered our possession or the possession of anyone.

Government Orders

The question I have concerns Bill C-69, which you talked about as an important thing. I agree with you when you say that indigenous communities are becoming far better places to do business. A lot of the time, when they are doing that business, indigenous communities are prioritizing what the impacts are on the environment. A lot of the things that we heard during UNDRIP were about communities wanting free, prior and informed consent when it comes to development on their area. That does not mean that they are against development but that they are for sustainable development.

Do you stand with indigenous communities and their free, prior and—

The Deputy Speaker: I just need to interrupt the member to make sure that he is asking the question through the Chair and not directly to the member. Rather than using “you” when asking a question, just try to run it through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, I will take that into consideration. I get so much time to speak to you, as a former Nova Scotia MP. Rarely do I get to speak to the Leader of the Opposition.

The question was what your thoughts are around free, prior and informed consent for indigenous communities to be able to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Again, I remind the hon. member.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Mr. Speaker, does the member opposite believe that the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous communities is important when it advances sustainable development?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I agree with the member when he says that the two shadow ministers, one of Crown-indigenous relations and the other of indigenous services, for the official opposition, the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, have done a fantastic job in advancing and fighting for first nations across the country.

With respect to the debate on free, prior and informed consent, the Prime Minister does not agree with that. He is against it. We know that because he has cancelled projects where there is unanimous support. Teck's Frontier Project mine, for example, had all 20 first nations around it agreeing with the project, and the Prime Minister walked in and cancelled it. What he likes to do is use first nations as an attempt to block things from going ahead, because that is what he really wanted to do in the first place. It is not because he cares about their well-being, but because it is a rhetorical tool for his ideological, anti-development agenda.

I believe in listening to all first nations, including those that are in favour of projects. That is why we will work with those first nations to get things done and make sure they are the primary beneficiaries and the big winners when they do get done.

• (1610)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to remind the member that first nations do not belong to the Conservative Party and to refrain from saying “our first nations”, because

first nations are self-governing nations that were here before Canada. I ask him to please remind his party to stop saying “our first nations” or “our indigenous peoples” in its terminology.

I do want to ask the member about first nations and what their priorities are. If first nations such as the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs are rejecting mining projects, does that mean he supports all first nations, as he says, even if they reject mining projects?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, she mentions the Wet'suwet'en. Twenty out of 20 Wet'suwet'en nations along the route of the Coastal GasLink pipeline are in favour. All of the elected first nations support the project, and the NDP goes against all of the elected first nations leaders and imposes the NDP's ideological agenda to try to block those opportunities. I disagree with the NDP when it takes away the land rights of first nations people in order to impose the extremist ideology of the NDP that prevents first nations from having opportunities and keeps them in poverty.

We believe in these projects like LNG Canada, the Coastal GasLink, the Haisla Nation's development of liquefied natural gas, and projects of so many other first nations that want to develop resources but have NDP politicians standing in the way. We stand on the side of first nations that want to get things done, and we do not stand with the NDP and its obstructions.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-45, an act to amend the First Nations Fiscal Management Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

As the indigenous critic for and on behalf of the New Democrats, I say that we are very pleased to show our support for the passing of Bill C-45. I share my gratitude with Harold Calla, executive chair at the First Nations Financial Management Board; Manny Jules, chief commissioner of the First Nations Tax Commission; Ernie Daniels, president and chief executive officer of the First Nations Finance Authority; and Grant Christoff, general counsel at the First Nations Infrastructure Institute. The leadership they have shown is very important for the advancement of first nations, and their acknowledgement is well deserved.

Government Orders

We have heard from other parties that this is about economic freedom and about creating economic independence. That is not solely what it is for me. If there were true reconciliation and true economic independence, Inuit, first nations and Métis would be able to thrive off the land based on their expertise and knowledge of the land. If it were truly about reconciliation, indigenous peoples would have free, prior and informed consent right at the beginning of the free entry system, and indigenous peoples' questions would be appropriately responded to during consultations at the environmental assessment phases. Only if indigenous peoples' standards were met would any development on lands be allowed to happen, knowing that it would include benefiting indigenous peoples and not only the private sector. That is what economic reconciliation would look like.

What Bill C-45 would do is open doors for first nations that wish to use the same powers that municipalities all over Canada do. It would open up ways for first nations, tribal councils, modern treaty nations and self-governing groups that have opted in to build their administrative, financial and governance capacity through the risk-managed support of the First Nations Financial Management Board. It is so that first nations can make decisions about and seek supports for infrastructure developments.

Bill C-45 would create an indigenous-led first nations infrastructure institute. First nations opting in to the first nations infrastructure institute would see the doors open for them to make decisions about owning, building and maintaining infrastructure in their communities. Bill C-45 is sorely needed because of the years of Liberal and Conservative governments' failures to properly invest in first nations and their infrastructure needs. To date, it is reported that first nations now experience a staggering infrastructure gap of at least \$30 billion.

Since my election and since becoming the indigenous critic for the New Democrats, whenever I meet with first nations, Métis and Inuit, including and especially my constituents in Nunavut, I hear frequently what the infrastructure needs are. First nations have decades-long water advisories, mercury poisoning, few to no health and well-being treatment centres, and school and, especially, housing needs that fall well below the investments people see and hear about in the rest of Canada. Since the government continues to fail in meeting the most basic infrastructure needs, my hope is that the passage of Bill C-45 would make those improvements. First nations would see significant gains. If there were schools in first nations communities like Kluane First Nation in the Yukon, for which it has been asking for years, this bill would not be necessary.

Bill C-45 would not absolve government's responsibilities to uphold treaty rights. It would not absolve government's responsibilities to ensure reconciliation.

• (1615)

Amendments to the current and other acts would include, among others, better supports for first nations seeking to create local revenue laws beyond real property taxation, strengthening the education and capacity supports available currently, supporting local revenue-based service agreements, and offering advice to self-governing first nations and other levels of government.

Bill C-45 would expand and modernize the First Nations Financial Management Board's mandate by completing the 2018 expansion of services and certification standards for new client segments, including tribal councils, and treaty and self-governing groups. It would also provide monitoring and review services.

It would create a full-time position on the First Nations Financial Management Board, establish a national indigenous-led organization under the First Nations Fiscal Management Act to achieve better and more sustainable infrastructure outcomes for first nations, expand law-making powers allowing first nations to make laws respecting the provision of services and to regulate, prohibit and impose requirements in respect of those services on reserve lands.

First nations would be given more authority and enforcement powers to ensure compliance with their local revenue and service laws. The bill would combine the fund supported by other revenues with the fund supported by local revenues. It clarifies that only borrowing members with outstanding loans could be called upon to replenish the fund in circumstances that it has used.

I repeat that this is not about economic reconciliation. First nations, Inuit and Métis were self-governing before colonialism. Through their self-governance, indigenous peoples had laws and management regimes that protected the wildlife and environment. Indigenous peoples respected important relationships with the land and with each other.

While colonial and genocidal policies continue, Inuit, first nations and Métis continue on a path of reconciliation. That relationship with the government is not reciprocal, not to the extent that will advance indigenous peoples' health and well-being.

Bill C-45 is a step to give powers to first nations to make choices and act without federal government assistance. As such, New Democrats support Bill C-45. New Democrats will continue to advocate for reconciliation that is meaningful to Inuit, first nations and Métis.

Routine Proceedings

• (1620)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her dedication and hard work on this file. I know she sits on the INAN committee with me. We have seen and heard of so many different indigenous communities from across Canada with some amazing ideas in terms of how to create economic wealth in a way that is sustainable. Within the powers of this act, we heard a lot about access to capital and indigenous communities needing access to capital to do all these great projects.

When indigenous people have access to capital, what are some of the amazing things they are able to accomplish in her riding and across Canada?

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji, I have heard some examples shared in our committee like more culturally appropriate facilities, places to smudge, and schools developed to be more culturally appropriate to first nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

It is important that we support this bill so that first nations communities can say what is important to them. If a first nations wants a school, then this bill would allow that to happen in a more expedited way than what we do with the federal government assistance.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Nunavut for her remarks. I had the opportunity to visit her riding back in 2018. I met with indigenous leaders and territorial leaders there, as well as the Northwest Territories, as part of a trip with the foreign affairs committee.

One of the issues we discussed was the government announcing an offshore drilling ban. This was announced back in 2016. The Prime Minister announced it alongside President Obama. We heard that leaders in the territories got a phone call 45 minutes before that happened. It was a complete lack of consultation.

The presumption seems to be on the part of the government that if it is blocking development, if it is saying no to something going forward, then somehow it does not need to consult. In reality, it should be consulting in either case. The government brought in a policy that has severely limited economic development in the north without proper consultation with indigenous or territorial leaders.

Can the member share what the current conversation is around that issue? Does she think the government should have been consulting before implementing this kind of policy?

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji, I think that consultation is absolutely important, but what is more important is the proper implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which declares that there should be free, prior and informed consent before any kind of development is happening. I do hope that this party supports my bill, which would make changes to the Territorial Lands Act and would make sure that there is free, prior and informed consent, even at the beginning stages, so that we do not have to end up in these conversations questioning whether consultation was appropriate or not.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have only ever heard the Conservatives talk about oil and gas whenever they talk about indigenous. However, the Liberals are

telling us about all these great projects that are going to create capital.

In Fort Albany right now, people are flying home today from weeks of being put up in hotels and community centres, because the dikes broke on the Albany River due to failed basic infrastructure, putting them at risk. We are working with the Mennonite Central Committee and True North Aid to get food hampers in. That is the reality on the ground in the communities I represent: underfunded infrastructure and having to beg to get food in, because the government has failed in its fundamental obligation to keep communities safe.

I would ask my hon. colleague: How is it possible for these communities to take economic control of their lands when they have been left in such dire straits of infrastructure poverty and a lack of an ability to control their lives?

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqagtittiji, this is very much a question about whether there can be true self-determination as indigenous peoples have been suppressed and oppressed for so long, which is why I made sure in my presentation that I talked about the genocidal policies still having an impact on first nations, Métis and Inuit communities. We have to start making sure that if we are going to talk about self-determination, if we are going to talk about reconciliation, there need to be continued investments, there need to be improved and increased investments, that allow first nations, Métis and Inuit to thrive and have a better well-being at the same level that other Canadians do here in Canada.

• (1625)

The Deputy Speaker: There being no further members rising, pursuant to an order made earlier today, Bill C-45, an act to amend the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, to make consequential amendments to other acts, and to make a clarification relating to another act is deemed read a third time and passed.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[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 table, in both official languages, the government's response to 57 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today, as the member for Calgary Centre, to present a petition from my constituents, particularly those who have relatives in Sudan.

The petitioners are asking the government to commit more resources and expedite the arrival of Sudanese applicants who have applied for Canadian citizenship, Canadian permanent residence, who have family here. There are permanent residents in Canada who are looking to bring their family and loved ones over. This has to be expedited as quickly as possible. The petitioners are asking for the expedition of this and to be put to the top of the list. Forty months is too long to wait when people are in a conflict zone, and so they are asking the government to make that commitment and get these people processed through its department as quickly as possible.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the tremendous growth of our Indo-Canadian community over the last number of years, members would know that there has been an increased demand for international flights, which is what this petition is dealing with.

The petitioners are asking the government, international airlines and regional airport authorities to look at ways to enhance international flights, in particular. It would be wonderful to see something flying right from Winnipeg to Amritsar, India, which is an idea being proposed by many people who signed the petition today.

JUSTICE

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The people of Swan River are demanding that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies that have fuelled a surge in crime throughout the rural community.

The crime severity index in the rural town of 4,000 has increased by over 50% from just five years ago. What was once a safe community has now turned into a place where people fear for their lives because the government's catch-and-release policies have allowed violent repeat offenders to be out on bail instead of in jail.

The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies that directly threaten their livelihoods in their community, and I fully support the people of Swan River.

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POINTS OF ORDER

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As you know, presenting petitions is about presenting them based on what is written in the petitions. For a member to follow up the presentation by saying he or she fully supports it is definitely against the rules.

The Deputy Speaker: In the interest of time, I will take that under advisement. I will look at it and come back with the rule that we are supposed to be following when it comes to the presenting of petitions.

* * *

● (1630)

PETITIONS

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table today a petition signed by many concerned Canadians about immigration from Hong Kong.

The petitioners note the various circumstances that have unfortunately contributed to the decline of the rule of law in Hong Kong, as well as threats to previous promises that had been made about democracy. The petitioners describe some of those events. They also raise concerns about the impact on the ability of those involved in the democracy movement to come to Canada. The petitioners believe rightly that those who are involved in the democracy movement and have had unjust charges applied to them as a result of their democracy advocacy and involvement in protests should not be prevented from coming to Canada on that basis.

There have been various prominent cases of well-known Hong Kongers like Phin Lao and Ray Wong who have experienced challenges coming to Canada as a result of an expectation that they present to police a certificate. There are many other cases from those who are not able to share their names. The petitioners of various backgrounds stand in solidarity with Hong Kongers and others who are concerned about how Canadian immigration needs to not discriminate against those who have been involved in the democracy movement.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to recognize the politicization of the judiciary in Hong Kong and its impact on the legitimacy and validity of criminal convictions, to affirm its commitment to render all national security law charges and convictions irrelevant and invalid in relation to inadmissibility provisions, to create a mechanism by which Hong Kong people with pro-democracy-related convictions may provide an explanation for such convictions on the basis of which government officials can grant exemptions to Hong Kong people who would otherwise be deemed admissible and to work with other allies, such as the U.K., the U.S., France, Australia and New Zealand, to waive criminal inadmissibility of Hong Kong people who have been convicted for political purposes and who otherwise do not have a criminal record.

PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition that I am tabling expresses the opinion of petitioners that strong medical evidence exists that access to psychedelic-assisted therapy can effectively treat existential suffering in dying, depression, anxiety, addiction, PTSD and other mental health conditions and improve quality of life.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners believe that psilocybin required for psilocybin-assisted therapy is currently only available in clinical trials and by special individual permission from Health Canada, despite its low potential for harm. Further, the petitioners argue that it is paradoxical and unethical to allow MAID in these cases while preventing the same physicians from using this kind of psychedelic-assisted therapy for those in this situation.

The petitioners call on the government to allow Canadians to have timely, unrestricted access to therapeutic psilocybin in any form, as needed, to alleviate their suffering via section 56 exemptions.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition that I am tabling is with regard to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in the People's Republic of China. The petitioners highlight the history of that persecution, which has now been going on for decades, as well as the work of David Matas and the late great David Kilgour in exposing the issue of forced organ harvesting and trafficking targeting Falun Gong practitioners.

The petitioners are calling on Canada's Parliament and the government to do everything they can to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking and to call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is in support of Bill C-257. This is a private member's bill that I have put before the House. The petitioners highlight the importance of protecting Canadians from discrimination on the basis of their political beliefs. They recognize it is the fundamental right of all Canadians to be politically active and vocal, and that it is in the best interests of Canadian democracy to protect public debate and the exchange of differing ideas.

Bill C-257 seeks to add protection against political discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Act by adding political activity or belief as prohibited grounds of discrimination. The petitioners call on the House to support Bill C-257 and to defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

• (1635)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I would like to table today deals with another issue of political discrimination.

It notes that the Liberal Party of Canada, in its 2021 election platform, put forward a proposal to discriminate against organizations in the application of charitable status if those organizations have views that are different from those of the Liberal Party on the issue of abortion. Charitable status rules already prohibit dishonest conduct and do so on a neutral basis, but the Liberal Party proposal would be to apply another values test, effectively discriminating on the basis of opinions on other issues and preventing organizations such as hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations from being able to access charitable

status on an equal basis. This is opposed by the full charitable sector. A broad range of charitable organizations oppose this proposal from the Liberal Party.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis without discrimination on the basis of political and religious values and without the imposition of another values test, and to affirm the right of all Canadians to freedom of expression.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next I would like to table a petition that calls for the release of Mr. Huseyin Celil. Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen who has been unjustly imprisoned in China for over 5,000 days. He is a Canadian citizen and a Uyghur activist who has been detained in China as a result of his advocacy for justice and for the human rights of Uyghurs.

The petitioners note that he was taken from Uzbekistan and unlawfully sent to China. The Chinese government has refused to recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and denied him access to lawyers, family and Canadian officials. He was coerced into signing a confession and underwent an unlawful and unfair trial.

Evidence, the petitioners note, now clearly shows that the Chinese government's treatment of Uyghurs meets most if not all of the criteria of genocide, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

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

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I want to table in the House—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I am actually going to table one more just to honour the member across the way, who I know appreciates this so much.

The second last petition I am going to be tabling raises concerns about proposals put forward for the euthanasia of infants. It notes that Louis Roy of the Collège des médecins du Québec recommended expanding euthanasia to “babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with severe deformities and very serious syndromes”.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are horrified by this proposal. They believe that infanticide is always wrong, that killing children is always wrong and that proposals for legalizing the killing of infants are deeply out of step with the recognition of universal human dignity that should define our criminal law. The petitioners therefore call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to legalize the killing of children in Canada.

MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition highlights a proposal by the Minister of National Defence's advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination from 2022. It was a proposal to, ironically, discriminate against chaplains from certain faith backgrounds whose faith traditions do not share the presumed progressive direction of the government.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to reject the recommendations on chaplaincy for the Canadian Armed Forces in the final report of the Minister of National Defence's advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination, and to affirm the right of all Canadians, including Canadian Armed Forces chaplains, to freedom of religion.

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POINTS OF ORDER

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: Before proceeding, I thought I would dispense with the point of order the hon. member brought up.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, 2017, at page 1,192, chapter 22, under "Public Petitions", says, "No debate is permitted during the presentation of petitions." If we go to Standing Order 36(7), it also says, "Any comment on the merits of a petition—even a Member's personal agreement or disagreement with the petitioners—has been deemed to constitute a form of debate and is therefore out of order. Members are permitted a brief factual statement".

This is just a reminder to members who will be presenting petitions at a later date.

• (1640)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, you reading the ruling made me think of something. When you say that a petition is supposed to be brief, is that per petition or per presenter?

The Deputy Speaker: It is per petition. Once members have the floor, they can, apparently, present as many as they want in the 15 minutes allotted for petitions.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1362 to 1367, 1369, 1370 and 1384.

[Text]

Question No. 1362—**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:**

With regard to the defence policy review of "Strong, Secure, Engaged", announced in budget 2022: (a) what is the total number of contracts signed for professional and management services with third-party service providers; (b) what are the details of all contracts in (a), including the (i) company the contract was awarded to, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) date the contract was awarded, (iv) expected deliverables; and (c) reflected as a number and a percentage, what is the total number of contracts in (a) that were (i) sole-sourced, (ii) awarded through a competitive bidding process?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Defence does not have any professional and management services contracts with third party service providers related to the categories in the question above.

National Defence is committed to openness and transparency, and proactively discloses contracts valued over \$10,000 publicly on Open Canada. Please see: <https://open.canada.ca/en/proactive-disclosure>.

Question No. 1363—**Ms. Louise Chabot:**

With regard to the government's maximum financial contribution of \$260 million through the new Building Canada Fund, under the Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component, for the project to extend Highway 19 between Laval and Bois-des-Filion, in collaboration with the Government of Quebec: (a) what is the total amount allocated by the government as part of the agreement for this project; and (b) what are the terms and conditions of the funding agreement for this project?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to part (a), Infrastructure Canada has allocated \$260,435,500 to the extension of Highway 19 between Highway 440 in Laval and Highway 640 in Bois-des-Filion project under the provincial-territorial infrastructure component of the national and regional projects of the new building Canada fund, PTIC-NRP-NBCF.

With respect to part (b), the specific terms and conditions of the contribution agreement for this project are being finalized between Canada and Quebec.

In 2018, an umbrella agreement was signed to establish the terms and conditions by which Canada would make its contribution to Quebec for certain road projects under the PTIC-NRP-NBCF.

On March 26, 2019, a federal approval in principle was granted to the project under the PTIC-NRP-NBCF allowing eligibility of expenditures as of that date subject to certain conditions and the signing of an amendment to the Canada-Quebec umbrella agreement signed in 2018, to include the project.

In February 2023, negotiations between Canada and Quebec regarding the inclusion of the project in the amendment to the umbrella agreement were concluded. Approval by Quebec's Conseil des ministres is now required in order to allow the signing of this umbrella agreement.

Routine Proceedings

The terms and conditions of the PTIC-NRP-NBCF will apply to the project in relation to matters such as eligible expenses, reporting on project progress and communications. Canada's role in the projects is in relation to financial contributions and oversight, whereas Quebec is responsible for the development of the projects and their subsequent operation. Canada will be able to reimburse claims submitted by Quebec in accordance with the terms of the agreement once it is signed.

Question No. 1364—Mr. Alex Ruff:

With regard to the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation (CDIC) insurance amount of \$100,000: (a) since November 4, 2015, have there been any (i) meetings, (ii) reports, (iii) policy briefs, (iv) recommendations proposed, for raising the insurable amount, and, if so, what are the details of each, including the date and summary; (b) through what processes is the CDIC insurable amount determined; and (c) through what processes can the CDIC insurable amount be amended?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, deposit insurance is an important element of Canada's financial system stability framework. It contributes to public confidence in the financial system by protecting depositors' savings in the unlikely event that a deposit-taking institution fails.

The deposit insurance limit is set out in the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation Act. Changing the limit would require a legislative amendment. At this time, the deposit insurance limit remains at \$100,000 for each of the nine separate deposit categories.

The Department of Finance Canada held public consultations on changes considered to the deposit insurance framework in the fall of 2016. The consultation paper on the deposit insurance review can be found at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/programs/consultations/2016/deposit-insurance.html>.

Approximately 15 submissions were received from a range of stakeholders, including Canada's six largest banks and the Canadian Bankers Association. In addition, the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, CDIC, held public consultations on proposed changes to the joint and trust account disclosure bylaw needed to implement the deposit insurance review provisions. Submissions the government received permission to publish can be found at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/programs/consultations/2016/deposit-insurance/submissions.html>.

Overall, CDIC depositor data at the time indicated that the framework is working well and provides sufficient coverage for the savings of Canadians. Approximately 97% of all eligible deposit accounts are fully covered under the current framework.

The analysis undertaken for the review indicated that raising the deposit insurance limit would not enhance protection to the savings of the vast majority of individuals in Canada because their deposit accounts are currently already covered under the framework. In line with international best practices, Canada's framework covers the large majority of depositors but leaves a substantial amount of corporate deposits exposed to the possibility of loss in the event of a bank failure. These uncovered depositors, therefore, have an interest in the risk management practices of the member institution.

Increasing the limit would provide a proportionally higher benefit to corporate depositors, while increasing CDIC exposure which

would need to be offset through additional premiums paid by CDIC member institutions, thereby potentially affecting the cost of financial services. This would not further the objectives of deposit insurance and could shift the existing balance between financial stability and market discipline, contrary to international best practices.

Based on the review, several proposed amendments to the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation Act were introduced in 2018 with legislative changes made from 2019 to 2022. The amendments modernized the scope of deposit insurance coverage to better protect depositors, e.g., foreign currency and extended term limits on guaranteed investment certificates, while clarifying and simplifying the deposit insurance framework for depositors, making it easier to understand, e.g., registered deposits and mortgage tax accounts.

Budget 2023 announced the government may amend the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation Act to provide expanded authorities to increase deposit insurance and related measures in the event of a market disruption.

The budget implementation act, 2023, no. 1 proposes amendments to the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation Act to authorize the Minister of Finance, upon the Governor in Council's approval, to increase the deposit insurance coverage limit until April 30, 2024. Specifically, the proposed legislation would provide the minister temporary authorities to increase the deposit insurance limit to a higher threshold if doing so would, for example, protect financial stability and support consumer confidence in the banking system. This would strengthen the financial stability tools available to the Government of Canada in the current economic environment.

Should the minister seek to temporarily increase the deposit insurance limit, the minister would be required to consult the Governor of the Bank of Canada, the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, the president and chief executive officer of the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the commissioner of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada prior to doing so.

The minister would be required to publish a report and table it in Parliament on a monthly basis during the period in which the deposit insurance limit is raised. The minister would also be required to undertake a review of these amendments after April 30, 2024, and publish a report on the review.

Question No. 1365—Mr. Taylor Bachrach:

With regard to government assessments comparing different procurement options for the proposed High Frequency Rail project: has the government conducted any assessments, and, if so, (i) which external professionals or consultants, if any, were used in conducting the assessments, (ii) which procurement approaches did the assessments consider, (iii) what were determined to be the advantages and disadvantages of each procurement approach considered, (iv) which other transportation projects or jurisdictions were analyzed as part of the assessments?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (i), the joint project office, a joint venture between the Canada Infrastructure Bank and VIA Rail, led the assessments of the different delivery models for the high frequency rail, HFR, project. The assessments were supported by the joint project office's advisers, including ARUP and AECOM, owner's engineer, Steer, ridership and revenue, Agentis Capital, financial modelling, DLA Piper, legal, and Ernst & Young, EY, which acted as a strategic financial, market and commercial adviser on the project to Transport Canada.

With regard to part (ii), in general, two traditional public-private partnership, P3, procurement options were analyzed for the HFR project, one in which the private sector partner would be responsible to design, build, finance and maintain the project, DBFM, and another in which operational responsibility would also be transferred, DBFOM. Within these two general strategies, different levels of responsibility transfer were further examined, for example, identifying specific components of maintenance or operational responsibility. Transferring responsibility for collecting revenues was also examined as an aspect of operational transfer.

An analysis of these options, including an assessment against a traditional design-build procurement model, indicated that a DBFOM model, inclusive of revenue transfer, showed the most promise for HFR.

An important enhancement to the procurement strategy of the DBFOM model is the inclusion of the co-development approach. Rather than defining the entirety of the project up front before engaging the private sector, the co-development approach sees the private sector participating as a partner in developing the project. This brings in private sector expertise and innovation earlier, which is of particular value for a project with the size, complexities and long-term nature of HFR.

With regard to part (iii), for the DBFM approach, the key advantages included a potentially faster procurement process due to less complexity, avoiding duplication of operating roles between VIA Rail and a new operator, reliance on VIA Rail's strong track record of controlling costs and their experience in operating rail in a complex operating environment, as well as lower costs of financing overall. Disadvantages included reduced fiscal certainty by transferring less risk and responsibility to the private sector, a smaller scope for the private sector to drive innovation on a large and complex project, and more difficulties in interfacing between the "operations" and the "infrastructure" than if these had different responsible entities. Also considered was that a unique project with the magnitude and transformational potential of HFR would benefit from a broader exposure of responsibilities to the private sector.

In the case of DBFOM, key advantages included higher fiscal certainty by transferring costs to the private sector, simpler infrastructure-operations interface risks by having a single responsible entity, that responsibility for operations and revenues would improve the incentive to build a project that operates successfully over the long term and would encourage innovative thinking, and the drawing in of external expertise to increase ridership and revenue, as well as be ready to adapt to change. Market outreach also suggested that there was more likely to be interest by the private sector in bidding on a DBFOM than a DBFM. Disadvantages included the

higher cost of capital, in particular when that capital is taking on more responsibility and risk, as well as the requirement for a more complex oversight approach to ensure the project achieves public interest objectives.

With regard to part (iv), the following transportation projects were analyzed when evaluating different procurement models and approaches: HSL Zuid, high-speed rail, Netherlands; Ottawa LRT, light rail, Canada; Eglinton LRT, light rail, Canada; Denver Eagle FasTrack, commuter rail, U.S.A.; Waterloo LRT+A21, light rail, Canada; Hurontario LRT, light rail, Canada; Canada Line, rapid transit, Canada; Brightline, higher speed rail, U.S.A.; Gautrain Rapid Rail, higher speed rail, South Africa; Zaragoza Tramway, tram system, Spain; REM, express rail, Canada; North East Link Program – Central Package, tunnel, Australia; Sydney Metro City & Southwest, rail, Australia; Sydney Metro Northwest, rail, Australia; London South Eastern Railway, passenger rail, England; United Utilities Haweswater Aqueduct, pipeline, England; Thames Tideway Tunnel Project, tunnel, England; Sepulveda Transit Corridor Project, rail, U.S.A.; Potrero Bus Yard Project, bus yard, U.S.A.; and Maryland Traffic Relief Plan – Phase 1, road, U.S.A.

Question No. 1366—Mr. Taylor Bachrach:

With regard to Transport Canada's (TC) Small Vessel Compliance Program (SVCP): (a) how many vessels have owners registered with the SVCP since its inception, broken down by year; (b) how many vessels were denied certification after having applied for registration, broken down by postal code and reason for denial; (c) how many vessels registered in each year did not register in the subsequent year; (d) how many small vessels does TC estimate are currently eligible for the SVCP; and (e) how many of the vessels currently certified by the SVCP are commercial towing vessels?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada undertook an extensive preliminary search in order to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response. Transport Canada concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Question No. 1367—Mr. Taylor Bachrach:

With regard to emission reduction objectives established by the government, per the requirement of the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act: (a) what is the 2026 objective; (b) on what evidence or modelling was the objective based; (c) does the government anticipate Canada will surpass or fall short of its 2026 objective; and (d) what does it estimate the difference of (c) will be, in tons of CO² equivalent emissions?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), subsection 9(2.1) of the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act requires the Government of Canada to include an interim greenhouse gas, GHG, objective for 2026 in its 2030 emissions reduction plan, ERP. Canada's 2026 interim GHG objective is 20% below 2005 levels. The interim objective is not an official target akin to Canada's 2030 nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement, but the act does require that the mandatory progress reports associated with the 2030 ERP, to be published in 2023, 2025 and 2027, include an update on the progress that has been made towards achieving the interim GHG emissions objective for 2026.

With regard to part (b), the 2026 interim GHG objective was set to be in line with Canada's emissions reduction trajectory to 2030, based on the projections included in the 2030 ERP. Projections for the 2030 ERP use a combination of two modelling approaches: a bottom-up approach and a back-casting approach.

The bottom-up approach provides an estimation for emissions reductions achievable from existing climate measures, including some ERP measures, which at the time of publishing the ERP accounted for 470 megatonnes, Mt, or 36% below 2005 levels.

The back-casting approach, on the other hand, caps total emissions at the level needed to achieve the 2030 target of 40% below 2005 levels and identifies economically efficient potential reductions from each sector.

With regard to (c), results from Canada's most recent GHG emissions projections to 2030 coming from the "With Additional Measures" scenario, which was submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2022 as part of Canada's Eighth National Communication and Fifth Biennial Report on Climate Change, show that Canada is still on track to meet it with emissions being projected to be 18.2% below 2005 emissions in 2026.

With regard to (d), according to the results from the "With Additional Measures" scenario, the difference between Canada's projected 2026 emissions and its target is 13 Mt of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Question No. 1369—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to Transport Canada's (TC) response to flight delays caused by air traffic controller (ATC) shortages at the Toronto (YYZ), Montreal (YUL) and Vancouver (YVR) airports: (a) what are TC's estimates related to shortages of operational ATCs in (i) 2023, (ii) 2024, (iii) 2025; (b) how many times were ground delays, programs or operational reductions put in place due to a lack of required amount of ATCs, broken down by month and airport; (c) what is the total number of flights that have been impacted in relation to shortages of operational ATCs, broken down by month for the last five years; (d) what was the average length of the delay for the flights impacted; and (e) what is the breakdown of (c) by (i) commercial passenger, (ii) cargo, (iii) private, aircraft?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada is the safety regulator of air navigation operation services in Canada whereas NAV Canada is the service provider. In its role, Transport Canada does not generate the type of data being requested. This type of data relates to operations and, as such, most of the information being sought may be available from NAV Canada.

Question No. 1370—Mr. Todd Doherty:

With regard to the information leaks about the contents of the budget by senior government sources to multiple media outlets on March 27, 2023, prior to the budget being released on March 28, 2023: (a) did the government launch an investigation to uncover the identity of those who leaked budget information, and, if so, what are the details of the investigation; (b) if no investigation was launched, why not; and (c) does the government have a double standard on investigating leaks based on whether or not the leak is part of a communications strategy initiated or approved by the Office of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office, PCO, did not launch an investigation or a fact-finding effort regarding a leak of information pertaining to the budget.

PCO investigates unauthorized disclosures in a consistent and standardized manner.

Question No. 1384—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to the government's net debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio calculation: does the government include the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) assets as part of its net debt calculation, and, if so, what is Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio without using CPP assets as part of its calculation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal debt as presented in federal budget documents does not include the financial assets of the Canada and Quebec pension plans, CPP and QPP.

That said, when presented for the country as whole, i.e., including all levels of government, Canada's net debt, total liabilities less financial assets, does include the financial assets of the CPP and QPP. These assets have been accumulated through decades of savings by Canadians and are of significant value.

Statistics Canada and the International Monetary Fund do not publish a measure of Canada's net debt that excludes the financial assets of the CPP and QPP, given that these assets are considered part of the general government sector under international accounting standards.

Canada's well-funded public pension programs are an international rarity. Most advanced countries operate pay-as-you-go systems, where current contributors pay for current retirees. By accumulating CPP and QPP assets over decades, Canadians have ensured that Canada's public pension plans are sustainable, meaning that they are well funded for at least the next 75 years at current contribution rates, which greatly enhances Canada's overall fiscal sustainability.

The choice that Canadians have made to set money aside to keep the CPP and QPP sustainable for future generations is a tremendous fiscal advantage for Canada relative to most other countries, many of which have chosen not to fund their pension plans. As a result, these assets are rightly included when assessing Canada's fiscal position relative to its international peers.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1361, 1368, 1371 to 1383 and 1385 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1361—Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:

With regard to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) reconstitution measures, since October 6, 2022: (a) what is the total number of contracts signed for professional and management services with third-party service providers; (b) what are the details of all contracts in (a), including the (i) company the contract was awarded to, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) date the contract was awarded, (iv) expected deliverables; and (c) reflected as a number and a percentage, what is the total number of contracts in (a) that were (i) sole-sourced, (ii) awarded through a competitive bidding process?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1368—Mr. Taylor Bachrach:

With regard to homeowner applications received by the Greener Homes program since its inception: (a) what is the breakdown of applications by postal code; (b) what percentage of applications have been (i) approved, (ii) denied, and, for each category, in which postal codes; (c) how many of the applications in (b)(ii) have involved heat pump installations and in which postal codes; (d) what is the average length of time between the submission of an application and reimbursement; and (e) what targets has the department set for the (i) number of completed projects, (ii) number of heat pump installations, (iii) total emissions reductions achieved by the program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1371—Ms. Raquel Dancho:

With regard to the government's decision to ban TikTok from government devices: (a) what threat or risk assessments were done by the government that led to the decision, and what were the findings of each assessment; (b) what is the government's specific rationale for banning TikTok; (c) why did the government not issue a directive to stop spending on advertising through TikTok at the same time that it banned TikTok; and (d) what are the details of all memorandums or briefing notes received by ministers or their staff about TikTok since November 4, 2015, including, for each, the (i) sender, (ii) recipient, (iii) date, (iv) title, (v) summary of the contents, (vi) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1372—Mr. Clifford Small:

With regard to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans' February 2023 decision to not renew salmon farming licenses in the Discovery Islands of British Columbia: (a) what evidence was considered in making the decision to phase out Atlantic salmon farming; (b) what evidence was rejected by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in determining the decision to phase out salmon farming; (c) what is the expected impact on food prices and availability for Canadian consumers due to this decision; (d) what is the expected impact on jobs and the economy due to this decision; (e) what is the expected impact on the jobs and economies of those Indigenous communities impacted by this decision; (f) what consultations were conducted to reach this decision, including the (i) date of the engagement, (ii) communities engaged, (iii) community's feedback regarding the impact on their way of life and economic prosperity; (g) which standard consultation processes were ignored or expedited in any way; (h) what is the climate change impact of this decision, including through food importation to replace Canadian production; and (i) what are the details of all memoranda or briefing notes prepared to support the 2023 decision to not renew these licenses, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipient, (iv) title, (v) subject matter, (vi) summary of contents, (vii) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1373—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to the Canadian Forces Housing Differential (CFHD) set to come into effect on July 1, 2023, broken down by Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) base: (a) what is the projected number of CAF service members or veterans expected to qualify for the CFHD who were previously eligible for the current Post Living Differential (PLD) allowance; (b) of the projections in (a), how many service members or veterans will see a reduction in their housing allowance by (i) the full amount, (ii) more than 75 percent, (iii) more than 50 percent; (c) what is the projected number of CAF service members or veterans expected to qualify under the new differential who were not previously eligible under the current PLD; and (d) what is the projected number of CAF service members or veterans not expected to qualify under the new differential who were also not previously eligible under the current PLD?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1374—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada health care service providers that were available prior to the start of the outsourced contract with Partners in Canadian Veterans Rehabilitation Services, broken down by province or territory: (a) what is the total number of health care service providers available to veterans who are not enrolled in the rehabilitation program that offer services in (i) English only, (ii) French only, (iii) both official languages, (iv) Indigenous languages; and (b) what is the total number of health care service providers available to veterans who are enrolled in the rehabilitation program that offer services in (i) English only, (ii) French only, (iii) both official languages, (iv) Indigenous languages?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1375—Mr. Damien C. Kurek:

With regard to retirement policies for firefighters employed by the Department of National Defence (DND): (a) what are the specific differences in pension eligibility requirements between firefighters employed directly by DND compared to those employed by the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF); (b) what is the rationale for the differences; and (c) is the government planning on reducing the pension eligibility requirements for firefighters employed by DND, and, if so, (i) when will this change be made, (ii) will the change involve aligning the requirements with CAF requirements?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1376—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to social media advertising by the Canada Infrastructure Bank, for each of the last three years: what was the total amount spent on advertising, broken down by social media company or platform?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1377—Mr. Michael Barrett:

With regard to the Canadian Forces School of Communications and Electronics at Canadian Forces Base Kingston: (a) what is the number of beds required for training objectives; (b) what are the number of beds currently available; (c) what is the current known infrastructure deficiencies at the school; and (d) for each deficiency in (c), what is the timeline for when the repairs will be completed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1378—Mr. Brad Vis:

With regard to government funding for new recreation centres and swimming pool facilities, since 2016: what are the details of all projects funded, including, for each, the (i) location, (ii) name of the facility, (iii) description of the facility, (iv) date the construction began, (v) date of completion, (vi) total cost of the project, (vii) amount of federal contribution, (viii) program under which the funding was provided?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders***Question No. 1379—Mr. Luc Berthold:**

With regard to privacy breaches that occurred since January 1, 2022, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: (a) how many breaches have occurred; and (b) what are the details of each breach, including (i) the date, (ii) the number of individuals whose information was involved, (iii) the summary or description of the incident, (iv) the government program or service that was impacted by the breach, (v) whether or not the individuals whose information was involved were contacted, (vi) the date and method of how the individuals were contacted, (vii) whether or not the Privacy Commissioner was notified, (viii) the description of any measures provided to individuals impacted, such as free credit monitoring services?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1380—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to clothing allowances and expenditures on clothing for use by the Prime Minister, the Governor General or other ministers, since January 1, 2017, broken down by year: (a) which individuals have received a clothing allowance and, for each, how much was the allowance; and (b) what are the details of all expenditures by the government on clothing or outerwear which was provided to any of the individuals in (a), including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount spent and value of the item, (iii) description of the item, (iv) title of the individual?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1381—Mr. Brad Vis:

With regard to the Canada Digital Adoption Program: (a) how many and which vendors applied to administer the (i) "Grow Your Business", (ii) "Boost Your Business Technology", stream; (b) what metrics and criteria were used by the department when determining which applicants in (a) would become administrators, broken down by stream; (c) what is the dollar value of the contracts provided to Magnet to administer the "Boost Your Business Technology" stream; (d) which vendors were awarded the contracts to administer the "Grow Your Business" stream; (e) what is the dollar value of the contracts provided to each of the vendors in (d); (f) what is the number of students hired, as of March 29, 2023, via the (i) "Grow Your Business", (ii) "Boost Your Business Technology", stream; and (g) what is the number of businesses which have applied, as of March 29, 2023, to the (i) "Grow Your Business", (ii) "Boost Your Business Technology", stream?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1382—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to the Ocean Lady and Sun Sea ships refugees, broken down by age and gender: how many people (i) remain in immigration detention, (ii) were identified as having security concerns, (iii) were granted permanent residence status, (iv) had their application for permanent residence status rejected?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1383—Mr. Martin Shields:

With regard to costs related to the United States President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s visit to Ottawa in March 2023: (a) what is the total estimated cost; and (b) what is the itemized breakdown of the estimated costs?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1385—Mr. Alex Ruff:

With regard to the granting of government security clearances since 2016, broken down by year: (a) how many individuals (i) applied for, (ii) were denied (not as a result of retirement or resignation), security clearances; (b) of the denials in (a), how many were due to the individual spying or otherwise acting on behalf of a foreign government; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity and level of clearance applied (secret or top secret)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Air Transportation; the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Innovation, Science and Industry; and the hon. member for Nunavut, Northern Affairs.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I left off in my speech talking about a number of areas where this legislation could have gone even further to make it better. I am talking about mandatory ambient air quality measures and making sure we are protecting the right to a healthy environment.

The last area I want to mention is that, while important advances were made in this legislation to create the ability of the government to label products containing toxic substances, it falls short of the recommendation in the 2017 Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development's report that proposed providing mandatory labelling on all products containing toxic substances. I note that a consultation was launched last year to bring in new measures to have labelling. I hope this leads to more robust measures that would give individuals access to all the information they need when exposing themselves to any substance that may be toxic.

While this bill is not perfect, it makes some very important advances in the field of toxic substance management and environmental protection that are long overdue. I agree with both industry and the non-profit sector that we need to pass it as quickly as possible, since it has now been over a year since the bill was originally tabled in the Senate. Although the thought of it is giving me some PTSD, having worked on the bill for so long at committee, we should swiftly pass this legislation so we can get to the new round of amendments that our government has promised on CEPA that are long overdue for reform.

Government Orders

This includes the issue of ocean dumping and the rest of part 7. When the Conservatives shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard base, it put the waters around the busiest port in the city of Vancouver at risk. That vulnerability led to a major oil spill in English Bay not getting noticed for almost 24 hours, back in 2015. While the Liberal government reopened the Kitsilano Coast Guard base to protect the waters and prevent this type of event from happening again, because of the wording of CEPA right now, the shipowner who spilled all of the bunker oil was not held liable for the damage caused. This is a clear violation of the polluter pays principle that needs to be fixed.

Most importantly, I note the environmental protection actions. Under section 22, there is the possibility of bringing in environmental protection actions to allow the public to hold the government to account for not properly investigating or responding to an alleged offence under the act. However, because of how this provision is currently written, it is not practical. This needs to be changed in future iterations of the bill.

With that, as I see my time is running out, I look forward to questions from my colleagues.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member and our committee going through all of the amendments we had to go through on Bill S-5 together. I note that he proposed some of the amendments that he brought forward at the committee. They were roundly voted down by all parties at the committee. Sometimes he had some support in some parties and sometimes he did not. However, he is going to make the perfect the enemy of the good by saying we need to do this.

This last piece of CEPA reform took 20 years, and now he is saying the minute we pass this bill, we are going to start on the new one right away. Is he proposing that his perfect is going to be taking another 20 years before it is brought into force, or would he find a different way to move it through the House?

• (1645)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, it absolutely should not take another 24 years for us to address other areas of the act that were not addressed. There were many areas that were out of scope in the bill, and we should be looking at them. I mentioned a couple of them in my speech. I think those should be addressed, and I am sure there are many others as well.

I hope that when this bill passes, hopefully very swiftly, we will be able to start consultations and get feedback from folks so we can start looking at amending this legislation to make sure we are addressing the areas I mentioned and other areas. I think there is a widespread understanding that those areas need to be addressed. As the member mentioned, we should not take another 24 years to get to that work.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauré (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. We are both members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

He talked about the right to a healthy environment. Although that right has been added to the government's mission, the bill does not

create a true right. In Quebec, that right was incorporated into the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms in 2007.

Does my colleague think that it is time to have the courage to open the Constitution to formally include this right in the charter?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, our best option to protect the environment would indeed be to include this right in the Constitution. I know that would be more difficult, because it requires the support of all the provinces.

Other countries have included this right in their constitutions. I would be in favour of that. This bill will give us very good protections, but they require a very good implementation framework. I hope this process can begin shortly and we can make the necessary changes.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned at the very end the things we need to fix about this bill that were considered out of scope, and I assume that is why they were not fixed in this iteration of the bill. However, Bill S-5 was introduced as a different bill in a previous Parliament. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act has never been enforceable. People knew that. One would think this would have been the first thing to be tackled by the government when it was fixing this bill after 24 years.

I am just wondering why that did not occur to the government and why we now have to have another piece of legislation. I agree with him that we need it done as quickly as possible to make this bill enforceable. What is the point of having environmental protection if it is not enforceable?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree. We need to reform the way that environmental protection actions are done under the bill. I do not think that means the act is not enforceable. Rather, what these actions allow us to do is hold the government to account if it is not doing its job to enforce it.

As someone who comes from an environmental law background, this is very much top of mind. I agree that it has to be one of the priorities. This issue was discussed in the report in 2016-17, when we went through it, and we have some options that were recommended and that we could move forward with.

I hope this process starts very quickly, because we want to make sure that the public has trust in the way this regime will be operating. I think this would be a really critical way of making sure that we are going to build that trust.

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• (1650)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-5, the bill to amend CEPA, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. It has been in the current Parliament for far too long. It was amended in the Senate, and then we brought it back to the House of Commons; we amended it further so that it actually worked. The amendments in the Senate, in my opinion, made it a somewhat dysfunctional bill.

At the end of the day, I was happy that my colleagues from all parties got together and went through this in detail. I thank all the bureaucrats who helped us in that respect, because we had all kinds of technical questions. We recognize what we are doing here. We are parliamentarians who have backgrounds in all kinds of areas, and we are taking a look at environmental protection legislation. There is a lot of science in this, and we are turning that into legislation that lawyers are going to have to interpret so that we can actually get some results for Canadians. Thus, we can make sure they have the protection they need and that people abiding by the law have clarity about how the law affects them. This was an interesting bill to work on, and I thank all the people on all sides of the House and in the federal government who were actually helpful in moving it to this point.

Environmental protection is a core Canadian value. Canada has some of the most robust environmental protection laws in the world, yet to keep them robust, accurate and current, they have to be updated periodically. This is the intent behind Bill S-5, which seeks to significantly update and modernize the Canadian Environmental Protection Act for the first time since it was passed in 1999. As my colleague iterated, this was 24 years ago.

Bill S-5 would do many things. It would recognize that every Canadian has the right to a healthy environment; that right may be balanced with social, economic, health and scientific factors. It would require the Government of Canada to protect this right, which is something that we strongly support.

The bill would put language into the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to highlight the government's commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It would distinguish between, on the one hand, regulated toxic substances that pose the highest risks to health and the environment and, on the other hand, those that have a lower risk but should still be regulated. It also recognizes the importance of considering vulnerable populations when assessing the toxicity of a substance, as well as the importance of minimizing risks posed by exposure to such toxic substances.

The nub of what we debated ad nauseam at committee was the whole issue around the two lists, because there are now two lists, of toxic substances. We wanted to make sure that we got this right. There are thousands of so-called toxic substances in Canada. Canadians would be bewildered to find that the plastic they use in their kitchen is considered a toxic substance. This delineation of lists is to make sure that the actual toxic substances that need to be regulated, monitored and reduced in the environment, and some completely done away with, are listed on one scale; those that are used for other purposes, as long as they are used effectively, are on a lower scale. That is effectively the major change we looked at here in

making sure that we are addressing getting rid of the real toxic substances and getting them out of the environment for Canadians.

In more pragmatic terms, the bill would give the government the proper tools to regulate such substances to protect people's health while considering all the necessary factors. This would include a plan of chemicals management priorities that assesses substances and involves consultation with stakeholders and affected groups. It would also remove redundancy in regulations by mandating that only one federal government department would regulate the same chemical substance and that the most appropriate department be the one to do so.

The next part is key. This bill is supported by virtually all stakeholders, and the essence of what it would do is to reduce red tape in many ways. As a matter of experience, I know that cumbersome and outdated regulatory requirements greatly hinder the ability of Canadian businesses to deliver goods and services to Canadians. One process that we look at here is the whole single assessment regime to assess both the environmental risks and health risks of drugs. Now, it would be the Minister of Health who looks at both of those, as opposed to the two regimes that it had to go through before. Now it would go through one process in the federal government.

The bill responds to 35 recommendations that were put forward here and finalized in a 2018 report to Parliament. Bill S-5 would ease the bureaucratic burden on our economy without compromising on Canada's strong commitment to protecting its environment, which is something we strongly support.

• (1655)

When it was received by the House, this bill suffered from many flaws. For instance, it contained unclear language surrounding the right to a healthy environment. It tampered with the agreed-upon definition of the "precautionary principle", which is an internationally recognized concept. It introduced new terms that are not clearly defined and would have caused uncertainty with regard to their enforcement.

I have heard some of my colleagues' debate. My colleague from West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country talked about 15,000 deaths a year as a result of combustion in the air. Combustion in the air has always been a problem, but we try to square that in society with why our life expectancy keeps going up if 15,000 people are perishing because of combustion in the air.

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We know that, when we burn things, including trees and fields, that combustion going into our lungs has an effect and affects our lives at the end of the day. However, we have consistently gotten better in this throughout the world, primarily in Canada, where we have been dealing with it for a long time. This repetition of one-sided narratives does not move the proper debate forward. I will say that again: This repetition of misinformation does not move the actual debate forward on how we solve problems in Canada.

We need to recognize that it takes time for stakeholders to agree on a common understanding of new terms. It is not as simple as looking up definitions in the dictionary. Legal interpretations are more diverse as we go through this process. It is important, in Parliament, to make sure we define what we mean with each of these terms. That is one of the weaknesses I have seen in many of these legislative proposals that have come forward. They leave it open for the courts to interpret these terms going forward, as opposed to us, as parliamentarians, giving them that definition of what we are talking about before we actually make the legislation.

I know I had some support on that from some of my colleagues in other parties, and I really appreciate that. It is also important to understand that regulatory uncertainty is detrimental to all parties involved. Like red tape, it greatly hinders the ability of Canadian businesses to deliver goods and services to Canadians. Thankfully, my colleagues on the environment committee and I worked collaboratively to address those issues to produce the version of Bill S-5 that we are now discussing today, a version that I believe all parties in this House can agree upon.

Unfortunately, the government acted in total disregard of the work done by this committee by introducing changes to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act in its most recent budget implementation act. I will go through that. For reasons that are not clear, the budget implementation act introduced an account referred to as the “environmental economic instruments fund”, as well as playing with semantics by replacing references to “tradeable units” with “compliance units”. If I did not know any better, I would dismiss this as a mere change in bureaucratic arrangements and terminology, but my two-decade-long career in the financial sector has taught me much better. It is apparent to me that the new fund established in this amendment is being set up as a credit-trading mechanism for carbon offsets, to be overseen and distributed by the Minister of Environment.

Changing terminology throughout the act is an attempt to get around jurisprudence on jurisdictional oversight. It is currently understood that “tradeable units” would be under provincial jurisdiction. The alternative use of the term “compliance units” would circumvent that optically, but function in the exact same way. For instance, Alberta's technology innovation and emissions reduction pricing for carbon could be usurped by the federal Minister of Environment with this change. I will note that the TIER program in Alberta is the first and best output-based pricing system in Canada; it has reduced carbon more significantly than any other province or any other industry in Canada as a result of its efficiency.

In short, this change to CEPA allows the federal government unilateral authority across jurisdictions. This is not in the bill amendment we have but in the budget implementation act. Therefore, it is trying to slide in with an omnibus bill along with something that

has nothing to do with CEPA. Our provincial governments are going to be aware of this, and the new language is a change meant to usurp their regulatory authority.

Is the country going to see more challenges to federal jurisdictional overstepping as a result of this? This is something that will be before the Supreme Court of Canada. I am cautioning that this is not the right step forward. We should pass this bill and move forward quickly.

• (1700)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

I notice my friend forgot to mention that today is May 15. I know that today is May 15 because I was given the greatest gift of life 10 years ago today. My oldest son was born. I want to wish him a very happy birthday.

Happy birthday to Nickson. His dad loves and misses him.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order, but happy birthday to Nickson.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way and I had many discussions on this in our environment committee. One area we discussed was the review mechanism, first taking a risk-based approach and then having an annual review process so that we could look at how well the act is working. Could the hon. member comment on the need for regular review of the work we have done together?

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is a member I work very well with on the other side of the House. He approaches issues scientifically, and I really appreciate the facts we put on the table together.

A regular review of these issues is already in CEPA. There are regular reviews of things like the biofuels act. However, it has taken years to even do a review of this. Asking the government, in its manifold applications, to go through a process of doing another annual review when it is not doing the annual or biannual reviews in the act already would be throwing on more bureaucracy.

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Review of our legislation is important. With the many issues already not being met by the government, how we are going to get to it is a riddle to me. Unless we are going to throw a whole bunch more government wide open here and double down on parliamentarians and bureaucrats, I am not sure how it would actually happen.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will also salute my colleague. We work together on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

The Senate proposed a number of amendments to the bill regarding pollution prevention. To my utter dismay, the Liberals and Conservatives voted against those amendments.

It is often said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, whether we are talking about health or not. Should the same thing not apply to the environment?

Planning for pollution would enable us to prevent disease.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. As I said, a little bit of prevention is better than doing the opposite. I think the committee study paved the way for solutions allowing us to do what is best for all Canadians, all industries and all those affected by the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know all about the need for the precautionary principle in mining communities, because we heard about “trust industry” and how we could not move too quickly or jump to conclusions for decades.

Our graveyards are full of dead young men. If one walks into graveyards in Timmins or Kirkland Lake, one will see that up to 1955, the average life of an immigrant miner was 41 years old. They died of silicosis, radon and radiation; later, they died from the diesel underground. They died from stomach cancers from the oils that were on the drills.

All the time, we were told, “We don't know how to prove this.” The way it was proven was with something called the widow's project. They went door to door to meet the widows to find out what happened in those stopes, all while industry said to trust it and that everything was fine. The precautionary principle has been paid in the lifeblood of workers and of Canadians.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that we need to protect the lives of workers across Canada first and foremost. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act should be protecting those work sites as much as it can.

I will point out as well that the number one site for reclamation in Canada right now is the Giant Mine in Northwest Territories, which is overseen by federal jurisdiction. It is going to cost the federal government \$4 billion in order to fix the pollution at that mine at this point in time. This is a failure of regulatory oversight. It is a failure for the environment, and it is a failure we cannot continue to make in Canada. Going forward, it is essential to this country to hold officials accountable for the outcomes affecting our environ-

ment, the lives of our workers and the people affected by that environment.

● (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: That is all the time for questions and comments, but I am going to give my normal reminder for everyone to be sure that we keep our questions and comments short so we are able to get everybody to participate in this. The next time around, I will call on the member for Kitchener Centre because he has tried a number of times to get into questions and has not been able to.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House for the second time to speak to Bill S-5. I was also very pleased to chair the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development when we studied and amended this bill.

Members may not know that, in 1999, I was the assistant to a member who sat on the environment committee. I was therefore quite familiar with the process of the first round of amendments made to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. This is a bit of déjà vu, but I see that we have made some progress with Bill S-5.

I would like to start by talking about tailing ponds. As we know, these are large artificial lakes that are found in the oil sands region and were built by the oil sands industry in the Athabasca River basin in northern Alberta.

Everything having to do with water in that region, including the tailing ponds, is something I have long been interested in. In 2009, I launched a study at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. At the time, I was a member along with the Prime Minister, who had just been elected as an MP. There was another member with us, the member for Ottawa South. We were in the opposition and we managed to convince the other opposition members at the committee, because it was a minority government, to adopt the motion to conduct a study. We had to work with the other opposition parties to get permission from the committee before we could embark on a study. We studied the impact of the oil sands industry on aquatic ecosystems in the Athabasca River basin.

We did this work somewhat in collaboration with the late David Schindler, who was one of the greatest experts in the world on aquatic ecosystems. At the time, he was conducting research into this topic.

The committee was chaired by my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, who is directly in front of me in the House. He is not listening to me right now, but he was the chair of the committee.

Up to that point, it was claimed that there were pollutants and bitumen in the Athabasca River, but that it was normal, that it had always been like that, and that explorers had found bitumen in the river 200 years ago. However, David Schindler conducted a study to prove that the bitumen was coming from the oil sands industry through toxins released into the atmosphere. When it rained, those toxins in the air were falling into the river and polluting it.

Why am I mentioning that? The reason is that, while we were studying Bill S-5 in committee or shortly thereafter, Imperial Oil's Kearl project experienced a tailings leak. We have invited the company and members of neighbouring first nations to appear before the committee to discuss the issue. We are going to have further discussions on the subject shortly.

In a way, as far as I am concerned, we are coming full circle because the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development's study dates back to around 2009-10.

Why did I mention tailings ponds? It is because the Senate added tailings ponds to Bill S-5 before it was sent to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. We discussed that amendment at great length in committee and it attracted media attention.

● (1710)

All of a sudden, the media was reporting that Bill S-5 was being studied. The NDP, the Greens and the Bloc Québécois, I believe, wanted to keep a reference that the Senate had put in the bill regarding tailings ponds.

I am pretty agnostic on whether the reference to tailings ponds should stay in the bill, but the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development decided to remove the reference.

[English]

I am quite agnostic about whether we mention tailings ponds in CEPA. However, I know that the Senate amendment, which we reversed in committee, garnered a lot of attention because we were studying the bill at the same time the Kearl tailings pond leak occurred.

As I said, I am agnostic, as such a mention would be nice, especially in the context of what has happened at the Kearl site, but it would add nothing to the powers of the federal government. The federal government already has a fair amount of power with tailings ponds. I do not mind if it is put back in, but my only fear and concern is that, if we had not taken out that reference, and if we get specific in the language in CEPA around tailings ponds, we could be detracting from the generality of some provisions that relate to pollution.

The government already has the power under CEPA to compel information about substances and activities for purposes such as conducting research, creating an inventory, or formulating objectives and codes of practice, which is in subsection 46(1) of CEPA, which reads:

The Minister may, for the purpose of conducting research, creating an inventory of data, formulating objectives and codes of practice, issuing guidelines or assessing or reporting on the state of the environment, publish in the Canada Gazette and in any other manner that the Minister considers appropriate a notice requiring any person described in the notice to provide the Minister with any information that

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may be in the possession of that person or to which the person may reasonably be expected to have access, including information regarding the following:

(a) substances on the Priority Substances List;

Then there is a whole list of areas before it continues with paragraph 46(1)(f), which reads, “substances that may cause or contribute to international or interprovincial pollution of fresh water, salt water or the atmosphere”. This would include what is going on in the oil sands industry and could include tailings ponds.

Further down in the list, paragraph 46(1)(k) reads, “the release of substances into the environment at any stage of their life-cycle”.

Under CEPA, the government can request information about tailings ponds, what is in tailings ponds and how tailings ponds are reacting. However, the government, just to give a little added heft to the bill, added proposed paragraph 46(1)(k.1): “activities that may contribute to pollution”. Therefore, we are really creating a wide net here to capture any kind of activity, but the law, as it is, captures tailings ponds and gives the federal government the right and the power to oversee these large structures.

As I said, I would not mind if it were put back in, but I do not think it is necessary. I do not think the committee erred by removing the specific references to tailings ponds and to hydraulic fracturing, which were added by the Senate when the bill was first studied there.

● (1715)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, we heard from our colleague from Timmins—James Bay about the implications of not doing more to get toxic substances out of our environment. These are substances such as asbestos, mercury and lead. It continues to be the case through the bill that pollution prevention plans would be optional. Our colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands had put forward amendments that would have required pollution prevention plans.

At the current pace of voluntary pollution prevention plans, we will not have the toxic substances in schedule 1 all covered for another 100 years or so. How can the member support the bill as it stands with this voluntary approach?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, that was a good question. The bill is quite revolutionary in the sense that it would tighten control over the most hazardous substances, and it would put the emphasis on prohibition of the most toxic substances. One would not need a pollution prevention plan if the government, through the new CEPA, were to say there was a prohibition on the release of that particular substance.

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Also, CEPA in general takes a risk management approach, providing regulations on how to use particular substances, which can be very restrictive. I think, in some ways, it comes down to the same thing. I think what the government was trying to do was avoid redundancy.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I see that the committee is here in full force to talk about Bill S-5.

I have to say one thing. I do not share the committee chair's enthusiasm for the passage of Bill S-5 or the great progress it could bring about.

The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the bill, but without much enthusiasm. In our opinion, this bill makes only a small step, not great strides.

The Senate made some worthwhile amendments, but the government and the official opposition did not support them.

I know that my colleague does not share my assessment of the work that has been done. The Bloc Québécois is of the opinion that we missed an opportunity to do a lot more for the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the bill evolves every time we make amendments to it.

There is already talk of a second bill in this session of Parliament to further strengthen the act. Perfecting the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is a long-term project, so to speak. I can be less enthusiastic if my colleague would prefer.

The member must admit that the whole idea of a right to a healthy environment is a major step forward. Obviously, that right is not set out in the Canadian Constitution, but it will influence all sorts of laws and regulations. It is an important part of the act.

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for going down memory land with CEPA 1999. He was there.

I think the hon. member eloquently described why Bill S-5 already covers the situation of tailings ponds and fracking. Like him, I am agnostic. I wonder if he would comment further on some of the measures the minister has introduced to deal with the current situation, with ongoing monitoring, restoring trust, and involving the first nations affected in decision-making and, particularly, long-term solutions.

• (1720)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we saw when we invited representatives of indigenous communities and representatives from Imperial Oil and from the Alberta Energy Regulator, that there had been a communications breakdown. I know “communications breakdown” is a term from the 1960s, but it is very pertinent when we are talking about what happened with the Kearl project. The minister has taken steps to bring the stakeholders

together to work out perhaps a new protocol on communicating in the cases of incidents like that.

Again, this is something the minister has the power to do, and he is doing it. It is a welcome development.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to address the House this afternoon on Bill S-5, legislation that the government has put forward in the Senate and is now with us in the House. It is a bit of an environmental policy omnibus, as it brings together a number of different kinds of provisions updating various pieces of legislation.

Conservatives are prepared to support this legislation. We think, generally, that the direction of it is positive, that it improves on its absence. Therefore, we are going to be supporting it, but it is also an opportunity to reflect, more broadly, on the government's approach to environmental policy because I think we are seeing, at a macro level, a lot of failures from the government in environmental policy. These are failures in how it acts and how it thinks about the environmental challenges in front of us.

Before I get into particulars, I wanted to propose a framework for thinking about environmental policy. When we debate questions in the House, there are some questions we debate that deal in moral absolutes, questions of absolute right or absolute wrong about how we are acting or how the state might treat a person. In such cases, we do not apply a consequentialist filter to determinations about those things. We say that this sort of action is absolutely unacceptable, regardless of any sort of effort to interpret the consequences in a favourable way. There are issues we deal with that relate to questions of absolute right and wrong, absolute justice and injustice, etc.

There are also questions, though, that we evaluate on consequential grounds, where the thing being done in and of itself is not intrinsically impermissible, unjust or just. Rather, the thing being done, whether it is a good thing or a bad thing, can be assessed in its consequences.

In moral reasoning, there are those who tend to want to apply absolute moral considerations to a broader range of areas, and there are those who want to expand the space of areas in which we consider things on a purely consequentialist grounds. Those are important debates, and there are maybe cases at the margins where we ask if this is a scenario where we would apply absolute reasoning or consequentialist reasoning.

For those with a certain kind of view and a perspective on the environment, they take a very absolutist approach. They are the ones to say that one ought not to be producing greenhouse gas emissions, or one ought not to be engaging in certain kinds of industrial production, period, full stop. If it is hurting the planet, therefore it is an absolute wrong, regardless of the immediate consequences. There are those who take that perspective.

My view is, though, that an environmental policy consideration should be viewed through a consequentialist lens, that is whether emissions should be justified in a particular case or not, whether emissions should be allowed and what kind of regulation or taxation policy should be applied in particular cases. Those should be evaluated, not through the lens of moral absolutes, but through the lens of consequences. Does allowing emissions in a particular case produce better consequences or not?

Those who take the opposite view and argue for absolutist evaluation on environmental policy, I think, have to explain why we should not consider consequences. Why should we not countenance that producing emissions in certain cases may have better consequences for humanity in general, or for the environment in particular, just because of an absolute opposition they have to producing emissions in a particular case? I do not see any text or basis for saying that there is an absolute moral prohibition on producing greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, I see this as being a space of consequentialist moral evaluation.

When one is looking at environmental policy through a consequentialist lens, when one is producing greenhouse emissions here, one always has to ask if it is displacing greenhouse gas emissions somewhere else. What are the net effects, in human security, human happiness, economic well-being and the environment? In general, the consequentialist reasoning Conservatives apply is why we are inclined to be very supportive, for instance, of energy development here in Canada, which we see as displacing less clean, and also potentially more negative, from a security perspective, energy being produced in other countries.

• (1725)

We say that expanding the Canadian oil and gas sector, even if it is within a certain narrow geographic band, might increase apparent emissions. However, if it is decreasing global emissions because it is displacing emissions in other cases, or if, in the production of that energy, we are generating new technology that could be used in other parts of the world to have positive effects overall, we are willing to say that, yes, that industrial activity is a net positive so we support it.

In other cases, they might say that Canada's producing more energy is bringing about security improvements in the world. If we are displacing Russian gas being exported to Europe by increasing our production and exporting it to Europe, the consequential impacts would be that Russia would not be able to fuel its war machine by selling gas to Europe so it would not be able to continue this war. Russia's being less able to prosecute the war against Ukraine would be good for security, human life and well-being around the world. This is particularly true not only around Ukraine, but also more broadly. It is a positive overall.

Rather than taking an ideological, absolutist approach to environmental policy, we need to take a consequentialist approach to look at the full range of impacts, what the economic, well-being, security and environmental impacts are, and weigh the decision to develop versus the decision to not develop within that larger consequentialist framework.

As I try to understand where different parties are coming from in the House and why they come to different conclusions, I see a

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philosophical difference on environmental policy between the official opposition, for instance, and some of the other parties in this place. It is not that one group of people is concerned about the environment and the other is not. We are all concerned about the impact of policies on the environment. We all recognize the role that environmental policy plays in contributing to humans' flourishing or not and to human well-being, etc. However, we believe that those evaluations should be done in a consequentialist way, as opposed to this absolute opposition to certain kinds of development and resources, etc.

We hear things from even the government that suggest that it is buying in to this more absolutist way of looking at environmental policy when we have, for instance, repeatedly tried to push the government. We have said it is important to develop our oil and gas sector, for instance, to displace less environmentally friendly sources of energy in other parts of the world. The government members will say that, no, these particular kinds of fuels are the energy of the past and the solution to 20th century instead of the 21st century. Just factually, that is not true. Oil and gas continues to be a very significant part of the global energy mix. Moreover, it shows this kind of attachment to an absolutism with the effort to apply the kind of language of moral absolutes to an area in energy policy where more consequentialist considerations are more appropriate.

I just wanted to put this on the record as a way of thinking about what kinds of differences exist between parties on environmental policy because it is often convenient for us to paint with a broad brush to say that this group of political actors care and this group of political actors do not care. We can have better conversations and more substantive understandings of each other if we try to look behind that to say what is motivating different political actors to come to different conclusions.

Just to summarize, Bill S-5 is a bit of an omnibus bill that covers various kinds of environmental policy changes. It is a bill that most parties in the House support, although there are some with different quibbles. We have a shared concern in the House for the environment and a shared recognition that environmental policy has an impact on human life and human well-being. Moreover, we see the environment as a good in and of itself and not just as a means to other goods. Also, we make those environmental policy considerations through a more consequentialist moral framework, rather than an absolute one, which is more appropriate for the particulars in this case.

• (1730)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will start with agreeing with the hon. member that the energy sector is extremely important in our country. We need the energy. What we do not want is pollution, particularly carbon dioxide pollution.

Government Orders

CEPA is used to manage greenhouse gases and has been absolutely critical in putting a price on pollution, which the hon. member campaigned for in the last election. His position seems to have changed. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills made it a centerpiece of his Conservative leadership campaign. Stephen Harper used to support a price on pollution, until he did not. Can the member explain his flip-flop and the stark fact that he has switched his position?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have not switched my position on this issue. I have been quite clear on it. If members think otherwise, they are welcome to search the record to see if they can identify instances where I have said the opposite—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, does the member's party platform count?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate. I would ask the hon. member, if he has questions and comments, to wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I doubt it—

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

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I think being a Speaker is really tough, and I want to thank you for such a wise intervention there. I really appreciate it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That was not a point of order, but I greatly appreciate the hon. member's comment.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, sometimes we have people in the House casting swine before pearls.

The government's approach to environmental policy is to say that increasing taxes on Canadians is going to solve the problem. I think we should look at the consequence of that approach to see if it is working. Again, I recommended looking at consequence as a means of evaluating the value of a policy.

The government has not met any of its environmental targets. People are paying more. Canadians are struggling with affordability, and the government is failing to meet its environmental objectives. The only case where we have seen improvements in its environmental performance was when it tanked the economy during COVID. We need a strategy that can improve the environment while having a strong economy, and the government has not found that approach.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, because he touched on the fact that all the parties here have had sometimes similar and sometimes different positions on the environment. When we worked on Bill S-5, the Green Party, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois all had

more or less similar amendments because we relied on experts from all the environmental groups. Unfortunately, the Liberals and the Conservatives voted against the suggestions we put forward based on the input of environmental groups. We feel that it was the industry's ideas that prevailed. Yes, it is important to listen to the industry because it has experts, but it is also important to have representatives from environmental groups who are also experts.

Was too much emphasis put on the industry's agenda in our analysis of Bill S-5?

• (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I was trying to find a great quote from the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* on experts. I may refer to it later.

Suffice it to say, members will obviously, in the committee process, bring in different witnesses. There will be different experts who work in different roles and wear different hats. Some may be involved in environmental advocacy organizations and have one perspective, while others may work for industry and obviously have another perspective informed by their expertise and the context in which they work.

I will go back to the comments I made in my overall remarks that we need to recognize the balance required in environmental policy and consider the policies we pursue in the context of pursuing overall human flourishing.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, it sounds as though the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is supporting the bill, which is good, because I know in 2017, the Conservatives wrote a dissenting report in which they expressed opposition to this idea of the right to a healthy environment.

My question is around labelling. It seems like a big missed opportunity in this bill would be to have clauses requiring the labelling of products that contain toxic substances, including personal care products that contain substances with a risk of causing cancer, reproductive harm and other such harms. Does he agree that this is a missed opportunity in the bill we are debating?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think the member is onto something, that people should be able to access information about the risks the products present to them. I also wonder if we need to have a broader conversation about labelling and how that information is presented.

I can recall various debates where people wanted all kinds of information and more detailed labels, but that can present certain challenges and barriers when those labels are not read in detail anyway. Therefore, we would need to have a conversation about QR code labelling and other tools where people can access that information easily, but it does not require the constant reprinting of labels in response to new information. That is a broader conversation, but it is an important area to discuss.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in favour of Bill S-5, one of the most important pieces of environmental legislation to come before the House of Commons.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA, is a vital piece of legislation that regulates the products we use every day in Canada. From food packaging to the personal care products we put on our bodies to our children's toys, CEPA has provided the regulations to further protect Canadians from exposure to toxic substances and keep all of us and our collective environment healthy since it came into force in 1999.

We received submissions from all across the country with regard to the modernization of this act. That is why I want to thank so many people for participating in the drafting of the bill that is now before us. In particular, I would like to thank Lisa Gue from the David Suzuki Foundation, Cassie Barker from Environmental Defence Canada, Jennifer Beeman from Breast Cancer Action Quebec, Jane McArthur from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Aaron Freeman, the members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie and Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the hon. members for Winnipeg South, Lac-Saint-Louis, Repentigny, Victoria and Saanich—Gulf Islands, and the senators who worked so hard to ensure that Bill S-5 came before the House.

Bill S-5 strengthens Canada's environmental protection measures for individuals, families and communities across the country. It helps to better preserve the measures that we all need to live a healthy life. It protects the water we drink and better regulates the products that we use every day as Canadians. Bill S-5 is a necessary and long-awaited update of CEPA that guarantees that the act can continue to do in 2023 what it was implemented to do in 1999, and that is to protect the environment and the health and safety of Canadians.

As the former parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I consider it an honour to have worked on the modernization of CEPA with the current Minister of Natural Resources and member for North Vancouver when he was minister of environment and climate change. This bill began as Bill C-28. Most of the elements that we worked on at the time, not to mention the amazing work of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, including the right to a healthy environment, the assessment of the combined effects of substances and the improvement of transparency about consumer goods, are still included and even reinforced in Bill S-5.

● (1740)

[*English*]

It has been a quarter of a century since CEPA was last updated. As such, many improvements and modifications were necessary. We need only think of the changes in our society we have experienced over the last 25 years, too many to reference, unfortunately, in the short time allotted to me today, to better understand the need for the many key improvements to CEPA included in Bill S-5. I would like to share a select few in my remarks, beginning with an

acknowledgement in the preamble of the bill that all Canadians have a right to live in a healthy environment.

Countries around the world, in fact, are acknowledging the relationship between a healthy environment and our human rights. In fact, on June 28 of last year, the UN General Assembly adopted a historic resolution declaring that access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a universal human right. For the first time in our federal law, Bill S-5 would recognize the right to a healthy environment in Canada, and our country will join 156 fellow members of the United Nations who have done the same in some way, shape or form.

While including the right to a healthy environment represents a historic step for Canada, our government will work hard to secure these rights through a robust evaluation framework and regulations, which we have committed to creating with input from Canadians over the next couple of years. Everything that follows in this newly strengthened CEPA flows from this acknowledgement, including the second aspect of the bill that I would like to speak to, that being the better management of chemicals in Canada, aimed at reducing exposure to hazardous chemicals for all Canadians.

Currently, CEPA uses a science-based approach to evaluate over 4,300 chemicals and reduces the number of harmful chemicals that Canadians encounter in their everyday lives. Canadians have benefited from our strong leadership on the risk assessment and risk management for chemicals.

For example, there are chemicals like BPA, which is a known hormone disruptor that used to be found in bottles for infants. High exposure to BPA can adversely affect the liver, the kidneys, fertility and the brain development of newborn infants. A risk assessment through the chemicals management plan led to a change in the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act that made it illegal to manufacture, import, advertise or sell bottles that contained this product in Canada. Canada has worked with industry to successfully phase out the use of BPA-containing packaging for liquid infant formula products available for sale in Canada. Since then, Canadian parents have worried less, knowing that the feeding bottles they are using to nurse their newborn child are free from this dangerous chemical.

Working with Canadians to publish an updated chemicals management priorities plan in Bill S-5 is critical to protecting Canadians against the exponential increase in the volume and concentration of chemicals entering our environment.

Government Orders

In addition to an updated chemicals management priorities plan, proposed subsection 75.1(1) of Bill S-5 requires the Minister of Health and the Minister of Environment to list substances capable of becoming toxic. The inclusion of this clause in CEPA would help address the problem of regrettable substitutions and deter manufacturers from replacing the use of one equally hazardous chemical for another. These updates to this bill, among others, would weed out toxins in our products at the source, so that Canadians do not have to at their local grocery or hardware store.

Another key improvement to CEPA in Bill S-5 is the incorporation of cumulative effects assessments. Why is this important? It is quite simple. The pace and scale at which new chemicals are being produced and added to our products and environment are astounding. Since 1950, chemical production has increased fiftyfold, and today there are approximately 90,000 chemicals used domestically in Canada and the United States. The largest concentrations of toxic substances are often found in the cheapest products. The reality is that with the sheer quantity of chemicals now present in our everyday lives, it has become an ever so daunting task to fully appreciate and identify hazards. Most Canadians do not have the time or expertise to determine which products, combined with other products, could be dangerous and more and more are counting on us, as their federally elected representatives, to ensure that we are doing this imperative work for them and that the laws and regulations in place are strong enough to protect them and their loved ones.

In the current version of CEPA, assessments are conducted on the singular impacts of each chemical individually. The significant change included in Bill S-5 would address the cumulative effects on human health and the environment that may result from exposure to the substance in combination with exposure to other substances and would require cumulative effects to be considered in the risk assessment through CEPA when information is available.

Another important aspect of this bill is the improvements to CEPA that address social justice when it comes to our health and our environment and recognize it is intrinsic to environmental protection. Bill S-5 explicitly requires that the federal government consider vulnerable populations in the assessment of toxic substances. Social challenges in indigenous, low-income and racialized communities are further exacerbated by environmental ones when a landfill, a water treatment facility or a chemical plant is located in their backyards. This change to CEPA would help ensure that the health of vulnerable communities is considered through the implementation of CEPA regulation.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

As I mentioned in committee and in the House, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is the most important piece of legislation that most Canadians know very little about, yet it has been protecting the environment every day for decades. With the changes proposed in Bill S-5, it will continue to protect the environment and all Canadians for decades to come. By passing this bill, we parliamentarians are clearly affirming that their health and safety will always be our priority.

[*English*]

I look forward to joining all members in this House in voting in favour of Bill S-5, moving it to the next level of our parliamentary process and, finally, ushering in a new era of environmental protection in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague started his speech by paying special tribute to the work of non-governmental organizations. However, most, if not all, of the amendments that were moved by the Green Party, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, based on input from the environmental groups, were brushed aside by the government and the official opposition.

I think a lot remains to be accomplished if we hope to really modernize the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and protect the public's health and the environment.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, once again, I thank my colleague, the member for Repentigny, for her exceptional work on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I was fortunate to work with her. We worked well together and collaborated closely with the community and environmental groups that came to share their ideas.

I think that all of the parties and the Government of Canada did a great job of including most of these groups' recommendations in Bill S-5. I believe that extremely positive changes will follow for all Canadians.

Of course, there are other things we could do, but I think that we have made a lot of progress in terms of protecting the environment for the good of Canadians. I am very proud of the work we did.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it really interesting that the government deliberately excluded the tailings ponds in the Athabasca from review, because we know that just prior to the illegal tailings pond leak at Imperial Oil, the environment minister was scheduled to allow a massive release of the toxic chemicals that are in that contaminated water into the Athabasca River system.

We know from speaking with Fort Chipewyan and the Mikisew Cree that they suffer high levels of cancer. We are dealing with ammonia, lead, mercury, benzene and other contaminants, and yet the environment minister was more than willing to let this be released into the Athabasca River. These are tailings ponds that are 2.6 times the size of the city of Vancouver and are growing every day. When is the government going to actually deal with the massive level of water contamination coming out of the oil sands projects?

Government Orders

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his advocacy. I know he works very hard on environmental protection.

The one thing I would say, and I think my hon. colleague knows this very well, is that the reason those references were removed for those specific activities is that they were already captured under subsection 46(1) as activities that may contribute to pollution. The reality is that information on tailings ponds is already collected and reported under CEPA and Canada's public inventory of releases, known as the national pollutant release inventory. This is already being done, so the committee decided not to single out one particular industry because this information is already being collected and shared with Canadians.

• (1750)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I am sure the member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges would agree with me that the right to a healthy environment needs to be more than a bumper sticker. I wonder if he would share to what extent he is similarly disappointed that reasonable amendments from many parties, including from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, which would have ensured that the right to a healthy environment is not just considered but protected, were not accepted?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I know my hon. colleague is a strong advocate, and I very much enjoy working with him and having discussions about how we can improve environmental protection in Canada.

I would be honest to say that I would like to have seen more robust inclusion of a right to a healthy environment in this piece of legislation. I would be lying if I said anything different, but this is a huge improvement. Every time we put forward a piece of legislation in this House, we need to be doing right by Canadians by moving the needle forward and always advancing. That is what we have done here. Hopefully, by working with the hon. member and other members in this House as this moves forward and is reviewed every couple of years, we will be able to do that in the years to come.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the people of Laurentides—Labelle to speak to Bill S-5, the strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act.

I want to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois is in favour in principle of the bill. However, a word of caution: Agreeing in principle does not mean signing a blank cheque.

As my colleagues know, our party is highly allergic to anything to do with jurisdictions and the federal government's intrusion into matters that are the responsibility of the Government of Quebec. It is in our DNA. We know that the current government will use any excuse to interfere in provincial jurisdictions.

I would say to my colleagues across the way to not think they can take us in. That seems to be a clear pattern in the government's legislative agenda. I want to remind the federal government that the elected members of the National Assembly of Quebec are against any federal government intervention in environmental matters, except where the current legal framework makes the Government of

Canada responsible for certain provisions. That is why the Bloc Québécois will keep a close watch. We will ensure that the federal government takes care of its responsibilities properly before taking on more.

Bill S-5 is, first and foremost, a technical bill, which is a shame. This bill is not ambitious enough to address the current climate crisis. It is unbelievable. Bold action is needed. It is important to act to ensure that the right to live in a healthy environment is enshrined in law, as it is in Quebec. In 2006, the Quebec National Assembly passed legislation that states, "Every person has a right to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved, to the extent and according to the standards provided by law".

That is not yet the case in Canada.

The United Nations passed a resolution on July 26, 2022. In the resolution the UN said that:

...climate change and environmental degradation were some of the most pressing threats to humanity's future. It called on states to step up efforts to ensure their people have access to a "clean, healthy and sustainable environment".

That is not yet the case in Canada.

In 2021, the New York State Assembly passed a constitutional amendment to enshrine the right to a healthy environment in the state constitution.

That is not yet the case in Canada.

In 2004, the French government incorporated an environmental charter into the French constitution. I would like to share part of the preamble:

Natural resources and equilibriums have conditioned the emergence of mankind;

The future and very existence of mankind are inextricably linked with its natural environment;

The environment is the common heritage of all mankind;

Mankind exerts ever-increasing influence over the conditions for life and its own evolution;

Biological diversity, the fulfilment of the person and the progress of human societies are affected by certain types of consumption or production and by excessive exploitation of natural resources;

Care must be taken to safeguard the environment along with the other fundamental interests of the Nation;

In order to ensure sustainable development, choices designed to meet the needs of the present generation should not jeopardise the ability of future generations and other peoples to meet their own needs,

...

• (1755)

This is not yet the case in Canada.

In Laurentides—Labelle, nature is a way of life. I am sure that everyone listening to me would agree. It has a national park, the oldest one in Quebec, by the way, along with two wildlife reserves, regional parks scattered across the riding, and countless lakes and rivers. Laurentides—Labelle alone has over 10,000. Nature surrounds us, but it is also a major economic driver for the northern Laurentians.

Government Orders

Early in my career, I worked in the forest industry for seven years. I am very proud of the industry personally, but also on behalf of the Antoine-Labelle regional county municipality, where it still plays an important role to this day.

Let us look back into the past. In the 2000s, the forestry industry was seen as harmful in many ways. Fortunately, science has come to the rescue of this industry. We now know, and I hope everyone does, that forest management is imperative if we want healthy forests. Our forests are key to our health and to our environment. They capture CO₂. We could talk about the two billion trees that will probably never get planted by 2030 despite the government's promise to do so. Sometimes I have to make people aware that a fully mature tree releases all of the CO₂ that it captured. Nature takes its course. We can see the forest fires and epidemics that are happening now. If we use our forests wisely and we use the raw material with secondary and tertiary processing products to construct new builds, we are helping to preserve the environment.

I will fight until the end, as I have been doing since I was 20 years old, to make people aware of how important the forestry industry is to both our environmental and economic ecosystems. I cannot emphasize it enough. It is the very definition of sustainable development, and our region is on the front lines.

Two weeks ago to the day, I was really worried about the images I was seeing from Laurentides—Labelle. In Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, the Demontigny Street bridge and the Château-Bleu Road bridge were closed. The water level, the highest it has ever been, made the roads impassable, and they are still impassable today. The same situation is playing out in Val-Morin, where the 7th Avenue bridge is badly damaged. In Sainte-Adèle, several roads have also been closed because they are too dangerous to use. Lac Raymond, the Rivière du Nord and the Rivière aux Mulets were overflowing. Homes flooded and infrastructure needs to be rebuilt.

This is unusual in southern Laurentides—Labelle, just as it is in many other parts of Quebec. I am of course thinking of the people of Baie-Saint-Paul, in Charlevoix. Extreme weather events are now frequent. It is outrageous.

There was the derecho in May 2022, the rock slides in Mont-Tremblant last summer and the ice storm in early April. We must act. This bill is called the strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act. It is time for the government to have the courage to act. People ask me if enough is being done. People know that not enough is being done. In fact, they actually feel as though nothing is being done. Let us have the courage to act, because healthy citizens are the ones who have a healthy environment and who benefit from a healthy economy focused on sustainable development.

• (1800)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Laurentides—Labelle for her commitment to her community and to the environment. I also want to give a shout-out to the member for Repentigny. I enjoyed working with her very much. It was a very collaborative committee, and I think Parliament needs to see more of that.

I would ask the hon. member for a comment. I have been hearing from the Bloc that we did not adopt this or that Senate amendment. We adopted 70% of the Senate amendments, and by all accounts, from environmental groups to industry to everyone else, this bill is a great improvement over CEPA, 1999.

The issue of air quality standards has come up. That is a very sensitive issue delving into provincial jurisdiction. Does the hon. member agree that this should be done together with the federal government? I would expect the Bloc to be very sensitive to that issue.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, how can they say that they listened to the proposals, took action, accepted the changes to the legislation, when they ignored the individuals themselves, for example from the forestry industry, who were consulted and who provided recommendations? The proposals presented by the Bloc Québécois came from the forestry industry.

I am having a hard time understanding why the recommendations made in committee were completely dismissed and are not included in the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we just had a question about some of the amendments that were not considered. Some of the amendments that people wanted to put forward were considered out of scope. We even heard one of the Liberal speakers today say that he hoped we would go back to this bill as soon as possible, as soon as we passed it, and create another bill that would fix the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

After 24 years, the government did not include these important provisions in this new bill. They include things like the enforceability of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, something obvious that should have been done. Can the member comment on why these things were not included in Bill S-5?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I told the people of Laurentides—Labelle that we had an example in the promise to plant two billion trees by 2030. People are wondering. Are they really going to change the law to try to have a healthy environment when they are so behind in everything I just outlined in the past few minutes?

People need to have more confidence and to hear from all parliamentarians. This is not about telling them that we are going to adopt this bill and make amendments later.

I was saying that they need to have the courage to take action and now is the time to do it. As long as we do not see a modicum of effort and energy, we will continue to fight because we do not believe them.

Government Orders

• (1805)

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the right to a healthy environment is set out in the bill's preamble. Therefore, it does not apply to other laws.

Does my colleague believe that the government lacked the courage to establish a real right to a healthy environment in its modernization of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, when the government implements small measures, it often does so to ease its conscience. Had it had the courage to act, it would have overhauled the environmental law. We are among the laggards. It is embarrassing when we go abroad and are told about the state of our law. I believe that answers my colleague's question

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate tonight to talk about amendments that have been proposed to Bill S-5, which is an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act of 1999.

I have now had a chance to review many of the amendments that are before the House right now. I want to focus my comments on one particular area, and perhaps express some concern over the lack of clarity with regard to this area, coming into the report stage of the bill, as well as to provide some suggestions should the bill progress further. I want to do so as a representative from the province of Alberta.

I will start by echoing the statement by my colleague from the Bloc earlier. There is a lot in the bill to agree on in principle, but there is concern in terms of how the bill's current format could actually affect things like provincial jurisdiction. My colleague who just finished debate spoke a little bit about it in the context of her province, and I want to talk about it in the context of mine.

The area I want to focus on is how the government has approached the concept within the bill of the right to a healthy environment. I would like to think that every Canadian certainly supports the right to a healthy environment. On behalf of my province, I would say that so many Albertans, sometimes undeservedly and politically, get cast as not caring about the environment. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are so many Albertans who utterly respect our natural heritage and also want to ensure that we have a strong, sound approach to addressing climate change that actually reduces greenhouse gas emissions, ensures economic growth and addresses the fact that we are in an affordability crisis.

The government, to date, in spite of having spent billions of dollars, has really failed to provide Canadians with a lot of affordable, readily available substitute goods for high-carbon consumer products and practices. At the same time, it has also failed to address the issue of energy security in Canada.

Going back to the principle of a right to a healthy environment, how the government has approached it and where the bill is at right now with regard to the amendment phase, in terms of how Canada has approached legislating a right to a healthy environment, I do not think it is fair to say that, collectively, across political stripes of various forms of government, Canada has not done that in the past. I would argue, hopefully from a non-partisan perspective, that

Canada has some of the strictest environmental protection laws in the world, across a collection of legislation, including the Transportation Act, CEPA, and, at the provincial level, through our environmental assessment review processes of major natural resource projects.

I could go on, but the reality is that we do have a legislative framework that reflects those principles of how we use land and how we assess projects in terms of their impact on the environment. The bill that we are discussing tonight, on CEPA, would also do that. However, my concern is that the government, in this phase of the bill, has actually not defined how it is planning on looking at this term within the context of the bill. Also, with the current status of the bill, it is going to take that process behind closed doors in some sort of framework development process that is not outlined in the bill.

I really am concerned about several things. First of all, we do not know the sufficiency of what this measure is supposed to do. We really do not have any way of evaluating that, number one, and other colleagues of all political stripes have actually raised that as a concern in the House. So that is a big deficiency with the bill right now. Second, because that is not defined, there are very significant concerns that have already been raised in debate, and that I want to echo on behalf of my province, about how this could infringe upon provincial jurisdiction.

• (1810)

If this bill does proceed to the next phase, the onus is on the government, rather than to just take this process behind closed doors with a very narrow set of stakeholders who might have the minister's ear or the department's ear, to really open that up and particularly lean on provinces to have input into this process. There also need to be stakeholders from civil society, from industry and also, importantly, from first nations groups, indigenous persons who have traditional knowledge that needs to be imported into this process. I am very uncomfortable with how the government has attempted to address this issue. It feels like it is just checking a box without actually putting any meat in here for us to debate. We might have different opinions on that, but I hope that all my colleagues would agree that how this term is laid out in the bill right now is not sufficient.

Government Orders

Third or fourth, I am not sure where I am at as there are so many concerns on this provision, I am also concerned that, because the government has not provided clarity on this, we are adding essentially another barrier to either investment or environmental mitigation measures by not providing that clarity. The government should have put some sort of principle in here about whether it foresaw the enforcement of a right to a healthy environment, in the context of the bill, as an administrative function or as a function of the judiciary. What I mean is that it should have given some sort of hint about whether this framework it was providing could have included, for example, a privative clause. That is something that we should have been debating in the House, and now what the government is saying is “No, no, we are just going to put that behind closed doors.”

Some of my colleagues might disagree with me on whether enforcement should be administrative or whether it should be in the judiciary, but, again, because we do not have that clarity, I want to just put on the record what I think, on behalf of my province, about how this should be administered. I really think that, without clarity on how this is going to be enforced, we now are opening ourselves up, as a country, to what could be vexatious complaints on the enforcement of this right. Just as a colloquial example, and it might not be exactly in this context, but let us say that someone has a bonfire in their backyard and neighbours get a little cheesed at them. They complain, saying that they have a right to a healthy environment. Now they are suing the municipality on the bylaws.

What I am trying to say is that the way it is written, with the lack of clarity, could have major impacts on housing strategies. I could see this being used to protest, like NIMBY. People might say that they have a right to a healthy environment, so they do not want a certain tree cut down or they do not want a backyard filled in with a multiplex. The same goes for roads or, also, carbon-mitigating infrastructure, such as public transit projects, which, just for the record, I would like to have more of in my riding as well.

I am very concerned that the government has not put more details and more meat in here on the context, on how it plans to enforce this and also on its consultation process. What we have seen with the government is that things like this just sort of disappear into the bureaucracy, where people and stakeholder groups that have privileged access end up pulling this out of a democratic process. What that does is disenfranchise the provinces, and it also disenfranchises, I think, first nations persons as well. We cannot be talking about the right to a healthy environment without enshrining that principle of first nations knowledge in this particular principle. Should the bill proceed, these are principles that have to be embedded in the consultation process, and the government has an onus to report back to Parliament on how it is doing this. It can certainly rest assured that we will be holding it to account on that.

I will close my time with this, just to emphasize and bookend what I said at the front end: My province cares deeply about the environment. She is coming to the end of her term in public service, but I would like to congratulate Alberta's environment minister, Sonya Savage, who, I think, has cross-partisan support. She has a storied and long history of understanding the nuances between natural resource development and environmental protection. She delivered a very strong net-zero commitment for climate change in Alberta and also recognizes the Alberta context in which that was

built out, which is that we are industry-heavy with our emissions, and that industry has to be brought to the table in a stage-gated approach, so that we are not just looking at hope on targets but actually putting a plan together to achieve those targets. I want to congratulate her as I close my speech tonight.

• (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. Sorry, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. It is so automatic to call the other one.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, some people think the deputy House leader and I look alike, but I beg to differ; he is much better-looking.

I want to thank the hon. member for raising the issue of a right to a healthy environment. We had 50 hours of deliberations in committee. I sat through most of them. I just want to assure the hon. member that no one from industry raised a concern. There were some concerns raised by environmental groups. I would just assure the hon. member that the implementation framework would last about 24 months. There would be deep consultation and there would be transparency. We will get back to the member with the plan. There would be deep consultation with the provinces, indigenous governments and stakeholders. This is to answer that very question she asked about how a right to a healthy environment would be implemented, and to provide clarity.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's response. I also think he would understand that, when I hear from the government “Do not worry; just trust us”, I am not so sure about that.

Also, the reality is that we do have a very important issue facing our country, which is climate change. The Liberal government has failed to meet its targets. It has failed to provide the type of infrastructure, for example, for my riding that could get cars off the road, provide those substitute goods for high-carbon consumer products and practices, and actually have a productive working relationship with provinces and understand that fighting on this constantly is not building a collaborative relationship. All I ask is that, if the bill proceeds, the government really enshrine that principle of working with the provinces, respecting jurisdiction and ensuring that there is transparency, particularly in the enforcement mechanism.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees with some points, especially with regard to territorial sovereignty. Quebec already has its own law, the Environment Quality Act.

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The smooth-talking Liberals are in government. I will remind members of their track record. Canada has the worst record of any G7 country for the average per capita greenhouse gas emissions. Since the arrival of the Liberals in 2015, Canada is the only G7 country whose greenhouse gas emissions have increased. That is quite the record.

However, I can say what the government is good at. Canada is second among the G20 countries for public investment in fossil fuels. Trans Mountain now has a \$30-billion price tag. That is a significant sum.

Yes, we agree with respecting environmental laws. However, how can this government, which boasts about being a green government, justify this type of bill today?

● (1820)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would never defend the Liberal government, just to be very clear to my colleague. We agree that there has to be some change there.

The reality is that Canada is a large country that is natural-resource-intensive in terms of its economic output. It is cold here. We do not have the substitute goods that we need, in the Canadian context, to lower the price elasticity of carbon. The government could tax carbon all it wants and it could set targets, picked out of the air, but until it actually, fundamentally solves the question of price elasticity in the Canadian economic and social context, while keeping affordability sound, we are not going to achieve those targets. That is what the government should be focusing on.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I just want to bring up the business of enforcement, which the member talked about at the end of her speech.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act is widely held as unenforceable. It has not ever been enforced in any reasonable way by the public. Bill S-5 would not change that. Ontario has had an environmental bill of rights for many years now, with an enforcement mechanism. Again, under that bill, it has not had anybody complaining about backyard bonfires.

I am wondering if the member could comment on the fact that this is really not going to happen, but that we really need this. If we have an environmental bill of rights, we have to have some way to enforce it.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, just to re-emphasize the point I tried to make in my speech, the government has not included any sort of clarity with this provision, either on scope or on enforceability. It is really unfortunate. It is a missed opportunity, particularly now that we are in report stage. The government needs to fix that.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Canada's number one riding, Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. In preparation for my remarks this evening, I began to think about all the challenges my riding faced in 2021.

Just shy of two years ago, the village of Lytton burned to the ground. Forest fires consumed the province of B.C. Lives were lost,

animals were lost and homes were lost. We are still recovering from the devastation, especially in the Okanagan, the Similkameen Valley and the Fraser Canyon.

To fast forward a few months, things got even worse. A new term, “atmospheric river”, was coined. Basically, we had such a deluge of rain that I have never seen the like in my life. The fields of Sumas Prairie and Matsqui Prairie were flooded. Critical infrastructure and dikes were wiped out. The roads that had saved people in the village of Lytton were washed away. At Jackass Summit, a large portion of the road the size of a CFL football field was completely washed away into the Fraser River. My communities are still recovering and waiting for help.

Help does not always come in the form of a flashy announcement or with another consultative meeting. In many respects, help is solely related to good governance, to the laws we put in place to deal with any challenging environmental issues we face in our country.

In 2016, before I was elected and when I was still a political staffer, I read with great interest a paper put forward by some very competent people at Environment and Climate Change Canada. It is called “Discussion Paper: Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999: Issues & Possible Approaches”. I will note in my review of this paper and the bill before us this evening that a number of issues, such as improving information-gathering provisions and acts on new substances and activities, risk management and living organisms, were covered in that report. However, many areas that were already identified by the Government of Canada almost eight years ago were not included in this legislation today. I am dismayed by that.

I remember fondly how the member for Kingston and the Islands; the former member of Parliament for Pontiac; Hugs Bossio, who was here at the time; and many Liberal members criticized the Conservatives for not taking action on the environment. How dare we not do more for the environment? A comprehensive report was tabled, but many of the recommendations have not been put in place, even today. This includes recommendations put forward by the Liberals.

What makes matters even worse is that the current government did not prioritize the modernization of Canada's foremost environmental laws as a matter for this chamber to debate and deliberate. Instead, it punted this matter to the Senate. While I admit some improvements have been made, as a British Columbian, I will always stand up when a Senate government bill comes before this House. I mention that because British Columbia only has five senators out of 108 right now, so every senator in B.C. represents approximately one million people.

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B.C. is the economic future of our country. British Columbia is home to many mining companies; the Vancouver Stock Exchange is full of mining companies and start-ups. This morning, I met with a team of leading scientists at the University of British Columbia who said that these companies are doing a lot of good things that are essential to protecting the environment and will be essential to Canada's economic development in the years ahead.

● (1825)

British Columbia is home to some of the most diverse and ecologically sensitive marine areas in Canada in our temperate rain forests. It is home to a growing port. In my riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, it is home to where the CP and CN rail lines meet.

I mention all this because, in that 2016 discussion paper, there were points on preventing marine pollution. If there is one thing British Columbians love, it is the run of the salmon. It is that moment as a young kid when we finally get one on our rod on the Fraser River and really feel a sense of jubilation. We need to protect that for future generations. We could have done more for salmon in this bill before us today. However, perhaps because there are only five senators from British Columbia, 24 from Quebec and 24 from Ontario, there was not enough emphasis put on my province and our unique environmental needs. I cannot fault the Senate; I have to fault the Constitution. However, it was irresponsible of the Senate not to do more to protect British Columbia in the bill that it received from the government.

Similarly, we could have done a lot more on preventing pollution from the transboundary movement of hazardous waste and hazardous recyclable material. Recently, at the industry committee, I asked officials about certificates and rules of origin regarding the exportation of garbage from Canada into the United States and subsequently into Asian countries, which buy our waste. We could have done a lot more in this bill to ensure that Canadians are not exporting their waste to third world countries. In fact, my colleague from Canada's breadbasket in Simcoe spoke at length about this and tried to pass a bill, only to have the environment minister say it was not relevant; the bill was defeated. Here, we again had an opportunity to do something to stop the exportation of plastic waste, but neither the government nor its Senate members took that opportunity.

In my riding, there have been many instances in which we did not have proper emergency alerts. Small communities were cut off. The port of metro Vancouver was cut off from the rest of Canada. There were over 30 washouts on the CN and CP rail lines. In November 2021, British Columbia was isolated from the rest of Canada.

The 2016 report from Environment and Climate Change Canada talked about improving CEPA in terms of preventing and responding to emergencies. None of those actions were taken, even though the government spent more on the disaster in my riding than on any other disaster in the history of Canada; it did not receive ample attention or consideration. Again, I point to the fact that there are only five senators from British Columbia, one for every million people or so.

Another part of the bill that was addressed in the 2016 paper and relates to my riding is supporting environmental protections related to federal activities on aboriginal lands. We are talking about reserves here. I represent over 31 bands. Many of them were wiped out by disasters as well. We had an opportunity here to improve emergency response management, give indigenous people the tools they need to be stewards of the land, put in place protocols, and allow resources from Ottawa to be used in areas of environmental significance where indigenous people live in greater proportion compared with other Canadian citizens. We had an opportunity to do something about that, but we did not. Again, I can point to the fact that B.C. only has five senators, with one million or so people for every senator representing our province. We needed to do more for indigenous communities, but the Senate and its government members did not listen.

Another area of the bill that I hear about often is strengthening the enforcement of CEPA, and I have heard this in the chamber this evening. In Nova Scotia, there was recently an issue with respect to baby eels, and I could go on to talk about salmon as well.

I could go on, but at this point, I am going to have to take questions.

● (1830)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I mentioned before, CEPA allows us to manage greenhouse gases by putting a price on pollution. The hon. member talked about climate disasters, such as what happened in Lytton, and our hearts go out to the people there.

There were 600 people who died under the heat dome. There was a \$9-billion impact from the floods, fires and droughts. Tourism and agriculture were destroyed for an entire year. However, the hon. member and his party opposed every single measure that we tried to take on climate change to implement climate action.

Why does the hon. member continue to oppose the price on pollution, our climate actions and things that would prevent these kinds of disasters in the future?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, for the most part, what I am opposed to is an out-of-touch government that has spoken a lot about protecting the environment, but when it actually had the chance to act and make substantial improvements for the people of Lytton, it did not take those necessary steps. This is even though the government has politicized the people of Lytton from time to time.

People in Lytton do not have homes. People in Lytton are still living in hotels. People in Lytton want governance and to see the operationalization of announcements made in their community.

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to extend condolences to everyone in his riding who has experienced this disaster. It is important to recognize that they are victims of climate change.

My colleague talked a lot about the Senate, but I would like to remind him that the Liberals and the Conservatives did not listen to any environmental groups, unlike the NDP, the Bloc Qu b cois and the Green Party, which made proposals based on information from environmental groups.

I completely understand that the people of his riding want to promote economic development, but I am tired of people pitting environmental protection against economic development. I look forward to a day when the two are finally reconciled. In this case, unfortunately, the Liberal-Conservative coalition rejected everything the environmental groups were calling for.

• (1835)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, the people of Lytton and the Fraser Canyon want the federal and provincial governments to take action to improve infrastructure so that they can live in their town. Investments are needed so that these people can continue living in their town. Nearly two years after the disaster, we are not there yet.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon for his speech; his points about Lytton are well taken. I think everyone's hearts continue to go out to the folks there, who need more action from the government. I noted their community broke yet another temperature record just the other day by 7°C, if I recall correctly. My colleague spoke about how this bill did not address the specific needs of our shared home province.

Could he expand on what amendments or clauses he wishes were contained in this bill that would better address the needs of British Columbians when it comes to a healthy environment?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, that was the whole point of my speech. It was about taking action on preventing and responding to emergencies, supporting environmental protection related to aboriginal lands and strengthening the enforcement of CEPA. They were all points I raised in my speech.

It all goes to the point that British Columbia is never going to get its fair share in this country until we have equal elected and effective representation in both chambers of this House and of this Parliament. I hope the member appreciates that.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians care about the health of their environment. According to polling, 92% of Canadians believe the government should recognize the right to live in a healthy environment. Canada has several major pieces of legislation on environmental protection, but the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is the centrepiece of that commitment.

Bill S-5, which we are debating here today, is the long-awaited update to that act. It has been 24 years since the last update, and there has been a lot of water under the bridge since then. Some of

that water likely contained some of the many new toxins we have invented in the last two decades, and that is one thing that needed to be updated with this bill. We have also learned a great deal about the cumulative effects of even tiny doses of these toxins. We literally have to run to keep up with the ways we are damaging the environment here in Canada and around the world.

People concerned about the environment welcomed the effort to update the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA, as it known for short, and the NDP welcomed that too. It is long overdue.

I want to spend a bit of time talking about the history of this particular bill, as I think it puts some of the efforts to fix CEPA in a better context.

The bill was first introduced in the previous Parliament as Bill C-28, tabled in April 2021, two years ago. However, the government did not bring it to the floor of the House for debate that spring and then called an election in the summer, so that ended that version of the bill.

Environmental law experts across the country analyzed that bill and began to drop ideas to make it better when it came back to Parliament. There was some hope that the government would take some of those ideas and amend the new version before reintroducing it so that things would not be considered out of scope. Instead, it tabled the exact same version of the bill, the same as Bill C-28, in the Senate in February 2022, where it took on its life as Bill S-5, the bill we are debating today. The Senate took a long, serious look at the bill in committee, improved it in several ways and sent it to the House at the end of June last year, and the House took it up last fall. It has since been through second reading debate and committee, and we see it here at report stage.

This bill, at its heart, is about allowing Canadians to live in a clean, healthy environment. Much of its detail is in regulations around toxic chemicals, chemicals we have invented and continue to invent and chemicals released into the environment, whether knowingly or not, that can directly affect our health and degrade the ecosystems we all depend on.

One new and very important part of this bill is the long-overdue inclusion of language that declares that Canadians have the right to live in a healthy environment. Last year, on July 28, 2022, the UN General Assembly passed a unanimous resolution that recognized the right to a healthy environment around the world. A hundred and fifty-nine countries around the world have legal obligations to protect the human right to a healthy environment, but Canada does not.

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There are environmental bills of rights in Ontario, Quebec, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, but there is no federal law that explicitly recognizes the right to a healthy environment in Canada. Bill S-5 could change that, so it is a positive step forward, but it is important to back up declarations of rights with legislation that enforces those rights. Unfortunately, the previous version of CEPA was considered unenforceable, and this one is no better.

The Senate committee studying Bill S-5 sent the bill to the House with the following message:

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

● (1840)

The reason the Senate did not fix this enforceability issue with amendments is that apparently it would have been considered out of scope, so I would say the government should table separate legislation as soon as possible to remedy this. Again, the government could have missed all of this if it had fixed this problem with CEPA and Bill S-5 before tabling the new version of the bill.

Similarly, there were other major shortcomings in Bill S-5 that were out of scope for amendments, including a lack of legally binding and enforceable air quality standards. It is really quite surprising that the first draft of Bill S-5 made no attempts to address air quality at all. It also lacks a more open, inclusive and transparent risk assessment process for the evaluation of genetically engineered animals in the environment, especially wild salmon. Salmon are a critical part of our aquatic ecosystems and are sacred to first nations that have relied on healthy salmon populations for millennia. The risk of introducing genetically engineered salmon into the wild environment should set off alarm bells on all sorts of fronts.

I would like to mention here that I have a private member's bill, Bill C-219, the Canadian environmental bill of rights, that would extend the right to a clean environment across the federal mandate, not just for toxins and other aspects covered under CEPA, but for all aspects of the environment covered by federal legislation. The heart of Bill C-219 is a transparent accountability process that would allow Canadians to ensure their government is actually upholding the right to a clean environment. That accountability process is missing from Bill S-5 and CEPA. It could have and should have been included. I am hoping that the government and all parties will support my bill and use that part of it as a model to strengthen the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

In conclusion, I would like to make it clear that the NDP will be voting in favour of Bill S-5 at this stage. We are happy that the right to live in a clean and healthy environment has finally been recognized within federal legislation, and we are happy the bill confirms the government's commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples under the act. However, the bill has many shortcomings, only some of which I have listed above.

I was heartened to hear the speech from the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, in which he admitted these shortcomings and called for a new bill amending CEPA to fix them as soon as possible. Why they were not included in the bill before us, which has been 24 years in the making, is beyond my comprehension, but I would certainly welcome such a bill.

Most Canadians will be happy to see the bill pass, and I know that most parties will be voting for the bill, albeit some reluctantly. I hope the Senate will deal with it promptly so we can enjoy its benefits and quickly start the process of crafting a new bill that will once again make CEPA a stronger act, an act that will truly protect Canadians and ensure that we and our grandchildren can live in the clean and healthy environment that is our right.

● (1845)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoy working with the hon. member across the way on the science and research committee.

Part of this bill has to do with science and research in that animal testing and the use of toxic treatments on animals are things this bill addresses. Through testimony we received from Dr. Chandrasekera, we are going to chip-based technology, which can simulate the testing done currently using toxic chemicals on animals.

Could the hon. member comment on how this is an important move forward on behalf of animal rights?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I agree that we have seen a gradual improvement in the way we treat animals broadly, especially within the research context, and I am happy to see that included in the bill. The bill has a lot of good things in it. That is why I think it is important that we support it. It just has many shortcomings that make me feel disappointed about it in other ways.

I hope we will see a new bill, a fresh bill, on CEPA shortly, but I agree that it is a good step forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are discussing a bill to establish the right to a healthy environment. However, this bill does not actually give Canadians such a right. In its current form, Bill S-5 does not really give citizens a way to assert this right.

Does my colleague acknowledge that this would depend on the government's goodwill or lack thereof? At the moment, it seems reasonable to question whether certain government actions show that it really wants to move in the direction of a meaningful right to a healthy environment.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, indeed, one of the major problems with Bill S-5 is that the enforceability of the right to live in a clean and healthy environment is left up to the minister. It is not up to the residents of Canada, who should be able to bring forward concerns to the minister and then follow a transparent and timely path so we can make sure this right is upheld in a proper manner. It should not be left entirely up to the minister, as it is now.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for his leadership in introducing a true right to a healthy environment through Bill C-219.

I think this is the third speech I have heard sharing an interest in introducing better legislation before we even get this bill passed. We know that the Conservative Party intends to support this legislation, but it does not even support a carbon tax as a starting point, the simplest environmental policy of any to begin with. What does he think this says about the quality of the legislation in front of us now?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I totally agree with the member. This bill is one of the steps in the right direction. It is something we feel we should support because we want to make a step in the right direction. We just wish there were several steps or bigger steps. At least with the right to a clean and healthy environment, for instance, we now have that enshrined within legislation. However, we do not have a good method of enforcing it. That is one thing we should do next, one of several things I outlined.

A lot of these issues could have been fixed if the government had listened to what people were saying, after Bill C-28 was introduced, about ways to fix it. It should have made Bill S-5 a much better bill from the start.

• (1850)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I like to think that Bill S-5 is a piece of legislation that really demonstrates the government's commitment to bringing forward good, solid legislation with the co-operation of both the House and the Senate. We have seen amendments proposed by all political parties, and different amendments were accepted. I think we have good, sound legislation, and we can all take some pride in its passage.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to how ultimately this legislation is in fact advancing something worthwhile by giving Canadians the right to a healthy environment.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, again, we had 22 years before Bill C-28 to fix this. We have had two years since then. This should have been a much better bill. We now have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment within the scope of CEPA, not within the scope of the rest of the federal mandate, so it

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is a tiny step. We should be doing better. We could have done so much better if the government had done so.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on Motion No. 1.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask for a recorded vote, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 2. A vote on the motion also applies to Motion No. 3.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded vote, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on Motion No. 2 stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motion No. 3.

[*Translation*]

At this time the House should proceed to the taking of the deferred divisions at the report stage of the bill.

[*English*]

However, pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded divisions stand deferred until Tuesday, May 16, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House you would find unanimous consent at this time to call it 7:20 p.m. so we can begin the late show.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 7:20 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1855)

[*English*]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, on April 25, I asked the Minister of Transport a question regarding air passenger rights, the response to which I found wholly lacking, and so I am glad I have a chance this evening to speak at greater length to this issue.

As a quick recap, the Liberals brought in their first air passenger rights framework in 2019 promising that Canada's approach was going to be one of the strongest in the world, and yet what we have seen over successive travel seasons is anything but. We have seen thousands of passengers greatly inconvenienced, sleeping on airport floors, out thousands of dollars and having their much-awaited travel plans uprooted.

Last September, the Liberals brought in further changes, again promising that this was going to make it one of the strongest in the world, and yet the complaints have piled up. Now there are over 40,000 air passenger complaints before the Canadian Transportation Agency, and we see the government going into its approach yet again and trying to finally fix what is clearly broken and not working.

The European Union has had an effective approach in place for over decade, an approach that gets passengers the compensation they deserve. However, instead of copying that approach or following my private member's bill, which is based very closely on the European approach, this minister and this government have taken a circuitous, complex and bureaucratic tack in trying to finally put in place something that protects air passengers.

I want to highlight some of the specific concerns, the first of which is the concern that I raised on April 25, which is that as part of the mediation process envisioned in Bill C-47, the budget implementation act, passengers who enter into mediation to resolve their complaints with the airlines would be forbidden from speaking about any matter that was covered as part of that mediation. This is a confidentiality clause that I do not believe any air passenger who has a grievance with an airline would want to commit to. Passengers deserve transparency, they deserve a process that is open and transparent, and so this confidentiality clause, which was the topic of my question on April 25, seems entirely misplaced in the legislation.

There are other concerns too. There has been much said about a loophole in the current approach that allows airlines to deny passengers compensation for reasons within the airline's control but on what they deem to be required for safety. Now, the minister has stated very vehemently that the legislation before us would close that loophole, and yet we see the phrase "required for safety" repeated time and time again in the legislation we are debating.

Much of the meat of this approach the minister has put off to regulations, which will not get debated in the House, and he has gone

one step further. He has given the Canadian Transportation Agency the ability to establish guidelines that will set out the extent and manner in which the agency enforces the regulations, which are based on the legislation. We need accountability, and when we see an agency that is supposed to be at arm's length from this government given such great powers to determine the extent to which it upholds the spirit of the legislation, that is very concerning indeed.

We need an approach that is transparent and has air passengers' backs. We are not seeing it in this legislation, and we certainly intend to bring forward amendments that will finally get air passengers their due.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, protecting the rights of air passengers when air travel does not go as planned is a priority of our government.

[*Translation*]

Creating the air passenger protection regulations provided an important framework for travellers' rights; however, lessons learned throughout the pandemic, which began shortly after the regulations were implemented, have provided the Government of Canada with valuable information, including areas that need strengthening.

[*English*]

Legislative amendments to the Canada Transportation Act have been introduced to clarify and strengthen Canada's passenger rights regime while increasing air carriers' accountability and streamlining the process for administering air travel complaints by the Canadian Transportation Agency. With these changes, air carriers would be required to pay compensation to travellers unless they can demonstrate that a disruption was caused by specific allowable circumstances. These allowable circumstances would be predetermined and regulations would be established by the agency in consultation with the Minister of Transport.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

Our government recognizes that changes are needed to ensure that passenger complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible. Legislative changes are being proposed to streamline the process by which dispute resolution services are provided to Canadians and to help reduce the agency's backlog of complaints.

[*English*]

The current process involves three steps, including time-consuming and resource-intensive adjudication. The new process is simplified with mediation and a decision, if no settlement is reached. This would ensure Canadians obtain decisions more rapidly while having their complaints thoroughly addressed.

It is important to note that the mediation process for air passenger complaints has always been confidential, since we introduced these protections in 2019, becoming the first Canadian government to enshrine the rights of air travellers in legislation. The amendments being proposed in Bill C-47 do not impose any new restrictions. While a confidentiality obligation is typical in mediation processes to allow a frank and open discussion between a complainant and an air carrier, the new process has been designed to ensure that more passengers have access to the information they may need to claim compensation.

Under the new process, the agency would be required to make public a summary of each case, including the flight number and the date, as well as the reason for the flight disruption and whether compensation was awarded, which would provide insightful information to other passengers on that same flight.

[Translation]

In addition, because compensation amounts are publicly available in the air carriers' terms and conditions of carriage, there is nothing to prevent the agency from publishing this information. I expect the agency to do just that.

Our government is confident that the proposed changes will improve transparency while allowing for more timely resolution of air travel complaints.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the parliamentary secretary believes that this third approach at getting it right is going to finally work.

However, we have some grave concerns. From a passenger perspective, this is a complex approach that they have to navigate. It is not two steps. First of all, passengers have to complain to the airline about the disruption that has impacted their lives. Then, when the airline gets back to them and denies them compensation, they have to enter this mediation process, and possibly go on to a third stage of obtaining an order.

One of the things we are very concerned about is the fact that an order of these mediation processes is not considered to be a decision of the agency. Therefore, the passengers who file the complaint would not have the ability to pursue an appeal under the provisions of the Canada Transportation Act. We are very concerned that Bill C-47's air passenger rights actually reduce the ability of passengers to pursue the full compensation that they are due.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that travellers' rights are respected by airlines when air travel does not go according to plan.

[Translation]

The proposed amendments to the Canada Transportation Act will increase airlines' burden of proof by requiring them to compensate travellers unless they can prove that a disruption was caused by a circumstance set out in the list of exceptions.

[English]

The proposed measures would also streamline the processes for administering air travel complaints at the Canadian Transportation

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Agency and requires the agency to make public a summary of each decision made by complaint resolution officers. This would inform passengers on that same flight whether compensation has been awarded.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this adjournment debate arises from a question I asked the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry on May 1.

On that day, as I was asking the question, on the lawn of Parliament Hill, there was a crowd of young researchers from Ottawa universities demanding to be heard by the government. They were part of a cross-country demonstration that day that involved nearly 10,000 graduate students, post-docs, faculty and supporters. They had walked out of 46 institutions across Canada.

Their question for the government was simply this: Why are grad students are getting paid the same amount today as they were being paid 20 years ago? Their wages, which come in the form of federal scholarships and fellowships, cover the full-time work they perform doing their research, and that work is the backbone of our university research in Canada.

These are scholarships, so these are not average students, but our best and brightest, yet the federal government pays them below minimum wage. They are forced to live below the poverty line. Master scholarships have been pegged at \$17,500 per year for 20 years. Ph.D. students get a bit more at \$21,000. Therefore, my question for the minister is this: Why have these scholarship amounts not changed since 2003?

Last week, at the Standing Committee on Science and Research, we were studying the same question. One of the witnesses was Sarah Laframboise, a Ph.D. student from the University of Ottawa, who had organized the May 1 walkout. She had appeared before our committee exactly one year ago on the same subject. This time, and I am quoting from the blues, she stated, "It is frustrating, however, that in the last year since my appearance there has been no action by our government to solve these problems. During this time, we have 7,000 scientists and 40 scientific associations sign an open letter. We had 3,500 signatures on a petition...delivered to the House of Commons. We rallied on Parliament Hill in August. We spoke to MPs, ministers, media and the public about our cause, and sent over 2,000 emails to our MPs. But this wasn't enough. Budget 2023 contained no new funding for graduate students and post-docs."

Also testifying was Dr. Maydianne Andrade, a professor of biology at the University of Toronto. She said, and I am again quoting from the blues, "Our current system is a massive filter. It is a filter that is filtering out people as a function of their finances, not as a function of their excellence, not as a function of the likelihood that they might be the next Canadian Nobel prize [winner]."

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“We are filtering out people who can't take the mental load of living in poverty, those who don't have credit ratings that allow them to take out loans, those who are unable to manage incredibly challenging research agendas while holding down several jobs.

“We are filtering out mature students who have dependents, and we're filtering out anyone whose family can't help support them through this without massive debt.”

The science and research committee recommended last year that these scholarship amounts be increased. We have the advisory panel report on the federal research support system, headed by Dr. Frédéric Bouchard, and commissioned by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry himself, recommending that these scholarship and fellowship amounts be increased and indexed to inflation. I spoke with Dr. Bouchard recently, and he was mystified as to why these recommendations had not been followed.

Therefore, I will repeat my question: When will this be fixed? When will we start paying our young researchers a living wage so they will stay in Canada, where we need them to be, instead of leaving for any number of countries that would happily pay them twice as much as they receive here?

• (1905)

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to respond to the comments made by the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay regarding federal investments in science for our graduate students, scientists and researchers.

Canada is a leader in science and research, and the government is committed to ensuring that this continues. Every day, Canadian researchers stand at the forefront of new scientific discoveries and research breakthroughs, and the Government of Canada has continued to invest in Canadian researchers, the key drivers of innovation who are helping to build a healthier and more prosperous future for us all.

Since 2016, Canada has committed more than \$16 billion to support the valuable contributions that scientists and researchers make to the health, well-being and prosperity of all Canadians. Enhancing the opportunities available to researchers has been a priority that the government has backed up with significant investments in successive budgets. In terms of targeted investments to support students and post-doctoral fellows, the government recognizes the critical role that federal scholarships and fellowships play in nurturing and sustaining Canada's top talent through support for career progression and increased financial security and independence.

Budget 2019 provided \$114 million over five years, with \$26.5 million per year ongoing, to create more than 500 master's level scholarship awards annually and 167 more three-year doctoral scholarship awards annually through the Canada graduate scholarships program. That same budget, budget 2019, also invested \$37.4 million over five years and \$8.6 million ongoing to expand parental leave coverage from six months to 12 months for students and post-doctoral fellows to help young researchers better balance work and family.

Looking ahead, to deliver an equitable, accessible and effective suite of scholarships and fellowships, the Government of Canada

continues its work to promote equity, diversity and inclusion. Budget 2019 invested in bursaries and scholarships for first nations, Inuit and Métis students through a \$9-million investment in Indspire, while the granting agencies, the tri-agency, have partnered with indigenous peoples to develop a national research program to advance reconciliation. Furthermore, through Budget 2022, we invested \$40.9 million to support targeted scholarships and fellowships for Black student researchers.

Looking forward now, the Government of Canada remains committed to supporting a strong federal system that fosters new ideas, breakthroughs and advancements. To cement Canada's leadership position on the world stage, our research support system must meet the needs of today's research, which is increasingly complex, collaborative, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and international. To these ends, the government recognizes the importance of continued evaluation of and investment in Canada's science and research ecosystem.

The government welcomes the advisory panel on the federal research support system's report, the Bouchard report. The government is carefully reviewing the findings and recommendations and taking them under consideration. As we advance efforts to support the research ecosystem and Canada's top talent, the government understands it is important to provide a research environment that is supportive of Canada's top talent and to promote science in this country.

• (1910)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I am sure the government thinks it is doing the right thing for science and research, and it has made some investments in that regard over the past five years or so, but it is clearly missing an obvious investment here, an investment that would be relatively small in comparison to some of the other programs it has initiated, an investment that would have a huge payback, and that is to invest in our young researchers and graduate students. They have literally been forgotten for 20 years. That is the only way I can explain this.

Many of these students are moving to other countries or dropping out of their studies altogether. We need them to keep working here to make sure our country is the innovation powerhouse it should be. We know what needs to be done. We need to pay them a fair wage. We know what needs to be done, so let us do it.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that the government has heard the calls from the research community to increase the value of the scholarships and fellowships, as I have heard them, and I will continue to work with governments, the federal granting agencies and the research community to explore ways to support our next generation of researchers and top talent.

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The Government of Canada recognizes that for Canada to achieve its full potential and for Canadians to achieve their full potential, support for science and research must respond to the evolving needs of our science and research ecosystem.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, my questions are timely, given the debate earlier today on Bill S-5, the strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act.

When I originally asked about the Kivalliq hydro-fibre link project back in February, it was before the budget was announced. Since then, budget 2023 has mentioned the Kivalliq hydro-fibre link. This is now the second time this major Nunavut clean energy project is mentioned in a federal budget.

Unfortunately, this is also the second time a budget failed to give this transformative project the direct funding it needs to proceed to its next stage of development. By failing a direct and immediate funding commitment, the government is not addressing Inuit self-determination and is disregarding the almost decade-long efforts invested in the project.

By avoiding the funding of this project, the government is failing to meet its international obligations to combat climate change. Communities will continue to rely on diesel, rather than transition to the use of renewable resources to power Nunavut communities.

The Kivalliq hydro-fibre link project would meet the whole territory's greenhouse gas emissions target for 2030. It would create generational socio-economic opportunities for Nunavummiut, and it would secure the Arctic in very tangible ways.

Inuit were led to believe that the government would walk the talk. Promises keep being made, yet Inuit see nothing. Inuit are treated under a one-size-fits-all approach of tax credits and Natural Resources Canada's funding. Being mentioned within the tax credits section of the budget announcement does not meet the promises made by the government. These tools are great for big corporations and Crown corporations with extensive balance sheets. Outside of these tax credits and small funds, what is the government's plan for the Kivalliq hydro-fibre link project?

• (1915)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Nunavut for bringing up this important issue, and I would like to acknowledge that I am speaking to members from the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Northerners are very aware of the impacts of climate change, including the Inuit, with their deep connection to the land. Indigenous and northern communities are on the front lines. Climate change is having real impacts on their infrastructure, livelihoods, cultures and way of life.

The federal government has been working to mitigate and reduce the impacts of climate change. In the north, we have been learning from the traditional knowledge and expertise of indigenous peoples to assist with innovative projects in response to climate change.

There are many examples of indigenous communities taking the lead to build a more climate resilient future. They are involved in climate monitoring, adaptation solutions and the transition to clean energy. For example, the northern REACHE program helps indigenous and northern communities reduce their dependence on the use of diesel fuel for electricity and heating. Program officials have also been working to implement an indigenous and remote communities clean energy hub. The hub, recently gifted the indigenous name Wah-ila-toos, delivers funding using a community-centred, single-window approach.

This simplifies access to funding and resources to better support indigenous, rural and remote communities in developing and implementing clean energy—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt. There are conversations being had while there is business being done. I would ask members, if they want to have conversations, to take them out of the chamber.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, so far, the northern REACHE program has invested more than \$53 million to support 176 clean energy projects across the north. Examples of the projects funded by REACHE include solar panels and biomass installations in community buildings, as well as feasibility studies and project planning. The program has also funded capacity-building initiatives for local communities. These include energy coordinators, workshops, skills development, and mentorship programs. All across the north and the Arctic, indigenous peoples are playing a critical role in the effort to mitigate climate change.

Our government continues to support the Inuit-led Kivalliq hydro-fibre link project connecting communities in Nunavut. This project will help Nunavut meet its climate change targets, connect communities and reduce the use of costly polluting diesel for energy. I am particularly enthusiastic as a Manitoban that Manitoba will help provide power through Manitoba Hydro.

Business of Supply

I can also tell members about a project in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. With federal support, Nihtat Energy, an indigenous owned and operated company, is developing a one megawatt solar farm in Inuvik. The project is expected to displace 824 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year and improve local air quality. This project is creating jobs as well as training and capacity-building opportunities for local community members, and it is saving the community money instead of importing costly and polluting diesel. The project builds on the success of several other solar panel initiatives in Inuvik that were developed by Nihtat Energy, and I would like to acknowledge its climate and community leadership and innovation.

Madam Speaker, there is much noise coming from the other side, and I would appreciate the hon. members' attention. However, I will stand down and assure the hon. member that we very much have Inuit and Nunavut in mind in both fighting climate change and providing them with clean energy.

• (1920)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members again, if they wish to have conversations, to please take them out into the lobby. There is business being done right now in the House.

The hon. member for Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, it is quite clear that it is one thing to have this in mind, but it is another thing to see action.

I am going to turn to the other side of what is important here, which is Canada's need to meet its international obligations on emissions reductions. The Liberal government has committed to a 40% GHG emissions reduction below 2005 levels by 2030, a 90% non-emitting electricity grid by 2030 and net-zero emissions economy-wide by 2050. This is just a short list.

How is the government addressing the very unique needs of Inuit-led clean energy projects while meeting its international obligations to combat climate change?

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I have given some examples of the types of projects that the federal government is funding in the north. I can also tell members about the national adaptation strategy, which will provide an additional \$50 million in funding over four years starting in 2023-24. The funding will enhance support for indigenous adaptation projects and priorities through existing climate adaptation programs.

One of the government's highest priorities is adapting and responding to the impacts of climate change, particularly in Nunavut. From the initiatives I have spoken about, it is clear that the government has been working closely with indigenous peoples in the north to ensure they are highly engaged in the fight against climate change.

I want to thank the hon. member for the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn, and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to study all votes under Canada Mortgage and Housing Cor-

poration in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2023-24

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in the main estimates, Mr. Chris d'Entremont in the chair)

The Chair: Today's debate is a general one on all votes under Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional representation.

[Translation]

Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used for both debate or for posing questions. Members wishing to use this time to make a speech have a maximum of 10 minutes, which leaves at least five minutes for questions to the minister. When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used, in other words, how much time will be spent on the speech and how much time will be used for questions and answers.

Also, pursuant to order made earlier today, members who wish to share their time with one or more members shall indicate this to the Chair. The Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent. When the time is to be used for questions and comments, the minister's response should reflect approximately the time taken to pose the question, since this time will be counted in the time originally allotted to the member.

• (1925)

[English]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the time provided for debate tonight may be extended beyond four hours, as needed, to include a minimum of 16 periods of 15 minutes each.

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Chair, eight years ago, the then Liberal leader, now the Prime Minister, promised that he would “make it easier for Canadians to find an affordable place to call home”. At the time, the typical house in Canada cost \$452,000. What does it cost today?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is an honour to stand here to debate my colleagues.

We know that Canadians are facing challenges in accessing their dream of home ownership. We are doing everything we can to help them get there.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, since he is the housing minister, he will know about housing prices. As I said, when the Prime Minister promised lower costs, the typical house was \$452,000. How much is it today?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, different prices can be seen in different parts of the country, so I would like the leader of the official opposition to recognize that fact.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, specifically, I am looking at the housing price index for the entire country provided by CREA. How much?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the average price of a home in Canada in 2022 was \$703,000.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, that is close, but it is actually a lot higher than the \$452,000 when the Prime Minister promised that he was going to bring housing prices down.

Back when he made that promise, the minimum down payment on an average house was \$22,000. How much is it today?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, average down payments are also regional in nature. That is my answer.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I want the national number, please.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the average down payment on a home, again, depends on the region. Those are the numbers I have. I am happy to provide them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I want just the national number, please.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is a regional number depending on what part of the country one lives in.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, one can average the regions to get the number for the nation. That is what averages do. This is the housing minister. Surely he knows the average necessary minimum down payment on an average house.

Could the housing minister please provide that basic housing information?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I have provided that information.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, no, he has not. If he believes he has, he should do it again.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I will do it again by saying that I have provided that information. It is regional, and I am happy to provide the regional breakdowns to the leader.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, he cannot provide the average down payment. I know he does not want to because it shows that since the Prime Minister promised more affordable numbers, the average necessary minimum down payment in Canada has more than doubled, from \$22,635 to \$47,390. That is a doubling of the necessary down payment.

The minister says regional information is different. Can he name one region where housing is more affordable now than it was when the Prime Minister made that promise?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we know there is a challenge with the rising costs of housing. That is why we have implemented a number of policies to enable Canadians to access their dream of home ownership.

● (1930)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, he was the one who said that regional data was the most important, so I will ask him this again. Since the Prime Minister promised that housing would be more affordable under his leadership, could he name a single region where it is more affordable?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I can give him the numbers. In Halifax, in 2022, the average was \$541,790.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, that is more than a 70% increase. I asked for a region where it is more affordable, even one region.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I am happy to provide numbers. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to keep doing this for the next five hours, I am happy to do it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, he has not provided numbers. Let us give him another try.

The Prime Minister said that housing would be more affordable under his leadership. When he took office, it was \$1,400 for the average mortgage payment in Canada. What is the average mortgage payment in Canada today?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is pretty rich seeing the leader of the official opposition ask me these questions when he has voted against measures to help Canadians access their dream of home ownership.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

Perhaps you would like to rule that when you are speaking, you give the floor to one person, and when you give it to the minister, he has the floor. The Leader of the Opposition should not be standing up at the same time, until he has been recognized. I find it extremely disruptive to the process. He seems to be standing up almost instantly after the minister starts speaking.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I will just wait for everything to calm down for a second. We will play it by ear and make sure that when the hon. member is acknowledged, he can stand and keep going.

Business of Supply

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, it is very straightforward. The Prime Minister promised in 2015 that he would make housing more affordable. Back then, the average mortgage payment needed on an average house in Canada was \$1,400. What is it today?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is \$1,459.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, actually, it is \$3,149, more than double the amount. It is incredible that the minister has officials here and was not able to get the right number.

Back when the Prime Minister first promised more affordable housing, in the 10 biggest cities, it cost \$1,172 for rent. What is it today?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we know that rents have gone up. We are doing everything we can to support renters.

In terms the average rental rates, again, there is a regional breakdown. I am happy to provide those numbers.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, this is our housing minister. The answer is \$2,200.

What we have is double trouble. The Prime Minister promised housing would be more affordable when he took office. At that time, the average needed minimum down payment was \$22,000. It has now risen to \$47,000. The average mortgage payment was \$1,400. It has now risen to \$3,100. The average rent on a two-bedroom was \$1,172. It has now risen to \$2,227. It is double trouble.

Speaking of double trouble, that is in the headline in a New York Post article, which says, “Double trouble: A house in Canada now costs nearly twice what it does in the US”.

Could the minister explain why a house is more expensive in Canada than it is in the U.S., where there is 10 times the people and a smaller land mass? Why?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, what we are witnessing is someone who does not have a plan for housing and someone who does not have a plan to support renters.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Do I have the floor or not? I did not interrupt you. If you do not interrupt me—

The Chair: Order. Let us just keep the conversation going. I do not want to interrupt more than I have to. Let us keep the tone down so we can ask questions and get answers and can get as many as possible in during the 15 minutes.

There is seven minutes and 57 seconds left, and the hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, most of the numbers the leader quoted were wrong.

For someone who has voted against supports for renters, supports for home buyers, supports for building supplies and supports for the most vulnerable people in Canada, it is very rich to see all these questions coming from him as if he cares about this issue.

• (1935)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I have probably voted against every single housing policy the current government has put forward, which has doubled the cost of housing in this country. Therefore, I urge the member to remind Canadians that I am in no way associated with anything the Liberals have done in housing.

The standard home in Canada now costs twice as much as in the U.S. A plan to rein in the stunning boom is a test for both housing markets. Why is it that the average house in Canada costs twice as much as in the United States, when the United States has 10 times the population on a smaller land mass? Why?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, at least he should explain to Canadians why he votes against measures to increase supply. He has been in this House saying that he cares about more supply and getting rid of gatekeepers, but he is the biggest gatekeeper when it comes to actually investing in measures and investments to create more supply for Canadians. He should—

The Chair: The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, if he wants to talk about housing supply, I will change it up here.

These data clearly show that the pace of home construction relative to population has declined since 2016, according to Scotiabank. In other words, we actually have fewer houses per capita today than we did in 2016. If the minister's housing plan is so great, why is it that the population is growing faster than the supply of housing?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, our population is growing because we have a robust immigration policy, but we also have a growing economy. The issues that the leader points to are issues associated with growth, with low unemployment numbers, high economic growth and high immigration. Skilled people are coming to Canada to help us grow our communities and our economy. If he is against that, he should come out and say that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, the number of housing units per 1,000 Canadians has been falling since 2016, when the current government took office, and we have the fewest houses per capita in the G7, even though we have the most land to build on. Why?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we are actually doing something about that. We are investing in measures to increase housing supply, but the member has voted against that, so he should come out and explain to Canadians why he keeps doing that. If he cares about supply, why does he block investment in more supply?

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, I am voting against his policies because they do not work. It is very simple. The Liberals doubled down payments, doubled mortgage payments, doubled rent and reduced the number of houses per capita. That is why.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order. The rules of committee of the whole are that we are permitted to make a speech at the beginning, and once that speech is done, we can start asking questions. The Leader of the Opposition has now done it two or three times where he has asked a number of questions and then he has gone into giving speeches and giving his own personal opinion on matters. The rules are very clear with respect to this. The time for him to have made a speech has already passed and now he is only into the time of asking questions and receiving answers.

The Chair: Let me repeat what I said at the beginning of committee. Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used both for debate and for posing questions. Should members wish to use this time to make a speech, it can last up to 10 minutes, leaving five minutes for the minister. Also, if members want to just get into questions and answers, they can do that as well.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, the speech part needs to be at the beginning, followed by the questions. Perhaps you want to consult with the Table on that.

The Chair: I have consulted with the Table. There is no requirement for the speech. The point is that if a member wants to go directly into questioning the minister, they can go into questioning the minister. I am allocating 30 seconds and 30 seconds, or 15 seconds and 15 seconds, as is the practice of this House.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, my question was, can they then go into a speech?

The Chair: Yes, members can go into a speech and take as long as they want at the end, as long as they are giving enough time for the minister to respond. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition wanted to take five minutes for a question and then have a five-minute answer, that would be fine as well.

Let us just proceed. The hon. leader of the official opposition.

• (1940)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, as an example, the median price in Niagara Falls, Canada, is \$645,000. The median sale price in Buffalo, 35 minutes away, is \$242,000. That is in Canadian dollars on both sides of the border. Why is it that the house 35 minutes away on the Canadian side of the border costs more than twice as much as the same, equivalent house on the American side? Why?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the leader can ask all the questions he wants, but these are the facts. He does not believe in helping homebuyers. He does not believe in building more supply. He does not have a real plan on housing. He has a half-baked plan built on our real plan that was already in progress from 2017. That is the fact. We can have this debate. I am happy to compare our record to his, which is non-existent. He did not do anything as housing minister, and today he pretends to care about homeowners when he voted against measures to help homeowners.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, when I was housing minister, people could afford a home.

In fact, if one looks at the housing on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls versus the American side, it is very interesting. On the Canadian side, at 3047 St. Patrick Avenue, one can get a tiny shack for \$549,900. On the American side, one gets a much bigger stand-alone home for \$164,000. It is \$549,900 on the Canadian side and \$164,000 on the American side, and both are at Niagara Falls. Why the discrepancy?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, here are the facts. He spouts numbers and he talks about housing affordability, but when it comes to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I did not interrupt the party opposite. I would appreciate it if the members did not interrupt me. I have the right to respond, as I have been asked a question, and it is becoming routine now.

The fact of the matter is that when it comes to housing supply, he has voted against measures to increase housing supply. When it comes to housing affordability and the measures to help homebuyers, he has voted against them and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I do not interrupt the other side. It is interfering with my right to reply to the questions from the leader.

The Chair: I just want to make sure everybody keeps their comments down.

The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, we have established that on the American side house prices are roughly half of what they are on the Canadian side. I have asked why multiple times. It cannot be population; they have 10 times the people. It cannot be land mass; they have less land than we do. The answer is that government gatekeepers block construction. He claims he is doing something about that, but he has been in this role and his Prime Minister has been in this job for eight years. If they were going to solve the problem, they would have by now, but everything is worse.

Will the minister tell us, how much is the cost of red tape and taxes for the average unit of housing in the city of Vancouver?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we are witnessing the biggest gatekeeper in this House. He has voted against every measure to build more supply, to support homebuyers and to build affordable housing. He talks about the gatekeepers and red tape. Why did he vote against the housing accelerator fund, a \$4-billion program to do precisely what the leader just mentioned, which is to help municipalities increase their capacity to build housing of all types for all families and individuals in Canada?

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Their record is voting against all and somehow doing less on housing and magically hoping the problem will take care of itself. We are doing everything we can, despite their opposition to everything we are doing.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, it costs roughly \$600,000 for red tape alone in the city of Vancouver, and what has that minister done as a consequence? He has shovelled more billions into the coffers of municipal red tape gatekeepers.

Our proposal is precisely the opposite. We will link the number of dollars a big city gets for infrastructure to the number of houses that actually get built. We will require more housing to be built to get more infrastructure dollars, and we will fine gatekeepers who block infrastructure and block housing. We are going to attach dollars to result, remove the gatekeepers and speed up and lower the cost of building permits in order to get it done and to bring it home.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, on this side of the House we believe in the right to housing, and they do not. The leader is two years behind schedule. We introduced the concept of combining infrastructure investments for housing two years prior. We introduced the housing accelerator fund, a program to do exactly what he is claiming he will do in the future, which is to connect infrastructure and also make sure that local policies lead to more housing supply.

• (1945)

The Chair: I am going on to the next one in the list, the hon. Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am thankful to be invited to rise in the committee of the whole to speak to the main estimates for the CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and to discuss the Government of Canada's priorities for housing, ongoing activities and our plans for the future to give more people a place to call home.

[*Translation*]

Housing affordability is one of the most important issues to Canadians. Everyone deserves a dignified place to call home.

[*English*]

Everyone deserves a place of sanctuary—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Order. Members can take their conversations outside while we are in committee of the whole.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, everyone deserves a place where they can raise their family, plan for the future and belong to a community. Unfortunately, families across the country are struggling with the rising cost of living, especially the rising cost of housing, both for homeowners and for renters.

[*Translation*]

Housing is a basic human need. It is also an economic necessity.

[*English*]

Our economy is built by people, and people need homes to live in. In other words, investing in housing is good social and econom-

ic policy. That is what the Government of Canada has been doing since 2016. With each successive budget, we have made major housing investments, including launching Canada's first-ever national housing strategy. This comprehensive, \$82-billion, 10-year plan will ensure hundreds of thousands of Canadians have a place to call home, particularly for those most in need, and it is succeeding by addressing housing affordability from every possible angle.

The greatest part of the strategy, the greatest driver of affordability, is creating more housing supply and building more homes around price points to make housing more affordable, whether someone is a renter or a homeowner. Unfortunately, in many parts of the country, we are seeing a housing supply shortage, and we need to build more homes for our growing population.

According to research by CMHC, we need to build 3.5 million homes by 2030 to achieve affordability. This is above and beyond the current rate of construction. That is why, in budget 2022, we made housing supply a top priority. Budget 2022 introduced initiatives that will put our country on the path to double the rate of housing construction and meet Canada's housing needs over the next decade. That is why we included measures to build on that momentum in budget 2023.

A new initiative that I am especially excited about is the housing accelerator fund. This \$4-billion program will help local governments cut red tape and build the housing that we need. This summer, we will start to receive proposals from local governments that increase housing supply and align with federal priorities to create dense, affordable and inclusive communities.

[*Translation*]

This multi-year initiative will remove barriers to the construction of new housing at the municipal level.

[*English*]

It will help cities and towns reduce their backlogs and get more shovels in the ground faster. It will create an estimated 100,000 new housing units in the initial phase and lead Canada to doubling housing construction. We will work closely with our municipal, provincial and territorial partners to develop this initiative, and I am confident that it will bring a much-needed systemic change that will make a long-lasting difference.

In addition to this fund, we are also reinvesting in proven programs that are making a difference, like the rapid housing initiative. This program was created in the early stages of the pandemic to respond to the urgent needs of those experiencing homelessness or those who are at risk of experiencing homelessness. The first two rounds of the rapid housing initiative exceeded expectations and are quickly creating more than 10,000 permanent, deeply affordable housing units. Now we are investing another \$1.5 billion over two years to extend the initiative, and this is expected to create over 4,500 new deeply affordable housing units, with 25% of those units dedicated exclusively to women-focused housing.

The national housing co-investment fund is another program that has built or renovated more than 300,000 affordable housing units for Canada's most vulnerable people. Our government has advanced \$2.9 billion in funding under this fund. We also aim for the fund to become more flexible and easier to access, allowing for the creation and renovation of 21,000 affordable rental units for Canadians who need them the most.

We have also reallocated \$500 million from the co-investment fund to launch a new co-operative housing development program. Co-operative housing projects will also receive support through the \$1 billion in loans reallocated from the rental construction financing initiative. We are working closely on this program with the co-operative sector, a sector that has, for decades, played an important role in providing affordable housing in communities across the country.

• (1950)

[Translation]

While building new housing is critical to housing affordability, so is modernizing some of Canada's aging rental housing. Some of the programs I have already mentioned address this issue.

[English]

Now, we are about to launch a new program that will make all new rental buildings more energy-efficient and affordable to operate. It will also extend their lifespan. Ensuring that we create more housing supply is only part of the equation. We have also introduced measures to protect homeowners from unfair practices like blind bidding or being forced to waive inspections. For example, we are working with provinces and territories to jointly develop a homebuyers bill of rights, backed by federal investments of \$5 million over two years.

[Translation]

We are also directly supporting low-income Canadians by providing rent assistance through a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit.

[English]

Recently, to support low-income renters in these challenging times, we have provided a \$500 payment via the one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit. Another very important initiative is Canada's homelessness strategy, reaching home, which supports the most vulnerable. The Government of Canada is investing nearly \$4 billion over nine years, a doubling of the funding under this program. The program supports communities in establishing coordinat-

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ed access. This is an integrated, systems-based approach that prioritizes people most in need of assistance and matches individuals to appropriate housing and services in a streamlined and coordinated way.

Reaching home is having a significant impact. In its first three years, it has funded over 5,000 projects, which helped place over 46,000 people experiencing homelessness in more stable housing, while over 87,000 people benefited from prevention and from shelter diversion services. These temporary spaces during COVID were also put in place when shelters had to reduce their capacity to ensure physical distancing. In fact, over 214,000 temporary accommodation placements were made to support individuals in need. Reaching home is playing an important role in supporting the national housing strategy's target of reducing chronic homelessness by half by 2027 or 2028. It also contributes to the federal government's commitment to ending chronic homelessness by 2030.

What I have mentioned today are just a few of the many important housing initiatives we have introduced. However, this should give members an overview of the breadth and depth of our commitment to housing. We are leaving no stone unturned in our work to ensure that every Canadian has dignity through calling a place "home".

[Translation]

Our goal is to foster prosperous communities where everyone can thrive.

[English]

I thank members again for their time today, and I am happy to answer any questions they have regarding CMHC's main estimates.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to take a moment, if I could, to ask the minister a question. First of all, I wanted to thank the minister for the rapid housing investment. We have seen great successes with the RHI in Halifax and in the Dartmouth area. I have spoken to the mayor, Mayor Mike Savage, in Halifax, and no one really and truly knows more about what to do with the housing money than the municipalities do. I think partnering with them directly has been a real win.

I would like to ask the minister whether there is a way of moving in a more flexible way so that we can work with the municipalities and allow them to be flexible to build what they need with the funds they get.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we know, in Canada, that one of the challenges we face is the lack of an adequate supply of housing. We have the fastest-growing population in the G7, but we have comparatively less housing supply.

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One of the keys to unlocking additional housing supply of all types, including affordable housing, but also all the way to home ownership, is to work with local governments of municipalities and regions to increase their capacity to develop systemic changes that would enable them to permit and deliver housing faster. That means investing in their capacity to do more, including in the infrastructure related to housing, but also changing their internal systems to make sure we are permitting and delivering more housing in Canada.

• (1955)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Chair, I can tell the minister and the House that, during my time as mayor in the city of Kingston, there was absolutely no support from the federal government with respect to housing. It was absolutely silent, and it was nowhere to be found. I remember the initiative on the affordable housing development strategy that the Province of Ontario set up, in the absence of the federal government's wanting to be part of that.

However, one thing I find most offensive, which comes from the Leader of the Opposition routinely, is when he refers to mayors in this country as being “woke” mayors or “gatekeepers”. It is not just me and it is not just former mayors who happen to be Liberal. I feel sorry for the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry and the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, who were also mayors in their communities. Their leader is now going around the country calling all mayors “woke” mayors for not being able to deliver on the needs of Canadians.

I know that the minister has travelled this country extensively, talking to mayors and municipal leaders throughout the country, and has come to Kingston on a number of occasions and met with the mayor of Kingston, even when I was not present in those meetings. I am wondering whether he could inform the House as to how effectively he thinks he might have been able to do that job had he been running around previously calling mayors “gatekeepers” and referring to them as “woke” mayors.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I really appreciate this question, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the divisiveness of the leader of the official opposition in calling the mayors, the elected officials in this country, “woke”, and denigrating them and calling them “incompetent”.

We need to work with local governments, we need to work with mayors and we need to work with municipalities to increase housing supply, to build more affordable housing and to build more affordable rental units, and that kind of approach will not get one single affordable housing unit built. What it will do is alienate another level of government elected by Canadians to represent their interests.

On this side of the House, what we are doing is working with mayors, increasing their capacity to permit and deliver housing faster and enabling them to make the systemic changes that are necessary, through the housing accelerator fund investment, so that we can have more housing supply in Canada.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Chair, first of all, I want to commend the minister for giving us three ample housing projects. One of them was particularly for women at risk.

The minister had meetings with three mayors, including the mayor of Surrey. Surrey is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Canada, with 1,200 people moving in every month. I wonder how the minister's plan will help mayors, like those he met with, and what the discussions were.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, that is absolutely correct. I found the mayor of Surrey, as well as the members of Parliament from the region of Surrey, to be very open to working with our government to meet the needs of all types of housing advocates in Surrey.

Surrey has benefited greatly from the rapid housing initiative. While I was there to announce the third round of the rapid housing initiative in Surrey, I was talking to the current mayor of Surrey about the housing accelerator fund and the opportunities the fund will provide for Surrey and other fast-growing regions and municipalities in Canada that are dealing with the pressures of a lack of enough supply for their fast-growing population. What I found in Surrey and in other parts of Canada is that mayors are welcoming the federal investments under the housing accelerator fund. They lack the capacity to do more. They want us to invest in their capacity to do more, and we will do exactly that, while incentivizing them to speed up their permitting and delivery of housing locally.

• (2000)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Chair, what does the minister think is the biggest difference between us and the Conservatives? I want him to talk about fighting for Canadians, defending their right to have a home.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, that is a very good question, and it points to the fundamental difference between this side of the House, our government, and the official opposition. The Conservatives do not believe that Canadians have a human right to a dignified place to call home, but we do, and the evidence is there: Whenever we bring investments to the floor of the House to invest in Canadians, they vote against them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Chair, I must admit that I am a bit surprised by the rhythm of the conversation this evening, by this sort of rallying back and forth, and I am not sure we have really gotten any answers to our questions. Nevertheless, this is a very serious issue. We have an opportunity, this evening, to discuss with the minister, the person responsible for housing, something very serious that is happening in Quebec and Canada, namely, a severe housing crisis. This is very serious, and it is not a laughing matter. There must be a commitment.

I would like to use my time this evening to have meaningful exchanges with the minister so we can try to find solutions. I want to emphasize the word “solution” because right now solutions are lacking. The minister rightly said that housing is a right. I believe that. I do not know whether the Conservatives believe it, but I believe that housing is a right. It is a right, and I do not think that we are really dealing with that issue right now in Canada and Quebec. We are not able to house the most disadvantaged members of our society. That is a real problem.

Let us do something meaningful. I want our exchange to be constructive. After this 15-minute discussion, I would like us to have some solutions, because at this time, strategy or no strategy, there is a growing number of people in the streets. There are people whose lives were shattered by the pandemic or by something else, and we are not managing to house the poorest in our society.

I had a conversation with an economist at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC. I did not have this discussion with some radical left-wing group or something like that. This was an economist at the CMHC who said that in the next 10 years, in Quebec alone, to address both accessibility and affordability, we will need to build 1.1 million housing units. That is what we need to deal with the current crisis. The private sector alone will undertake the construction of 500,000 housing units. This means that in the next 10 years there will be a shortfall of 600,000 housing units that need to be built to give people a roof over their heads and ensure that it is a decent roof they can afford.

What is the plan? What solutions is the minister proposing this evening?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the federal government is determined to help Quebecers find safe and affordable housing. Since 2015, we have invested more than \$6.5 billion in Quebec to help more than 45,000 families and individuals secure the housing they needed.

The bilateral agreement between the governments of Canada and Quebec will result in a combined investment of an additional \$3.7 billion over 10 years to improve housing conditions in Quebec. That is what federal leadership on housing looks like for Quebecers. As part of our commitment to end chronic homelessness, we are providing more than \$400 million to Quebec. As part of the rapid housing initiative, we are working with the Government of Quebec to invest \$563 million to create 3,200 new housing units in the province. We have also announced \$9.9 billion through the affordable housing innovation fund to help build or renovate 2,675 affordable housing units in Quebec.

• (2005)

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, I was in Montreal today for an event organized by the United Way of Greater Montreal. All the community housing organizations in the greater Montreal area were there, along with advocates for housing assistance and assistance for families, victims of domestic violence and people with disabilities.

Everyone was at the event, which revealed some really interesting things. Several speakers gave presentations throughout the morning. The two words that received the most applause all morn-

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ing were “social housing”. All the organizations around Montreal are thinking right now that this is the solution.

As the minister pointed out, we have a supply problem in Canada. Everyone who spoke today emphasized this supply problem in Quebec and in Canada. They all said that one of the most important solutions to provide proper shelter for the most disadvantaged is social housing.

I would like the minister to tell us how many real social housing units have been built in Quebec since the national housing strategy was implemented.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Chair, I was in Montreal this morning too. I was there with my hon. colleague opposite. One thing I heard about this morning that I think he would agree with is the issue of social diversity.

Yes, we need to build social housing, we need to build affordable housing, and we need to work on meeting the entire spectrum of housing supply needs, but we also have to address market speculation. We have to keep working on the things we have already started, like banning foreign nationals from buying property here in Canada, and charging a 1% tax on residential buildings and properties in Canada that are owned by non-Canadians. We also have to keep doing more. On that point, we agree.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, I repeat my question: How many social housing units have been built in Quebec since the national housing strategy was launched?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, these are the figures I can give him: Since 2015, investments in the national housing strategy in Quebec have led to about half a million housing units being renovated or built in Quebec.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, I did not understand the answer. Does that mean half a million social housing units were built in Quebec?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I said half a million housing units have been renovated or built in Quebec.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, it looks like I am not going to get an answer.

Housing organizations across Quebec and Canada are proposing a solution because everyone realizes that the national housing strategy is not working. British Columbia has launched a \$500-million acquisition fund.

This is a massive issue right now, and I know that the minister and the parliamentary secretary are aware of that. There is a housing construction problem. Things are not moving as quickly as we would like. There is a labour shortage. Increased construction costs are hampering development. We all agree on that.

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One of the solutions is to take existing housing stock and get it off the market. This is a solution that many organizations are proposing. British Columbia gets it. They created a \$500-million fund to enable non-profit housing organizations across the province to buy private housing and get it off the market in order to keep it affordable. At the moment, many federal programs provide affordable housing. These have resulted in \$2,000 housing in Montreal. I do not know who can afford that.

When the minister saw that British Columbia was moving in this direction, did he seriously consider creating a similar fund at the federal level?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, what I can tell my colleague is that, in Quebec, and taking just Montreal as an example, we announced a project for 700 housing units that we bought back to ensure that housing remains affordable.

There are projects in place to ensure affordability in the long term, and we will stay the course. We will be building thousands of units in Quebec as part of the third round of our rapid housing initiative.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, the rapid housing initiative is an interesting program.

Has the minister, the parliamentary secretary or anyone in government given any serious thought to taking all the money in the national strategy, for example, the co-investment fund and the housing accelerator fund, which have billions of dollars in them but are not very effective, and putting all that money into the rapid housing initiative?

Everyone likes the rapid housing initiative. I spoke with some people today who are very happy with it. However, there is not enough funding for the projects that people want to develop.

Have you given any serious thought to rejigging and relaunching the national housing strategy, taking all the money that does not go to real social housing, or even real affordable housing, and putting it into the rapid housing initiative?

The government could invest a few billion dollars a year and make this program permanent, because, frankly, people do love it.

● (2010)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his comments. That is exactly what I heard this morning. People are pleased with the rapid housing initiative. They are also very pleased with the national housing co-investment fund. I think that what they want is to ensure that the money gets out quickly. I encourage my colleague to talk to the Government of Quebec as well.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, let us move on to a related question. Let us talk about the budget we just saw. The government is sending billions of dollars to oil companies to do some greenwashing, which is outrageous. They send billions of dollars for carbon capture, which does not work.

I am talking about billions of dollars sent to companies that made a whopping \$200 billion in profits in 2022. If we take the five big oil companies, that is \$200 billion in profits. When I saw that the government was sending \$20 billion to companies that are already making \$200 billion in profits, I asked myself a question.

When the minister saw that in the budget, did he stand up in cabinet and say that hundreds of thousands of households were in desperate need of housing in Quebec and Canada and ask whether we could take that \$20 billion and invest it in housing?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I would like to remind my colleague that since putting this national housing strategy in place, the federal government has provided \$40 billion to Quebec.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, I just want to know where the \$40 billion was spent. Give me the number of housing units where people were able to unlock the door with a key.

In regard to this \$40-billion investment in Quebec that my colleague spoke about, I want someone to tell me where the doors are. I want to know how much the doors built with the \$40 billion cost per month. I want someone to tell me right now.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I can quickly tell him about three projects. Chez Doris has 19 rooms for homeless women. Utile, in Quebec City, has almost 200 units of housing for an affordable—more than affordable—price of \$490. There are many projects in Quebec, even in his riding.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, she just spoke about \$40 billion. The projects she mentioned add up to perhaps a few million dollars.

Where is the \$40 billion she spoke about?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I would just like to make a correction. The \$40 billion is for the whole national housing strategy. We are talking about \$6 billion for Quebec.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, at least we got an answer.

I have another question for the minister.

We learned today that the Trans Mountain pipeline will cost \$30 billion. I weep to see that. To make matters worse, this is coming from a government that said it would not invest another penny in fossil fuels.

We have a severe housing crisis in Quebec and Canada. There are not enough housing units for the most disadvantaged members of our society. I visited the social housing in Quebec. In Longueuil, in my riding, there are 17 people sharing a three-bedroom apartment. In Trois-Rivières, a woman who was the victim of domestic violence is sleeping in her car with her two children. Meanwhile, the government is spending \$30 billion on outdated energies.

When the minister learned in cabinet that the cost of the Trans Mountain project had increased to \$30 billion, did he raise his hand to say that he would take a few billion dollars to build social housing in Quebec and Canada?

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Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I would like to give my colleague some figures because I think that is important.

In terms of CMHC funding, there has been \$348 million in the co-investment fund since 2015. Moreover, there is \$340 million for phase two of the rapid housing initiative and \$223 million for phase one.

Quebec has its fair share of the funding for all the housing units that we want to build in Quebec.

• (2015)

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Chair, I still do not know the address of the projects she is talking about. She named three projects that cost \$6 billion. I do not think the projects she told me about are worth \$6 billion; otherwise, those are some expensive doors.

I want to see more projects. In fact, I would like to know—if not tonight, tomorrow—what projects actually have people living in them that were built with the \$6 billion she is talking about.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, all the projects that have been submitted and confirmed can be made public.

Let us not forget that any of the co-investment projects, or even the rapid housing initiative projects, can be combined with funding from Quebec. Many projects have been funded and completed with federal funding.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Chair, the national housing advocate pointed out that the financialization of housing is a widespread issue that has negatively shaped Canada's housing system. She noted that large institutional investors and financial firms focus on making maximum returns for their shareholders. This is causing real harm to people, contributing to housing unaffordability, worsening housing conditions, and leading to evictions and displacement. Many tenants do not even know who their landlord is, because landlords hide behind numbered companies.

Will the minister do as the housing advocate recommends and track the ownership of financialized housing stock?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I agree with the hon. member that speculative investments in real estate are contributing to pushing housing prices higher. That is why we have legislated a number of measures that can deal with this, including an annual 1% tax on the value of vacant residential real estate that is not owned by Canadians or Canadian residents, as well as a two-year ban on foreign investment in Canadian residential properties. We have also committed to reviewing the tax treatment of real estate investment trusts and, through budget 2022, we announced the launch of a federal review of housing as an asset class.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, a serious way to address this issue is to stop the profiteering in housing, stop corporate financialized landlords from sweeping up undervalued affordable housing stock and create an acquisition fund for non-profits so that they can acquire and hold that affordable housing stock for the community in perpetuity.

Will the minister place a moratorium on the acquisition of affordable homes by financialized landlords, including REITs and corporate firms, and create an acquisition fund for the non-profit sector?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I agree with the hon. member that the financialization of housing is an issue that we have to deal with. We are committed, as a government, to making sure that housing is more affordable. We are continuing to do our part in addressing and tackling the financialization of housing.

When it comes to rent control and what landlords do at the local level, of course, the provinces have a major role to play. However, on this side of the House, we believe that we also have a role to play. We know that a number of factors are making housing more expensive, but the biggest issue is supply. As highlighted by the recent data released by the CMHC, Canada is facing a supply shortage. We are doing what we can to tackle financialization, but we are also doing everything we can to tackle supply.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, the minister should know that what he needs to do is put a moratorium in place and create an acquisition fund for non-profits so that they can get into the market to purchase housing units. This is like what British Columbia is doing, by the way. The federal government has not done that.

The Federal Housing Advocate said that the government has a really important role to play in creating an acquisition fund so that non-market actors, such as housing co-ops, non-profits and social housing, can purchase properties for sale before they are financialized. This means that non-profits would be able to guarantee affordability in perpetuity. The Federal Housing Advocate called for this creation of community wealth instead of individual wealth.

Does the minister agree with that, and will he act on her sound advice?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I actually agree with the hon. member that co-op housing is a very good model for housing, because it is community owned and community managed. We know that co-op housing is a good model for affordable, community-owned and community-managed housing.

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That is why we are investing \$1.5 billion to build the first new co-op units in 30 years; we understand that we need a healthy mix of housing. We need community-owned housing and affordable housing units. Moreover, \$1.5 billion to build new co-ops in partnership with such organizations as the Co-operative Housing Federation is the right way to go. That is why we put that significant amount of money in place to make sure that we continue to supply more affordable housing units through the co-op model.

• (2020)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, the minister says he agrees with me. When is he going to announce that they will put a moratorium in place?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, as I said, a number of factors lead to making housing more expensive and contribute to the challenges facing Canadians. One of them is financialization, but a second one is supply, and we are taking measures to deal with both.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, the minister did not answer the question, so the answer is no. He cannot pretend to agree with me and then do nothing.

When is the minister going to announce an acquisition fund?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, our whole national housing strategy is geared towards helping non-profits and those who are dedicated to increasing affordable housing, as the member has spoken about. They can get help from the federal government so they can build more affordable housing units for Canadians.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, I am sorry, but that is wrong. The national housing strategy is missing the mark, and the Auditor General has pointed that out. In fact, the Liberals do not even know what they are doing. They are developing housing that is not helping those most in need. The minister should read the Auditor General's report.

Real estate investment trusts enjoy preferential tax treatment in that they do not pay the corporate tax rate. The seven largest real estate investment trusts alone have saved a combined \$1.5 billion through federal tax loopholes. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that the federal government will lose another \$300 million in taxes over the next four years.

Will the federal government stop rewarding real estate investment trusts for pushing out long-term tenants and jacking up housing prices? Will it end their special tax treatment and make them pay their fair share?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I am really perplexed by the logic of the hon. member. She says that our national housing strategy is not really doing anything on the ground. Contrary to that, I can report back to the hon. member that we have invested in either repairing or building 500,000 units; this has supported almost two million Canadian households. That is the impact the national housing strategy has had on this country since we came into office.

In terms of the real estate investment trusts, we are taking the matter seriously. That is why we launched a federal review of the tax treatment of real estate investment trusts.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, actually, it was the Auditor General who did the report. The minister should read that, by the way.

When he says they have launched a review, the clock is ticking. The units are being lost. For every one unit the government builds, we lose 15. That is the reality of the crisis, the magnitude of the crisis that we are faced with today and the government says it is doing a review. Get on with it. Implement what is needed. The housing advocate has tabled reports for the minister. All he has to do is act.

Now I want to turn to a different issue. The mayor of Edmonton met with the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance regarding their \$277-million indigenous housing plan. The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance promised that they would have the federal government's support and CMHC is aware of that. Now the Liberals are renegeing on their promise. Worse still, they are blaming the NDP because they say the NDP wanted to see meaningful action on a for indigenous, by indigenous urban and rural northern housing strategy. To be clear, the NDP absolutely want that, but we also called for new allocations for other streams, including non-indigenous housing programs and for the funding of those programs to be proportional to the need for indigenous peoples.

Will the minister stop pointing fingers and honour the promise to the city of Edmonton and fund the indigenous housing plan?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I just want to correct a few things that have been asserted by the hon. member.

The Auditor General looked at the Reaching Home strategy and she looked at the performance of the Reaching Home strategy mainly during the pandemic. The Auditor General did not look at the entire national housing strategy program. I just want to clear that misconception.

Secondly, the hon. member seems to downplay the impact of the national housing strategy. Just one program of the national housing strategy, the national housing co-investment fund, delivers an average affordable rent of \$700. We are committed to building 30,000 additional units. The rapid housing initiative is committed to building almost 15,000 units. We are in the process of delivering 10,000 affordable units and are committed to a further 4,500 units of deeply affordable housing for the most vulnerable members of our community.

In terms of what we are doing with the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy, we are co-developing that with indigenous peoples across the north, across rural Canada and across urban Canada. In budget 2023, we are building on the investment of \$300 million to add another \$4 billion to the URN housing strategy.

Business of Supply

● (2025)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, that comment from the minister really just goes to show he has not even read the report from the Auditor General.

For years now, in the midst of this unprecedented housing crisis, unhoused people seeking relative safety in encampments have been displaced in my riding in the Downtown Eastside from Oppenheimer Park to CRAB Park to Strathcona Park, and now from the sidewalks of the streets. Decampment took place without any plans in place to ensure people can be properly housed.

I have written four letters to the minister, calling on him to provide leadership with a multipartite initiative, similar to the previous Vancouver Agreement to address the crisis in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, yet no action has been taken.

Will the minister show leadership and recreate a Vancouver Agreement with the city, province and community to address the housing and drug poisoning crisis in the Downtown Eastside?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we have. We have shown leadership and here is the proof. We have invested over half a billion dollars to continue doubling the annual funding for Reaching Home, which is Canada's homelessness strategy. We have gone from just over \$2 billion to almost \$4 billion in response to the urgent need on the ground. Our investments are paying off. We have prevented over 62,000 people from experiencing homelessness and placed a further 33,000 people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing.

I spoke earlier about the rapid housing initiative which is on track to build 15,000 deeply affordable, permanent housing units for the most vulnerable.

We will continue to work with all levels of government to make sure that we end chronic homelessness across Canada once and for all.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, Romy Bowers said that CMHC had to ration the funding to non-profits for the co-investment fund by limiting the per unit funding to \$25,000 at a time when construction costs are going up. Is this what the minister means by leadership? Was that his decision?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I am proud to stand behind the national housing co-investment fund. It is a great program that supports non-profits, as well as municipalities, to invest in deeply affordable housing.

We are committed to this program for years to come.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, who made the decision to limit the funding for the co-investment fund to \$25,000 per unit?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, this is a program that delivers deeply affordable housing every day, right across the country. We are committed to continuing to invest in this program.

In fact, we have brought \$2.9 billion forward, from future years to this year.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, if it is such a good program, why is the minister working to kill the projects within it, with that \$25,000 limit per unit? Why did the government not actually

put in new allocation to the co-investment fund in budget 2023, instead of robbing Peter to pay Paul with a reallocation from the repair component of that stream?

Why will the government not invest the real money that is necessary to make that program a success?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, doubling Reaching Home from \$2 billion to \$4 billion is real money. Putting \$1.5 billion in new money in co-ops is real housing money. Putting \$4 billion on top of the \$300 million for the dedicated urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy is real money.

Bringing forward \$2.9 billion in the national housing co-investment fund, so that we can deliver more deeply affordable housing, is real money.

That is our track record and I am proud of our government's work in this space.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, he can be proud of the fact that the housing crisis is getting worse and worse under their watch. From coast to coast to coast, it does not matter what city one is in, in cities big or small, there is a major housing crisis, and what the government is doing is not working.

That is the reality. Listen to the people on the ground. Walk the streets. Open one's eyes. Come to my community in the Downtown Eastside and I will show us how desperate the situation is. People are dying.

Stop with the message box and get on with the program to do what is needed.

On the housing benefit, why did the government, in the middle of the delivery of the program, in February of this year, put in a new requirement, which is not in legislation, that prevented people who are on income assistance, who had their rent directly paid from the government to their landlord, from being eligible for the housing benefit?

● (2030)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the hon. member thinks that we are the only order of government that is responsible for encampments, that is responsible for addressing municipal issues and provincial issues. We are doing our part, as I said, from doubling from \$2 billion to \$4 billion in addressing homelessness.

Business of Supply

We are committed to doing our part. While encampments fall under the jurisdictions of provinces, territories and municipalities, we are committed to working with our partners to do everything we can to save lives.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Chair, housing issues are deep-seated and complex. There are many interrelated problems and many stakeholders involved. To address the major challenges, we must all work together. That means working with the private sector, the non-profit sector, indigenous communities, the provinces and the territories. This also means that all homes must be built in partnership with municipalities, and our government recognizes that. Unlike the Conservative Party, we believe that municipalities are an integral part of the solution.

That is why we developed the housing accelerator fund for municipalities, which will be launched this summer. It encourages systemic changes in the way housing is built in this country by providing incentives to communities to reduce red tape and streamline their process.

The fund was developed in collaboration with the municipalities. Local leaders told us that they face obstacles to the quick construction of housing. They told us what we already suspected: No one likes red tape. However, we cannot eliminate red tape by calling for cuts; we must take concrete action.

Whether it is about modernizing the services and the permit systems or encouraging transit-oriented development or bringing in inclusive zoning, improving these processes takes resources. The rapid housing fund will provide these resources. It is backed by \$4 billion in investments over five years. The goal is to directly create at least 100,000 net new housing units over the course of the initiative. More importantly, the simplified process that will come out of this work will continue to bear fruit for a long time to come, beyond the existence of the fund itself.

The fund will focus on the production of affordable housing with greater energy efficiency and on densification. As such it will not only build more houses, but it will build stronger communities because it will include a certain number of different initiatives to address the problem of housing affordability from several angles at a time.

The vast majority of these initiatives involve renewing, recovering and revitalizing the partnerships we have with the housing sector. This includes bilateral agreements with each of the provinces and territories to help us move forward together on housing. This includes distinction-based strategies to support housing in first nations, Métis and Inuit communities. This includes new and innovative initiatives to work directly with the not-for-profit and private sector.

This includes, for example, working with Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada and other sector stakeholders to create a co-op housing development program. It also includes a revolutionary partnership with Habitat for Humanity to create hundreds of new

homes for families across the country. These communities will be ready for the future and leave no one behind.

Clearly, our government knows that this is an excellent program. It is also clear that we are not alone. As I mentioned earlier, the housing accelerator fund has already received support from across the housing sector, including from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Home Builders' Association and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association.

Also, at a parliamentary committee meeting last summer, Éric Cimon, the director general of the Association des groupes de ressources techniques du Québec, called it wonderful news. This kind of support is critical because, as I said at the beginning, it takes partnerships to build housing. We need a comprehensive approach to housing if we are to make it affordable again.

That is the reasoning behind the national housing strategy that the government launched in 2017. There are obviously several examples in Quebec. As I was saying earlier to my Bloc Québécois colleague, there is the example of Chez Doris. Chez Doris will be able to acquire and transform two connected buildings on Saint-Hubert Street in the borough of Ville-Marie. This project will provide 19 rooms for vulnerable women who have experienced homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless. Community support will also be provided to encourage social interactions and improve their quality of life. The national housing strategy is not only about paying for the bricks and mortar; some aspects of the program are also about supporting certain operations to ensure that these projects are sustainable.

• (2035)

For example, we can talk about the permanent, culturally safe housing centre created by Projets Autochtones du Québec, or PAQ, which opened on February 27. This centre provides 18 rooms that can accommodate up to 22 indigenous men and women experiencing chronic homelessness. It is located in downtown Montreal near the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal and the PAQ's main shelter. Psychosocial support is provided by experienced workers. It is also a space that is culturally adapted to indigenous communities.

Lastly, I will talk about La Résidence des Ateliers, a project that has taken a number of years to implement. This project, which provides 200 housing units for seniors with direct access to the Rosemont metro station, would not have been possible without the national housing strategy.

These kinds of initiatives are happening because we are able to form partnerships with municipalities and community organizations. I am thinking, for example, of the UTILE student housing project in Quebec City, which provides 200 affordable housing units for students.

These projects will be possible and we will be able to accomplish them because we are going to work with all levels of government and community organizations across the country.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we have had several very successful projects funded in Guelph, including Silver Maple Seniors Community, a seniors residency. We had the Parkview Motel converted for supportive housing. We have Cityview Village by Habitat for Humanity.

As the market is responding to the programs going out, we are seeing progress. In fact, Guelph Today said that housing prices in Guelph are down 16.3% over last year.

Could the hon. member talk about how the programs being initiated, the partnerships being developed and the work with the builders take time to develop, but we are seeing the momentum building?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I believe that with the national housing strategy we are also giving partners the means to be real partners. The housing accelerator fund for municipalities will do just that.

Our government has taken a systemic approach. I am thinking of the infrastructure programs that will be linked to transportation. I am also thinking of environmental projects that will help renovate existing homes to reduce electricity bills. Transit projects will have a housing component. Therefore, the entire program and the government are taking a systemic approach.

The national housing strategy will ensure, in the continuum of housing supply, that we work with the most vulnerable by fighting chronic homelessness and also with those who can manage to buy a home. We will work to limit the generational gap between those who want to buy a property today and those who bought one 30 or 40 years ago.

That is an overview of the national housing strategy and the government's approach.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I appreciate my colleague's work and her speech. I know she has a very good understanding of this range of needs.

In my riding, we need projects with services. Yes, there is a need for social housing, but it must be accompanied by services. I wonder if the member could talk a bit more about this. These projects have been suggested by the community. We need to work with the province, including social services, in order to ensure that services are provided in addition to affordable housing.

I would like my colleague to comment on these types of projects that meet real needs.

• (2040)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Chair, I have spoken about this often in the House, but when I was younger, we never found a home that was adapted to the needs of my disabled brother, who was in a wheelchair. My mother, who is now retired, would not be able to afford housing on her own with the pension she is receiving.

We are talking about the need to provide housing, but that also means ensuring that people have both a roof over their heads and the social safety net that comes with it. The national housing strate-

gy includes programs that provide that support. For example, there is the program called reaching home and other national housing strategy programs.

I think we can be proud to be part of a government that is thinking not only about building housing, but also about taking care of the people who live there.

[English]

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the Minister of Housing was recently in Sault Ste. Marie for some pretty historic announcements. Legion Branch 25 came to me because its building was becoming decrepit and inoperable. Through our office, the Legion's good work and that of many other people, we got a hold of a builder, Sam Biasucci of SalDan, and the Legion applied for the funding the Minister of Housing has been talking about. It is for 107 units, 30% of which are affordable. This is going to house veterans as well as other community members. It is an amazing project.

At the same time, the minister announced about 276 units through the Aboriginal Housing Services Corporation. About 90 of those units will be in the Sault Ste. Marie area.

I want to ask the Minister of Housing his thoughts on those projects and what he thinks about replicating that model, because we see a lot of Legions that need repair.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, this is an example of what can be done at the local level through investments in the national housing strategy.

We were able to partner with local Legions in a number of communities, including Sault Ste. Marie, and with local indigenous governments and organizations to build deeply affordable housing, housing that not only rejuvenates local Legions, some of whose buildings are falling into disrepair, but also creates more supportive and deeply affordable housing units for veterans and members of the community, including indigenous people right across Ontario.

The national housing strategy programs provide for flexibility and for leveraging local properties, land and buildings to unlock federal housing investments, which are a combination of loans and grants that are very favourable to achieving deeply affordable housing units, while also creating accessible units that are energy efficient and that, in some cases, as in Sault Ste. Marie, extend the lifespan of buildings.

It is an example of what we can do together through local partnerships with the federal government's national housing strategy.

Business of Supply

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Chair, by my count, the rapid housing initiative has certainly landed on the ground in the Durham region and in my riding of Whitby. The national housing strategy is one of the largest investments in housing in at least 30 years, as far as I remember. There certainly was not any for the decade under PM Harper.

We have the housing accelerator fund, co-operative housing investments, rent-to-own financing, the rental housing payment, the first home savings account and many other measures. Our government keeps adding measures that create a holistic approach to housing, so I wonder if the minister can speak to the importance of taking a holistic approach.

● (2045)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the hon. member points to a really important aspect of our national housing strategy: We are investing throughout the spectrum of housing to meet the needs of Canadians wherever they are in the housing spectrum.

We have the rapid housing initiative, Reaching Home for those who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of experiencing homelessness, the national housing co-investment fund to build deeply affordable homes, the rental construction financing initiative to ensure we are building more rental supply in this country, and measures to enable first-time homebuyers to access their dream of home ownership. We are also investing in co-ops. All of those things are examples of the federal leadership that was sorely lacking before we got into office, and I am proud of the results the national housing strategy is having at the community and local levels.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with two of my colleagues.

My first question for the minister is this: Does he believe that Canada is in fact in a housing crisis?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, does the hon. member believe that every Canadian has a right to housing? We do. Do the Conservatives?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, I am not sure if the minister understands how this works. I ask the questions.

Is Canada facing a housing crisis right now?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we believe every Canadian has a human right to housing. We have legislated that right. They do not believe Canadians have a right to housing.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, how many rental units do we need in this country to make them more affordable again?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, this is coming from a party that believes we should do less on housing and not more, and believes that somehow the problem will take care of itself.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, I am wondering if the minister is aware of the number of rental units we are required to build in this country to make them more affordable again?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, this is pretty rich coming from a party that has no housing plan.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that the CMHC just recently raised insurance premiums on multi-unit resi-

dential construction? Can he tell us what the percentage increase was?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we are committed to building more rentals in this country. They did not have a plan. We put together the rental construction financing initiative, which is about building more rental supply right across the country.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, does the minister believe that a massive increase in insurance premiums for multi-unit residential rental buildings is going to slow construction of those units?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I believe and our government believes that we need more housing supply. They do not. They want to spend less, and they somehow expect more housing will be built in this country.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that within a one-kilometre radius of all SkyTrain stations in Vancouver, there are about 28,000 properties? Of those properties, does he know how many are actually available for multi-unit residential housing?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the hon. member should understand that federal leadership means trusting local authorities to make the decisions necessary, but also empowering them to add more supply to housing in Canada. Their approach is to attack local mayors, calling them names, denigrating them and calling them incompetent, while somehow hoping that is going to create more housing.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, of those 28,000 properties, only 20,000 are for single family or duplex units, so it is 71% of those properties within a one-kilometre radius.

The federal government has committed \$1 billion to this project. I am curious to know if he thinks that is wise considering the fact that there is not enough multi-unit residential housing next to those stations.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we have been tying infrastructure to housing for the last two years. They just came around to that idea recently, and they announced their half-baked plan on the same day we launched the housing accelerator fund, which is about connecting community infrastructure and transit to more housing supply.

Business of Supply

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, Covenant House Toronto says that one-third of its residents are students. Does that sound like a successful housing plan to the minister?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I know Covenant House; It does good work. The member opposite as well as his party voted against more funding for organizations serving the homeless community.

• (2050)

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, Covenant House Vancouver constructed a new facility. It cost \$50 million. It received \$12 million from the CMHC, but it cost \$1 million in lobbyists and consultants. Does that sound like a wise housing plan to the minister?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, if they had their way, that organization would not even get any federal funding, because when they were in office, they did not believe the federal government had any role in investing in affordable housing.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, nine out of 10 young people in this country who do not own a home believe they never will. Does that sound like a successful housing plan to the minister?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, voting against every measure we bring to this House to help young people access their dream of home ownership is not much of a plan either.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, does the minister realize that voting against plans that do not work actually makes a lot more sense than just continuing on with plans that are not working and that are in fact making the situation worse?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the member opposite and his party believe in doing less and in investing less in housing, and that somehow that will magically result in more housing being built in Canada. We believe the federal government has a leadership role to play in housing. They do not. That is the fundamental difference.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Chair, the minister's own officials have predicted a 32% decrease in housing starts this year thanks to outrageous spending and high interest rates. Is that a good housing plan?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we do have a plan. It is called the housing accelerator fund, which is about building more supply and doubling the number of new homes built in Canada. What did they do when they had the chance to actually do something to help build more supply in Canada? They voted against it.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Chair, can the minister update the House and tell us what the average price of a home to rent or buy is in Mississauga?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, this is a party that has no plan on housing. It does not have any plan with respect to supply. It has voted against every measure that we brought in place, so it is pretty rich to hear its members asking questions about supply and affordability.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, can the hon. minister tell us the last time an opposition party voted for a budget?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we on this side of the House believe in Canadians' right to housing. The Conservatives voted against that right.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, let us play a game: name that tune. Who, in the House of Commons, said the following:

Mr. Speaker, the IMF has issued a warning about the inflated Canadian housing market, cautioning that home prices have jumped more than 60% over the past 15 years. Canadian families with a personal debt burden that the IMF warns is among the highest in the OECD are at risk of \$100,000 losses they can ill afford....

When will the government quit electioneering and fearmongering and table a budget that addresses Canada's cooling economy and overheated housing market?

Who said that?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is not fearmongering to actually do something about a challenge. Fearmongering is voting against real measures to help Canadians, Canadian renters, homebuyers and the most vulnerable find a place to call home, and then coming to the House of Commons to express fake outrage about something the Conservatives continually vote against, which is real help for Canadians. It is hard to take them seriously on this issue.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, I will help the minister. That was the now Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in 2015. Since that time, it has only gotten more unaffordable for Canadians. In fact, according to the OECD, Canada has the largest gap between home prices and incomes among all other OECD peers.

Will the minister finally admit that we are in a crisis and a housing bubble?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, will the member opposite finally admit their plan to vote against the housing accelerator fund, which is exactly about creating more supply so that more Canadians have access to more homes through home ownership and rent, was a bad idea?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, will the minister tell the House how much the new national building code will increase the price of each new home built in Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we do not believe in railing against mayors. We do not believe in insulting elected officials. We believe in working with them because that is how we get more homes built in Canada.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, has the minister actually talked to the Minister of Natural Resources about the new building code and how much it is going to increase the cost of each house being built in Canada?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we have a plan. It is called the national housing strategy. One of its programs is the housing accelerator fund, which is about making systemic changes at the local level to build more housing.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, if we are worried about housing affordability, we would think the minister would be talking to his colleagues about government actions that are going to make housing more unaffordable, or in other words, more expensive. The market and participants believe that the new building code is going to cost \$30,000 per unit of new housing.

Does the minister think that is fair?

● (2055)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, one of the biggest challenges to the housing crisis is a lack of supply. The housing accelerator fund is about increasing supply.

An hon. member: They are government gatekeepers.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, one of the hon. members is heckling me about gatekeeping. His leader is the biggest gatekeeper in this Parliament. He has voted against every measure to help Canadian homeowners, to help the most vulnerable and to help build more supply. That is a fact.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, the minister is not interested in talking his colleagues out of making housing more unaffordable. Let us talk about this one: The banks are unilaterally increasing amortization rates over 40 years in many cases, and 75% of Canadians with a variable rate mortgage have hit their trigger rate.

Does the minister think it is fair that existing homeowners can have amortization rates well over 40 years, but a new homebuyer off the street cannot?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I am proud of the fact that our government has issued new guidelines to help those who already have mortgages so they are not threatened with high interest rates and higher payments. We are doing what we can to help those who already hold mortgages, while, at the same time, helping first-time homebuyers by setting up the first-time homebuyers' savings account, which the hon. member voted against. I do not understand how he can stand here—

The Chair: That five minutes is up.

The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us how many rental units the national housing strategy has made available for Canadians and newcomers? I just want a number.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, can the hon. member tell us how attacking and insulting mayors actually leads to building more rental units?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, can the housing minister just tell us the number? How many are there?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, could the hon. member tell us, with his cuts to housing, which programs they would cut from the national housing strategy? They believe in cutting their—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us what the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Calgary is? How much is it?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, can the hon. member tell us how he votes against the housing accelerator fund, but expects more housing supply, including rental—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, for the record, it is \$1,607 a month. Calgary had the fastest-growing average one-bedroom rent in the country at almost 50%. Is this what the Prime Minister talked about when he said he was going to make homes more affordable?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, they absolutely do not care about Canadian renters because, if they did, they would not have voted against the Canada housing benefit or the top-up to the Canada housing benefit. In the member's own province of Alberta, the Canada housing benefit is helping 35,000 households. He voted against it.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, we will always vote against any failed policies by the government that double the rent, double mortgages and double the amount it costs to save up for a down payment. This is the same minister who committed \$90 billion to a housing plan and gave Canadians double rent, double cost on mortgages and double the cost to save up for a down payment.

How many housing units were built from the \$90 billion that he committed for Canadians and newcomers? I want just the number.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, they vote against rental supports and vote against more supply, but hopefully everything will work out because the free market will take care of it. That is exactly the kind of magical thinking that they have on that side of the House. We actually believe in a federal leadership role in housing, in more support for renters and in more supply for Canadians.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, how many units did his \$90 billion make for Canadians?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the national housing strategy has resulted in the creation, building and repair of almost half a million homes and the support of almost two million households. That is our record.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, the website says it has created or committed 118,000. Can the minister tell us how many were actually created, though?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is very rich listening to that side of the House talking about how many units were built, how many were created, how many were repaired and how many people were helped, when he voted against every one of those measures to help Canadians.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, how many units were created out of the \$90 billion that the minister committed to housing?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, for one last time, does the party opposite believe that Canadians have a right to housing, yes or no?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, Canada built fewer homes last year than the year before. Now, CMHC predicts it will fall by another 32% this year. How did the housing minister fail so badly, so expensively and let this happen?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, how does the party opposite fall so morally bankrupt that the members believe in magical thinking that says that we can cut programs and cut investment, but somehow build more housing? That is incredible. The fact that they can say that with a straight face is concerning.

I know that Canadians see through that because the Conservatives have voted against every single measure to help Canadian homeowners and vulnerable people, but then they come to the House to talk about how they need to help people.

• (2100)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, CMHC cites inflation and high interest rates as the main reason why housing starts are so slow. We know those have both gotten worse because of out-of-control Liberal spending. Again, how did this minister fail so badly and so expensively?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I am proud to work with the municipalities to build more supply. The Conservatives talk about getting rid of gatekeepers. He should start with his leader. His leader is the biggest gatekeeper in the House, voting against every measure to increase supply, increase affordability and to help vulnerable Canadians.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, for newcomers who are thinking of leaving Canada, their number-one reason is the high cost of living. Canada does not have enough housing supply. The minister cannot answer why his plan has failed so badly. Why is the minister failing newcomers so badly and so expensively?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, that is the kind of rhetoric that keeps coming from that side. They say, “Canada is broken.” Canada is not broken. Canada is the best country in the world, and people are eager to come to Canada to help us grow our economy and create more prosperity in this country.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is a real honour for me to rise to speak to this very important issue.

My introduction into politics, just shy of 20 years ago, even before I was involved in municipal politics in Kingston, was being appointed to the affordable housing development committee in Kingston. This committee was put together as a result of the provincial government in Ontario at the time seeing an incredible

need for housing and new affordable housing to be built, putting together a program with provincial dollars and working directly with municipalities to come up with a plan as to how we could build more affordable housing, particularly for those who need it the most. Noticeably absent at the time was the federal government. The federal government had absolutely no role to play in that. It was not participating in any way whatsoever.

The former Conservative government had no interest in affordable housing. It treated housing as though it were an issue that was solely for provinces to deal with and, of course, their subordinates, the municipalities. I find it incredibly rich today to not just hear Conservatives go on as though the federal government is solely responsible for housing, but now we are starting to hear it from the NDP too, almost pretending as though the federal government is solely and wholly responsible for building housing in this country. Well, unfortunately for their narratives, that is just not the way it works.

In Canada, we have two levels of government. One is not subordinate to the other. One is not superior to the other. We have provincial governments, and we have a federal government. They are there to work together. One is not in a higher position than the other. They are there to work together on the complex issues that we have, one of those being housing and building housing.

However, the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, stands up to routinely criticize mayors, politicians and municipal leaders throughout the country. He calls them “woke” and refers to them as “incompetent”. I mean, if he wants to be prime minister, how is he supposed to transition from that combative approach to one of trying to work with municipalities? It is not going to happen.

We do not have to look too far back in history to see where it had already happened with a Conservative government. We can look at Stephen Harper in the former Conservative government, who barely ever met with the premiers. I think there was an extended period of time where he went years without meeting with them because there was absolutely no interest.

Business of Supply

Now we have the newest Leader of the Opposition, who gets up in this House to rail on about these gatekeepers, and refers to our local mayors and city councillors as gatekeepers. Who, trying to work together with municipalities, would ever take that approach? It is one that is trying to intentionally be combative for, let us say, hoping to gain a little bit of political gain out of it. Yes, Conservatives will come in here, and they have done it tonight, to resort to their slogans and buzz words, including “gatekeepers”, “woke mayors” and “bring it home”. These are the slogans, but they do not have any policies. They do not have any ideas. The irony is that, when there is one idea that they finally seem to have come up with, it is something that we are already doing, and they voted against it. We already have the housing accelerator fund.

The member for Thornhill admitted the day before the last budget that the Conservatives were not going to vote for it any way, so they had already decided, even before seeing the budget, that they were not going to vote for it. Maybe, in their defence, they did not realize what they were voting against. However, the housing accelerator fund is specifically there to help municipalities increase the supply of housing, and it is directly correlated. The money received will be measured against and accounted for in how much housing is being built.

• (2105)

Those are the incentives. That is literally what the Conservatives are now saying is going to be their plan, something that they just voted against. That is the only thing they have offered, a plan that literally already exists and that they voted against days ago.

When we try to assess what is going on, we cannot help but come to the natural conclusion that the only things Conservatives are interested in are their buzzwords and their slogans. They are hoping that those things will stick and resonate with Canadians, and that this will somehow translate into the Conservatives forming government. I would suggest to them that Canadians are not as naive or as ill-informed as they might think; Canadians are actually paying attention to what is going on.

When one talks about things as critical as housing and what is going on, I know that there is a desire to reduce it to some simplistic terms. This is particularly coming from Conservatives. However, the reality is that a lot has happened in the last number of months and years.

We talk about global inflation. Of course, they will never put the word “global” in front of that, despite the fact that it is a global phenomenon. We talk about the pandemic and how that has contributed to things. We talk about Ukraine and how what is going on has affected supply chains, as well as what that has meant to the global economy and, indeed, the Canadian economy, which depends and relies so much on international trade. There is no doubt that we will be affected by the outcomes of those things that I just mentioned and how other countries are dealing with them.

The two programs that I really wanted to talk about in my opening statements before my question were, first, the housing accelerator fund. That fund is specifically tied to municipalities and encourages them to reduce the red tape and the NIMBYism and to put the incentives in place to get municipalities to start aggressively look-

ing at how to build housing. It seems that they are happy about it, but they did not vote for it.

My community is a perfect example of the struggle that exists. Kingston was the first capital of Canada. I know some people would like to debate that with me, but it was. One of the things that we value so much in our community is our downtown and the fact that it did not build up with high-rises decades ago, when many other municipalities did. This is despite the fact that many people were pushing for it. What we see now is a question of how we increase the density in the downtown core as opposed to urban sprawl; we know this is more affordable from the construction, rental and property tax perspectives. It makes more sense. However, how do we balance this with the needs and the desires of a community to maintain the downtown core?

I see that struggle in my community. I know that what is needed is some incentivizing from the federal government to make that happen. I see the federal government's role here as being very important in working with municipalities. We can only accomplish this kind of thing if we sit down with municipal leaders, as the minister has been doing, by going across the country and meeting with mayors and elected officials. We must talk about how the federal government can help them, as opposed to having an appearance by the Leader of the Opposition at the committee of the whole.

By the way, in the seven and a half years that I have been here, not eight, I have never once seen the Leader of the Opposition participate in a committee of the whole meeting. Why does he even have critics or shadow ministers? He is doing everything himself. I am sure he can rely on some of his colleagues to do some of the work for him.

Rather than be critical and call them “woke”, why not sit down with them and ask how we can help them? As a former mayor of a city in Ontario, I can say that this is what mayors want.

My first question for the minister is this: How important is the role of working with mayors and city councils throughout the country, as opposed to just taking a combative approach with them?

• (2110)

The Chair: Do not forget, the first capital was Annapolis Royal.

The hon. minister.

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, that question points to the need for collaboration. Of course, the federal government has a very important leadership role to play in unlocking more housing supply across the country. We have the fastest-growing population of the G7 but very low housing supply. The federal government has a key role to play in that, but we cannot do it alone. We need collaboration and partnership from the provinces and territories, as well as local and municipal governments, and we need to work with them. We need to empower them. We need to invest in them in terms of their ability to permit housing faster, to deliver housing faster, to build more mixed housing, to deliver more density around transit nodes, to make sure we have the right mix of housing, and to make sure that we have walkable, livable and climate-resilient communities.

To do that, we need to work with them, not denigrate them or attack them, which is the approach of the leader of the official opposition. He has called elected officials, mayors of three of Canada's largest cities, "incompetent". He has called them "woke". He has dedicated himself to fighting with them. I do not know how that leads to the building of one additional affordable housing unit. Our approach is different. We want to work with our partners to build more housing.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry and I all members who currently sit in this House; at one time, we were all mayors in Ontario. Could the minister inform the House of whether he thinks that we fall under that classification of "woke" mayors?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is very telling that there are a number of former mayors in this House; some of them sit on that side of the House and have to listen to their own leader attacking mayors, calling them "woke" and "incompetent". That is an affront to municipally elected local officials, who have been elected by Canadians to address issues around the permitting and delivery of housing.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry is heckling quite a bit right now. I know that he was a mayor who cared passionately about his community. We were both mayors at the same time. I certainly would not have considered him "woke". I do not consider him "woke" now. He did a good job of representing his community. Having partners to do that with, such as the federal and provincial governments, certainly would help that tremendously.

One of the programs that I talked about that the federal government and the minister have introduced is the housing accelerator fund. Could the minister go into more detail as to how that is going to specifically incentivize municipalities to build more affordable housing?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we will do so by taking the investment under the housing accelerator fund, \$4 billion, which will go directly to municipalities, local governments, indigenous communities and other governments to build more housing supply. How are we going to do that? We will invest in their systems, their ability to permit housing and deliver it faster. We will also present plans and incentivize them to consider and put in place more density

around transit, more affordable housing units in the market and more rental supply in the market.

• (2115)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, that plan sounds an awful lot like what the Conservatives are saying they would do if they were elected.

Could the minister help to educate me and this House as to why the Conservatives voted against exactly what they are proposing they would do if they got elected?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is very perplexing. Conservatives talk about, for example, connecting housing to infrastructure. We have been doing that for two years. They talk about investing in municipalities and removing the obstacles to more supply. That is exactly what the housing accelerator fund will do.

We are very much perplexed by the fact that they keep voting against the measures and investments that are supposed to do what they say are their priorities.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, in their defence, maybe the Conservatives did not know what they were voting on. Would the minister like to comment on whether he thinks that is a possibility?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is possible because we launched the housing accelerator fund in the morning, and the leader of the official opposition came up with this plan for more housing supply the same afternoon. However, their copy job was not good enough because it did not even capture the breadth and comprehensiveness of our plan.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with two of my colleagues.

Could the minister tell us what the average rent of a one-bedroom apartment was in Toronto in 2015?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would really like to understand how building more rentals by investing less money makes sense on that side of the House.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I just want the number, please. How much was it?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is very rich having these types of questions coming from that side, when they believe the federal government should do less on housing, not more.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it was \$1,103. Can the minister tell us what the average rent is now?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, if the Conservatives want to be taken seriously on the issue of rent, they should stop blocking rental supports to Canadians.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, does the minister have a single number from his own estimates?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is hard to take the party opposite seriously on rent, when it voted against the Canada housing benefit, which delivers rental supports to Canadians.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it is more than \$2,500. Is he aware that this number is more than double what it was eight years ago?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, what I do know is that the Conservative Party, when in power, did nothing to help Canadian renters. We introduced the Canada housing benefit, which is helping renters.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that the number is double? I want just a “yes” or “no”.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it would be interesting to know how the Conservatives plan to build more rentals with less money and less investment in housing.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, the hon. minister can ask all the questions he wants when he is in opposition, but this is not how it works.

Is he aware that \$2,526 for an average rental apartment in Toronto is double what it was eight years ago?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, I know how this committee of the whole works. I am pointing out the hypocrisy of not helping Canadian renters and then standing here and talking about rent as if they care.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, does the minister have a single number from his own estimates tonight?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I would like to know how the Conservatives plan to cut supports for renters and then stand here and pretend to care about renters.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I just want a single number.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I also noticed that you are not giving me the same amount of time as the questioner to answer.

The Chair: It is the same amount of time.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: You are cutting me off earlier—

The Chair: Order. I am actually giving the minister more time to answer than the questioner. Just so we know, if the member is taking three seconds, then the minister has three seconds. I am being very generous with the minister by answering that.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, if the minister does not have a single number on the prices of rent, let us try housing.

Can the minister tell us how much an average home in Toronto cost in 2015?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I will take the party opposite's rhetoric on housing seriously when it actually produces a real plan on housing.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it was just over \$600,000.

How much is the average cost today? I just want the number.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we on this side of the House believe in the right to housing. They do not.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it is \$1.2 million. He does not have the numbers. I am going to answer the questions.

What is 600,000 times two?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the hon. member should talk to members of her caucus, who believe we should do less on housing.

● (2120)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it is 1.2 million. Housing prices in Toronto have doubled in eight years. Is that right?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, how does the hon. member believe attacking mayors will produce more housing?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, has the minister come to this committee prepared with a single answer that includes a number?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, that is the party that believes in cuts. We believe in federal leadership on housing.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, to afford an average home, which has doubled in price, can the minister tell us how much money a family needs to make each year?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, if they care about housing affordability, why did the Conservatives vote against the first-time homebuyer incentive?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I just want a number.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, why did the Conservatives vote against supports for homebuyers?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it is \$207,000 a year. How much money does the minister think the median household in Toronto, the city in which he lives, makes?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, if the Conservatives are serious about rental supports, why did they vote against the Canada housing benefit, which is delivering real supports to Canadian renters?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I just want the number. Will the minister have a single number tonight for this committee of the whole on estimates?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the Conservatives have all the questions tonight, but they have no plan on housing, and they have no help for Canadians who actually need help with housing.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it is just over \$68,000 after taxes. Is the minister aware that the median family needs to pay three times its annual income just to buy an average home in the city he represents?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we know that one of the solutions to higher housing prices is more supply. We brought in measures to create more supply. The Conservatives voted against it.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, does the minister have a single number tonight for estimates?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, do the Conservatives have a plan for housing, or do they just have rhetoric and buzzwords?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, the minister is not answering the questions. Does he have a single answer for any one of the questions that I asked?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the Conservatives do not have a plan. All they have is gimmicks and buzzwords.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, if he does not want to speak about housing, could the minister confirm that there is no money in these estimates for racists like Laith Marouf?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I do want to speak about housing. The problem is the Conservatives have no plan, and they stand here, pretending to care about Canadians and getting help to them, but they vote against all the measures we bring to this House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am going to take a slightly different tack. All evening, the minister has been saying that we are asking ridiculous questions. However, he has not answered any of the questions that he has been asked since the evening began.

I am going to ask him a very simple one. After spending \$92 billion on his housing plan, does he think that he knows more than everyone else?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, almost half a million homes built or repaired is a significant impact. Almost two million Canadian households helped through the national housing strategy is a significant impact.

Is the hon. member denigrating that number and minimizing the impact?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, the reality is that, after the minister spent all of that money on his plan for housing in Canada, 32% fewer homes will be built in the coming year. Could the minister explain why there will be 32% fewer homes built after he spent \$92 billion?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, first of all, all the amounts of money have not all been spent, because this is a 10-year plan. It is a long-term plan. It is a stable plan. It is a predictable plan.

The impacts are already there. We have seen almost half a million homes repaired or built, and almost two million Canadian households have been positively impacted by the national housing strategy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I have a very simple question. I hope that the minister will have the number for us. How much of the money allocated under his 10-year plan has been spent to date? How many houses were expected to be built with the money that was spent? How many houses will be built in the coming years?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I have provided the hon. member with the current numbers based on all the investments that we have made. I have made those numbers clear, twice, in my answers.

What is rich is that this is the party that has voted no all along, to all those investments that have delivered all the units that I just mentioned.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I will repeat my question. Has the target for the number of houses that were planned to be built with the money spent in his 10-year plan been achieved?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, we have spent over \$30 billion on housing investments, creating 118,000 new units and repairing almost 300,000 units of affordable housing.

• (2125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, how many federal government buildings are available for social housing in Canada?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, what is interesting to learn from that question is that it is almost as if the party opposite is just discovering the notion of making federal lands and property available for affordable housing.

I have news to break to them, we have been doing this since the beginning of the national housing strategy in 2017. Conservatives have just come around to the idea now. Even then, the idea is a very half-baked plan.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, once again, the minister is taking us for fools for asking him simple questions that I believe are intelligent enough to be answered intelligently. Instead of accusing us of all kinds of nonsense, he really should try to answer the questions we ask him.

How many federal government buildings and properties would be available for social housing in Canada now? Can he give us a simple answer?

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, he is the one who is taking Canadians for fools, because he thinks he can vote against all the investments in affordable housing, including the federal lands initiative, which is doing exactly what he pretends to care about, and yet he comes back to this House and says that he cares about all these issues. The voting record shows that the member has voted, every single time, against investments in housing.

How does that make sense? The member votes against the very thing that he is advocating for, and then accuses the Liberal government of not doing anything. When I point out that hypocrisy, the member says that I am taking his party for fools. I am not, I am just pointing out the facts. The member could look at the record himself.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Hell, Mr. Chair, am I being naive? I asked him a simple question.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like the hon. member to withdraw that word and chose another one.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Chair, I am a very patient person. I think I am a smart enough man to ask questions that I consider intelligent.

I have a very simple question for the minister. How many federal buildings and property are available for conversion to social housing?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is called the federal lands initiative. We have had this program for a number of years. The hon. member has come around to the utility of this program, and I congratulate him for coming around to this idea, but he is a number of years late into this program.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Chair, under this minister's watch, the CMHC's use of performance bonuses is out of control, and this in the midst of a housing crisis.

How much in performance bonuses did the CMHC pay out last year?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the hon. member must know or at least ought to know that CMHC, as a Crown corporation, makes decisions regarding mortgage insurance criteria and questions regarding compensation for its staff independently.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Chair, I know that the minister is responsible for the CMHC budget. The CEO is sitting right in front of him. I am going to ask him again: How much last year in performance bonuses was paid out by the CMHC?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, no minister of the Crown makes or has ever made decisions in terms of an independent Crown corporation's employee compensation system. The hon. member knows that or ought to know that.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Chair, I ought to know that the minister is responsible for the performance in his department; he is failing miserably at it.

What percentage of CMHC executives got a bonus last year?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, it is embarrassing to listen to this kind of questioning, because the hon. member should know or knows that no minister of the Crown is responsible for the compensation determined by an independent Crown corporation.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Chair, the minister is responsible for results in his portfolio. Last year, the CMHC, under his watch, gave \$27 million in performance bonuses. One hundred per cent, which is every single executive who has overseen the doubling of housing prices, the doubling of mortgage payments and, frankly, did the debate prep for the minister tonight, got a good performance bonus. After tonight, I am starting to understand just how low the bar is for a good performance.

What was the average size of the bonus last year given to employees at the CMHC?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, I think the hon. member is absolutely on brand in attacking civil servants, which is what the Conservatives did when they were in government for almost nine years. I am not going to take that bait.

The hon. member knows or should know that no minister of the Crown has ever made a determination on the employee compensation by an independent Crown corporation. He knows that. He can play all the fake outrage he wants, but on this side of the House, we know that the independence of Crown corporations determines the compensation of their employees.

• (2130)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Chair, the minister is responsible for the performance of his or her department.

The average bonus for performance at the CMHC was over \$12,000 last year; 2,100 employees received over \$12,000, not in salary but as a performance bonus. That is 100% of executives and 96% of employees.

Canadians are looking at our housing crisis, and seeing how things are getting worse not better, and wondering what the criteria is for anybody receiving a performance bonus at the CMHC?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, for almost a decade, the party opposite, when it was in government, revelled at attacking civil servants, denigrating them and calling them partisan names. We do not do that on this of the House. We respect the independence of Crown corporations.

The hon. member, as an hon. member of Parliament, knows or should know that Crown corporations are responsible for determining the compensation of their employees, and I am not going to get into a debate about the independence of a Crown corporation. He knows better than that. He can ask all the questions about that, and I will keep repeating.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Chair, what is the criteria for good performance at the CMHC under this minister?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, the CMHC is an independent Crown corporation and no minister of the Crown will determine the compensation of employees of an independent Crown corporation.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Chair, he signs off on the estimates, and the CEO is right in front of him here tonight. However, with \$27 million in performance bonuses at a time when our housing is in a crisis, is that \$27 million in bonuses for good performance good money spent, yes or no?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Chair, according to the logic of the hon. member, the Crown corporation that is responsible for delivering almost half a million repairs and new homes as part of the national housing strategy is not entitled to determine its own compensation for its employees.

We are not going to play that game on this side of the House.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is my pleasure to have the opportunity tonight to speak about one of our government's top priorities and that is building up our housing supply.

We have made this a priority because we believe that everyone deserves the dignity of a home.

Having more supply across the board is the best way to make homes affordable for all. Demand for types of homes has continued to surge across Canada. It is greatest in our large urban centres but we now see it even in small cities that surround them, cities such as the one I live in.

The result is that nurses, teachers, shopkeepers and office workers, the people who make our cities run, can no longer afford to live in the communities where they work. Some of the most affected are our most vulnerable neighbours. Some of the 1.7 million families do not have a home that they can afford or that meets their basic needs.

Unlike the Conservative Party opposite, we believe that the federal government must play an active role in getting more homes built. That is why our government's national housing strategy is laser-focused on supply and working with our partners, our municipalities, provincial partners and community partners.

The strategy is a 10-year, \$82-billion plan to give more Canadians a place to call home. The strategy aims to eliminate chronic homelessness, reduce or eliminate housing need for 530,000 households, create 160,000 housing units, repair or renew more than 300,000 existing homes, protect 385,000 community housing units and expand Canada's community housing stock by 55,000 units.

These are ambitious goals but we will have heard from other colleagues speaking today that we are well on track to meeting them, despite the pandemic, despite the difficult economic conditions that have come since and knowing that we have to build partnerships to have a pathway to creating homes.

Today, I would like to use my time to talk about two of the main pillars of the national housing strategy that are driving this boost in the housing supply.

First of all, I would like to start with the \$13.7-billion national housing co-investment fund, the largest program of its kind in

Canada's history. The co-investment fund tackles supply challenges in two important ways.

It helps upgrade affordable housing that is aging or in disrepair. It also helps to build new housing close to public transportation, jobs, schools and other services that families depend on.

Because it is a co-investment fund, it supports projects that involve contributions from multiple partners and, in fact, as members of Parliament, we can help to facilitate those partnerships.

We all have responsibility to our communities for these successes to drive deep into our communities. It encourages all orders of government and community housing providers, indigenous governments and organizations in the private sector to work together to propose solutions that meet the needs of their communities.

Who is in a better position than the members of Parliament to champion programs like this?

This fund is true to the national housing strategy's focus on vulnerable populations. It includes specific targets to support survivors of violence, seniors, people from racialized communities and people with developmental disabilities.

Because it is grounded in partnership, we have also made changes to the funds since its launch, in response to feedback from the people who use it, people who sit at roundtables to create community solutions and then have the minister come to town to hear their needs, so that adjustments can be made.

That has happened in Guelph, I am pleased to say. Our minister has always supported our community as we develop solutions that are community based. We have adapted the program to respond to specific areas of housing need in different parts of Guelph and in different parts of Canada.

For example, some of the co-investment fund has been specifically carved out for projects that benefit indigenous people living in urban areas and in northern communities.

Some has been carved out for projects that benefit Black households and some has been reallocated to launch a new co-operative housing development program that is being co-designed with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada.

Since we have not had co-operative housing developed in Canada for so many decades, it is up to us to look for those opportunities to bring together boards of directors to create those housing solutions through the co-op investment fund.

Business of Supply

• (2135)

Already, \$6.93 billion in loans and contributions has been committed through the co-investment fund. It includes commitments for close to 29,000 new housing units and more than 123,000 repaired or renewed units across the country. Let me tell members about the partnership we are really excited about, through the co-investment fund. We are working with Habitat for Humanity to build more than 1,100 homes in communities across the country. We have had those meetings in my community, and I hope other members of Parliament are having similar meetings. Habitat for Humanity homes are energy-efficient, and one in every five homes is built to meet accessibility standards. They serve vulnerable populations, including single mothers and their children, indigenous peoples, Black families, recent immigrants, persons with disabilities, seniors and our veterans.

Next, I would like to talk about another major supply-oriented pillar of the national housing strategy, the rental construction financing initiative. This program is different from the co-investment fund in that it focuses on those who do not qualify for assisted housing but still cannot afford the escalating prices of market rents. It encourages a stable supply of rental housing for middle-class families in expensive housing markets. This includes many of the people who are essential workers and play an invaluable role in our communities. As with other programs, we have continued to adapt this initiative over time to leverage opportunities to deliver the most impact. For example, we plan to reallocate a portion of the fund to support co-operative housing projects, and some to help convert vacant commercial property into market-based rental housing. To date, more than \$14.7 billion in loans has been committed through the rental construction financing initiative, to create more than 41,000 new homes. Projects funded through this program are making a difference for middle-class families in communities across the country.

Let me give members an example of a project that is doing all that and also advancing Canada's reconciliation goals, the Señákw development by the Squamish Nation, which will create nearly 3,000 homes on traditional lands in Vancouver. This project is the largest first nation economic partnership, and the largest CMHC loan in Canadian history. It also aims to be the largest net-zero residential project in the country. It is all made possible through \$1.4 billion in low-interest loans through the rental construction financing initiative.

I have provided a quick overview of the two pillars of the national housing strategy. It is clear that, through these programs, we are making progress.

I would like to ask this question of the minister. Could he please tell us a bit more about what we are doing to create more supply in our communities?

• (2140)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, we are investing in more supply of affordable housing through the new investments for new co-op units to the tune of a \$1.5-billion investment, bringing forward future investments in the national housing co-investment fund.

However, the big program is the housing accelerator fund, with \$4 billion going to local communities to increase housing supply, as well as building up to 15,000 deeply affordable units through the rapid housing initiative.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Chair, with respect to the importance of partnerships and working together, we see a lot of confrontation and criticism of our civil service, municipalities and mayors when we are trying to build things together. The minister has given us access to CMHC, which has been a key part of our success in Guelph, bringing those grassroots opportunities to CMHC so it can take over the wheel and steer to a successful conclusion.

Can the minister mention how important it is for members of Parliament to be able to work together to bring their communities toward successful projects working with professionals at CMHC?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Chair, I am glad my colleague asked that question, because I am a former city councillor who is now in the House. I was duly elected as a municipal councillor, and, for the first time in the House, we hear a leader attacking municipalities and the leaders of the municipalities who were duly elected. We do not get things done by insulting people but by supporting them and making sure they can be at the table with the tools they need to partner with all provincial and federal governments to get more houses built in this country.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Chair, tonight we have heard several questions about exactly how much a house costs in this part of this community on this date. We are looking at a continuum of time during which the federal government really has not been involved in housing for a number of decades and is now building up and rebuilding relationships, knowing how important it is that we continue to be focused on the results and the future success of housing in Canada.

Could the minister tell us how important it is for us to work to be active and patient, but also, at the same time, insistent on getting results?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, after more than a decade of non-existent leadership on housing, the government was back at the table, not only with a plan, which is the national housing strategy, but also with money to support it, making sure we would leverage that money to get municipalities and provinces to also partner with the federal government, because it is a collaborative jurisdiction. We all have responsibilities, and the leadership of the government needs to be at the table to make sure we can support those projects.

Business of Supply

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Chair, last week, I was speaking with home builders who were visiting Ottawa. I was talking to a home builder about accessing the building codes using tablets, making it easier and faster to build homes by supporting our builders through new technologies, working with those technologies through our municipalities and how that might be facilitated through the housing accelerator fund.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the housing accelerator fund will incentivize more supply and will incentivize more density, but it will also incentivize the building of climate-resilient, dense, walkable and accessible communities. How do we do that? We do it by incentivizing inclusionary zoning, transit-oriented development and more affordable housing.

● (2145)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Chair, I am also talking with the builders about the supply chain issues they have had that have increased the cost of home building, the cost of homes in the market and the market influences of the externalities from the pandemic, where the supply of goods, materials and labour have all increased the cost of our housing.

Could the minister talk about how we are working to offset those external costs by supporting Canadians trying to buy houses?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, as my colleague was saying, we must work on the entire spectrum of housing supply, from the most vulnerable, those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, to those who want to buy homes.

We have to try to find solutions to narrow the generational gap that we have in this country. There are several measures we can use to get there. That is why the national housing strategy addresses several of these measures.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Chair, there is a saying that applies to home building, which is that when we think that every problem is a nail, the only tool we have is a hammer. The problems that we are trying to solve need all the tools in the tool box because they are all multi-faceted.

Are there any further comments that could be made on how complex the issue is that we are tackling, and how important it is to do that together?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, increasing supply is the best way to address the price of homes and rents. That is what the national housing strategy aims to do: make sure that every province and municipality is a partner in making that happen, and increase supply all across this country.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time this evening with two of my colleagues.

I would like to ask the minister if he knows the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Keswick.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would like to know why the party opposite does not believe the federal government should help renters.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Chair, I would like just the number, please.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I actually want to know why the Conservatives voted against the Canada housing benefit, which is helping renters directly.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Chair, I will make it easy for the minister. I will ask more broadly if he can tell me the average in York Region, please.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, York Region is facing a supply shortage. We are investing in the housing accelerator fund and the hon. member voted against it. I wonder why.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Chair, this is what frustrates Canadians. We ask a question and we expect an answer. This minister should know the answer to that, so I am going to try one more time. I am going to make it really easy for him because I know he can answer questions. What time is it?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, it is really difficult to take the party opposite seriously on this issue because it has no plan. What little ideas that the Conservatives bring are something that we have been doing for the last number of years.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Chair, the cost is now over \$2,500 in York Region. It is enough to make most Canadians' eyes water. It has become far out of their reach. In York Region alone, house prices have gone up 122% since 2013. I will ask the minister something else: When is the last time he applied for a building permit?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I respect the hon. member's history as a mayor. I respect all mayors, unlike his party leader who has called mayors incompetent. He has called them "woke" and he has attacked them and he has promised to hit their pocket-books. Instead, we are working with mayors to build more housing supply.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Chair, just to correct the minister, I was never a mayor. I was a small business person before I got into politics.

Does the minister know personally how long it takes to apply for a building permit?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, that is exactly what the housing accelerator fund is trying to do. It is to speed up the permitting and delivery of housing. Unfortunately, the Conservatives did not support it.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Chair, I would like to know from the minister just how long it takes now to apply for a building permit.

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Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Conservatives can play these games all night if they wish. Different local municipalities have different timelines for permits.

• (2150)

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Chair, to Canadians now this is not a game. These are questions this housing minister should know as a representative of Canada. These are important issues to Canadians. For a building permit now, the time has increased from 90 days to almost a full year. This is unacceptable right now. This is due to red tape and various other things that are happening in municipalities and it is unacceptable. Builders are calling me all the time about how long it takes to get conservation authority approval, truss designs and on and on. Red tape now costs an extra \$350,000 per house in somewhere like Toronto and \$650,000 in Vancouver. Why has the minister's government done nothing to cut the red tape that we see now?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, nothing could be further from the truth. That is why we introduced the housing accelerator fund. It is to work with municipal governments to speed up the permitting of housing and the delivery of housing. The very red tape that the hon. member is talking about is exactly what we are addressing through the housing accelerator fund. It is a \$4-billion program to invest directly in local authorities and local governments and municipalities to speed up the permitting and delivery of housing. I am surprised at this new-found concern about red tape when the Conservatives get up in the House and ask these questions, but when it comes time to actually do something about it through programs like the housing accelerator fund, they vote against those very programs.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Chair, I can say what I would not do. I would not give the gatekeepers at CMHC \$27 million in bonuses. If we look at where housing has gone in Canada, this is rewarding something that just is not happening at CMHC. Does the minister agree that, instead of finding new ways to line their pockets, the CMHC should be focused on lowering costs for housing for Canadians?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, it is right on brand for the party opposite to attack civil servants and to attack Crown corporations that are serving Canadians. The member knows, or at least ought to know, that no minister of the Crown is responsible for or able to determine the employee compensation of Crown corporations.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to ask the housing minister what the average cost of government fees per unit of housing is.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, the party opposite and the member opposite do not even believe in Canadians' right to housing. We on this side of the House believe that. They do not. We are investing—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, the answer is \$200,000.

I just want to tell people who are watching at home this is a situation where we, as the opposition, have an opportunity to speak on behalf of Canadians watching at home to get answers from the

housing minister, because we do have a housing crisis in the country. We are trying to get answers for Canadians.

How much of the housing market is not-for-profit?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, what Canadians deserve is members of Parliament to support solutions that actually work on the ground, like the housing accelerator fund and like the rest of the programs in the national housing strategy. If the hon. member cared about these issues, she would have voted for these programs that are making real changes in the community.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, the answer is 5% of the market.

How much of the market does the national housing strategy fund?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member and her party do not care about affordable housing, because every time we bring forth investments in affordable housing they vote against them.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, the national housing strategy only funds not-for-profit, which is 5% of the market, so how does the housing minister propose to fund and meet the demand of the housing shortage by only funding 5% of the market?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I would invite the hon. member to actually take a second look at the national housing strategy, because that is inaccurate. We do fund private developers to also build more rental supply in Canada.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, does the minister know how much homelessness has increased in my hometown of Peterborough since 2018?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, in fact, in the time we have been in office, we have doubled funding to help people experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, the answer is 350%.

Does the minister know how many people died in the Toronto shelter system this year?

• (2155)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, every single individual experiencing homelessness is a tragedy for our community, but we are investing more than any government.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, the answer is over 100 people.

How many Canadians reported that homelessness is a problem in their community?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the proof is in the votes. If the hon. member and her party cared about homelessness, then why did they vote against increasing investments?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Because nothing you are doing is working right now, minister, and the answer is 58%. That is almost 60%—

The Deputy Chair: I ask the member to address the questions through the Chair.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, does the minister know the point in time count of 59 communities how many people are experiencing absolute homelessness? That is 59 communities that were surveyed?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, this is pretty rich. On the point in time counts she is referring to, she voted against investments to increase point in time counts and coordinated access across this country. She voted against expanding more help for vulnerable people experiencing homelessness. It is very—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, they still won the vote and it is still not working, and the answer is 32,000 people.

How have numbers of people living in an unsheltered location changed since 2018?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, she should start her advocacy within her own caucus, because this is the first time I am hearing them raise issues about homelessness. It is the first time in seven years.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, the answer is that compared to 2018, those counted in an unsheltered location increased 100%. It has doubled.

Since 2018, how much has chronic homelessness increased in Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I want to congratulate the party opposite for finally coming around to talking about homelessness. For seven years, I have never seen its members make a statement, ask a question or intervene positively to help people experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Chair, the answer is 60%. With all due respect, I have talked about tent cities and homelessness since the day I was elected in this House, so I can say with certainty that mental health and tent cities have increased under this minister.

I have one final question. What is the average age when people experience homelessness for the very first time?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the member made an S.O. 31, but when it came time to actually doubling investments to help people experiencing homelessness, including in Peterborough, she voted against it. It is pretty rich and hypocritical for her to talk about homelessness now and pretend they are the ones with a plan.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Chair, what was the average number of housing starts under the Harper Conservative government?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, I know the answer. The party opposite spent a meagre \$250 million on housing—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Chair, the minister did not know the answer. It is 200,000.

What is the average number of housing starts of the Liberals from 2016 until now?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, does the hon. member believe that every Canadian has the right to housing? None of the Conservatives have said that Canadians have a right to housing.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Chair, once again, the minister does not know his portfolio. It is 221,000 since he has been in government. The government spent \$82 billion for 21,000 more homes than under the Harper government.

Is \$82 billion for 21,000 homes a good price?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, 82,000 homes is not accurate. I have told this House that our national housing strategy has resulted in half a million homes repaired or built in this country.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Chair, the minister is having trouble hearing now. I said \$82 billion was the cost.

How many houses need to be built in Canada to restore housing affordability?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Conservatives do not believe in Canadians' right to housing. They believe the federal government should cut investments in housing, yet they want more housing supply.

How does that make sense?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Chair, the minister should take the time to talk to the president of the CMHC, because the CMHC says 3.5 million houses need to be built by 2030. At the rate the current government is going, we will not have that level of new houses until 2040.

What should people do between 2023 and 2040 on affordability?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member knows that although the federal government has a key leadership role to play in housing, we are not the only players in this space. There are provinces and territories. There are municipal partners. We all have to work together to build more supply of housing in this country. That is exactly what we are doing.

What did the Conservatives do? They voted against those measures.

Business of Supply

• (2200)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Chair, the minister tries to claim things when they are in his benefit, but when they are against him, he blames other levels of government. The Auditor General says the minister does not actually track the percentages. The Liberal national housing strategy from 2016 until now targets 66% as the percentage of homelessness that should be reduced.

How much has homelessness been reduced since 2016?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I have never heard members from the party opposite bring homelessness up in question period. This is the first time they have done that. I want to congratulate them for finally coming around to prioritizing homelessness. Unfortunately, when it came time to actually do something about it, they voted against doubling investments to help people experiencing homelessness.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Chair, I gave the minister advance notice of what the answer is because I read it before the question. The Auditor General says his department does not even track it, even though it is a target. I am sure he can answer the following question. The target for his national strategy that he brags about says that the usage of homeless shelters needs to go down by 15% during his strategy.

Has that occurred by now?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we have prevented 62,000 people from joining homelessness and we have diverted 32,000 people away from homelessness into permanent housing. That is our track record and we will continue to invest more to prevent and solve homelessness in Canada.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Chair, the Auditor General's latest report actually says that he does not track that number, so I am not sure where he is coming up with that. The national housing strategy promises a 30% reduction in chronic homelessness usage.

What percentage of shelter usage has gone down since the minister introduced this strategy?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I wish the hon. member used his advocacy skills within his caucus because their so-called housing plan does not even have the word “homelessness” in it.

How can we take this party seriously on homelessness when it is not even mentioned in its plan?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Chair, homeless shelters have actually gone up.

On the rapid housing initiative, how much has been spent on providing housing to people with disabilities?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we believe in the right to housing; they do not.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Chair: I would ask members not to speak if it is not their opportunity to do so, especially when they have just finished speaking.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Chair, housing affordability is a real and growing concern. Personally, I believe that Infrastructure Canada remains determined to do what it takes to help Canadians get through this crisis and to address the issue of housing and chronic homelessness.

Together, we plan to strengthen communities and the middle class. We will get there by making key investments in infrastructure and housing. Although we have made progress, we must not spare any effort to end chronic homelessness in Canada once and for all.

Esteemed colleagues, we know that one of the most important things that we can do is to build affordable housing to meet the needs of Canadians.

Housing affordability is a real and growing concern. There is no quick fix to this complex problem—

[English]

The Deputy Chair: I will stop the clock. I want to remind members that if they want to have conversations, they should take them out into the lobby.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Chair, as we all know, simplistic solutions are simply unrealistic. Everyone deserves a safe and stable place to call home. Unfortunately, as we have seen recently in communities across our country, far too many Canadians face the unacceptable reality of homelessness on a daily basis.

That is why, in budget 2022, we committed to continuing to provide doubled annual funding to support Reaching Home, our homelessness strategy. These measures will provide more certainty to the local community organizations that are already doing incredible work in our cities and towns. Earlier, I mentioned what is happening in our community of Châteauguay—Lacolle. By supporting vulnerable Canadians, unlocking supply and addressing housing affordability, we will build stronger communities and a stronger middle class.

Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy, which was launched in 2019, is a comprehensive plan to reduce and end homelessness across the country. The strategy is based on a collaborative approach between the federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as the participation of community and civil society organizations. It aims to provide holistic support to people experiencing homelessness by focusing on prevention, affordable housing, access to mental health and addiction services, as well as skill building and social reintegration.

Business of Supply

The Canadian strategy also recognizes the importance of addressing the underlying factors of homelessness, such as poverty, social inequality and lack of economic opportunities. Through the Reaching Home strategy, we have helped prevent 87,000 people from becoming homeless and housed 46,000 people. We still have a lot more work to do. We will not stop until we end chronic homelessness in Canada once and for all.

Another key aspect of Canada's homelessness strategy is our commitment to relying on evidence and best practices. Our government is investing in research and evaluation to better understand the causes and consequences of homelessness, and to determine the most effective ways to address them. This evidence-based approach allows us to direct investments to the most promising interventions and to adjust programs based on their results.

The coordination of efforts and the collaboration between all the players involved are also key components to our strategy. Partnerships are established between the different levels of government, community organizations, social services and health care providers, as well as people who have experienced homelessness. This collaborative approach encourages the pooling of resources, coordination of services and sharing of expertise, which helps maximize the effect of interventions and working together toward a common goal of reducing and eliminating homelessness in Canada.

Recently, we also announced the veteran homelessness program, a cause that is very dear to me. This program provides funding to third-party service delivery organizations to help with rent supplements and complementary services. Our government has invested \$79.1 million to help veterans and their families obtain and keep housing. This funding will come in the form of a contribution under two distinct components.

The component on services and support measures will focus on the rent supplements and general support measures, for example consultation services and addictions treatment, for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

• (2205)

The capacity building stream focuses on research and improved data collection on veteran homelessness, as well as increased capacity of organizations to deliver tailored initiatives to address the needs of veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

All Canadians deserve safe and affordable housing. However, that is not the reality for far too many of them, especially indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and veterans. Our veterans bravely served our country. They sacrificed for our country, and it is unacceptable that a veteran cannot find stable and suitable housing in Canada.

Our government is determined to end chronic homelessness across the country, and this program is a key part of that effort. We will continue to work together with our community and housing partners to invest in solutions that make a difference for those in need.

Infrastructure is the foundation for our community. I would like to ask the minister a question. We spoke about investments for vet-

erans. I would like the minister to talk about projects like the one I heard my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie mention earlier.

• (2210)

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am actually very happy with that question. I just announced recently, along with the Minister of Veterans Affairs, a new program investing \$79 million to create permanent housing solutions for veterans experiencing homelessness, which includes rental supplements as well as wraparound supports and services to integrate veterans and provide housing solutions for them. It is a great program. It is also about building capacity for veteran-serving organizations, while also dealing with the housing needs of veterans.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Chair, I have another question. I spoke earlier about community projects in my riding. For example, the Rustik motel was converted into 31 housing units for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It was not easy to implement the project because the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation received an overwhelming number of applications. Has the government enhanced the plan?

In the end, the Rustik motel received \$6 million to help people in my area and the neighbouring territory of Kahnawake.

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, again, I thank the hon. member for her advocacy in getting those projects into her community. This is an example of what happens when the federal government is able to invest into locally prioritized projects that deliver real housing solutions for Canadians. I am proud of the work that we have been able to do in Châteauguay—Lacolle with the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Chair, I know that there are other worthwhile projects being implemented in my area. Either they received money or they are working with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC. It is not easy though. Flexibility is required.

This question is for the minister. How would we go about working with a project that wants to help people with severe disabilities, for example? How would we go about helping a project to support adults with intellectual disabilities who want to be independent? How does the CMHC work with these community groups?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member is absolutely right. Canadians with disabilities are one of the priority groups in the national housing strategy. That means that the national housing strategy prioritizes investments in affordable housing to deliver permanent housing and transitional housing to adults with developmental disabilities, as well as wraparound services and supports.

That is how we deliver housing that meets the needs of all Canadians, particularly projects with future partnerships among local governments, provinces and territories, non-profit organizations and multiple players, including the federal government. We have seen those kinds of projects come to fruition precisely because of the partnerships, but also due to the significant federal dollars that are delivered through programs like the rapid housing initiative and the national housing co-investment fund.

• (2215)

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Chair, the minister mentioned the fact that we are working in partnership with other levels of government. I would like him to tell us more about the agreements.

I think that, over the years, there have been many negotiations and many agreements with the Government of Quebec. From what I can see in my riding, that is working well and it is very worthwhile. I am thinking, for example, of the Rustik motel project. We are working with both the Société d'habitation du Québec and the CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest on that in order to provide services and funding.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the federal government is determined to help Quebecers find safe and affordable housing.

Since 2015, we have invested more than \$6.5 billion in Quebec to help more than 45,000 families and individuals secure the housing they needed.

The bilateral agreement between the governments of Canada and Quebec will result in a combined investment of an additional \$3.7 billion over 10 years to improve housing conditions in Quebec.

That is what federal leadership on housing looks like for Quebecers.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Chair, I would like to give the minister the opportunity to elaborate on certain points that he may not have had the time to address.

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, it is really important, as the hon. member has emphasized, that we continue to partner with other orders of government, but also with the private sector as well as the non-profit sector, to deliver more housing, more affordable housing and more supply of housing across the country. Partnerships are very important for the housing sector.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Chair, I am finding this evening a bit difficult. It is an im-

portant evening. As I said earlier, housing is a very serious issue. It is one of three serious crises that we are experiencing in Canada right now. There is the climate crisis, the language crisis and the housing crisis.

We have been here for three hours and the minister does not have any answers for us. He is accusing everyone of not voting for the reforms that he is making. However, we know now that the strategy does not work. It is not the Bloc Québécois, the Conservative Party, the NDP or the Green Party that is saying that. It is the National Housing Council. Many housing organizations across Canada are saying that the strategy does not work.

This evening, the Liberals are denying reality. They are saying that things are going well and that we should vote with them and that it will all work out. No, because the fact is that the strategy is not working.

I would like to come back to something the parliamentary secretary said. She said that 500,000 housing units have been built or renovated in Quebec. She mentioned that number earlier.

The CMHC itself published a document on the national housing strategy at its midway point. It talks about “the creation and repair of 213,733 units”, which includes the repair of 111,000 units. It talks about 213,000 units in total. That is 101,000 units built and 111,000 units repaired in the previous seven years across Canada.

The parliamentary secretary talked about 500,000 housing units in Quebec alone. I am not sure where she got her numbers, but I would like to know.

Earlier, I asked a very clear question. How many social housing units have been built in Quebec since the beginning of the strategy? That is my question for the minister.

• (2220)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Chair, when I referred to 500,000 housing units, I was talking about the \$40 billion planned for the entire national housing strategy.

The member wants numbers on Quebec. Under the co-investment fund, Quebec received \$348 million. That represents 8,074 housing units.

Since 2019, under the Reaching Home strategy, 62,000 people in this country have been prevented from becoming homeless, and 32,000 have found permanent housing. For phase one of the rapid housing initiative, we are talking about \$223 million invested for 1,698 housing units.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, when the government announced \$800 million for English in Quebec in the past five years in its official languages action plan, did my colleague stand up in cabinet and ask why they wanted to send \$800 million to help the anglophone community in Quebec, the best-treated linguistic minority in the Milky Way, when people are in core housing need?

Business of Supply

Again, I was there with her today. The United Way has released a study showing that 360,000 families are struggling to find housing in Montreal alone. However, \$800 million is being sent to help the anglophone community. I would like to know if my colleague stood up or made any kind of gesture to indicate that this does not make sense.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, I applaud the billions of dollars sent to Quebec since 2015.

I was there this morning, as was my colleague. What I heard people say is that they are pleased with the national housing strategy, whether it is the national housing co-investment fund or the rapid housing initiative.

We all agree that we must do more and do it faster. That will definitely not happen with a party that treats municipalities as though they were incompetent.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, I hope my colleague was not referring to me. I have never called the municipalities incompetent.

Once again, my colleague is gushing about her government's program, but the CMHC says there is a shortfall of 3.5 million units to "restor[e] affordability by 2030", as the CMHC put it.

The deputy chief economist of the CMHC, Aled ab Iorwerth, said, "Canada's approach to housing supply needs to be rethought and done differently".

That is what the CMHC is saying, not the Bloc Québécois.

He also said, "There must be a drastic transformation of the housing sector".

I would consider that criticism of the current strategy.

He added that there must be "government policies and processes, and an 'all-hands-on-deck' approach to increasing the supply of housing to meet demand".

What does my colleague have to say to the deputy chief economist of the CMHC?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, I would tell the deputy chief economist that that is exactly what we are doing.

A variety of measures are needed to address the overall challenges targeted by the national housing strategy, which includes increasing the supply of housing across the country. That is exactly what all of our programs are doing, whether by addressing the right to housing, curbing market speculation or increasing supply. That is exactly what we are doing, including with the chief economist of the CMHC.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, the chief economist is not happy with the way things are going right now. He does not think that the government is going about this strategy the right way. I am not sure what we are talking about here.

Let us talk about another gentleman, Steve Pomeroy, a professor at the School of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton University. He says:

With the new housing strategy, fewer than 16,000 housing units are going to be built and 64,000 are going to be lost, which means that for every one built, four are lost. We're still losing units a lot faster than we're creating new ones.

Those are not my words. Then there is Marie-Josée Houle, the federally appointed federal housing advocate, who said that "the situation has become so bad that, today, no one can deny there is a housing crisis".

In one of the documents it released a few weeks ago, the National Housing Council, the organization responsible for overseeing this major national strategy, said that 115,000 housing units have been built or renovated since the strategy was launched, but that 550,000 affordable housing units have been lost in the past seven years. According to these figures, we are moving backwards, not forwards.

I would like my colleague to tell me whether anyone was remotely concerned about the loss of these 550,000 affordable housing units when the Liberals came to power in 2015. They likely cost about \$750 a month to rent in Montreal.

Where are the 550,000 affordable housing units that have been lost?

• (2225)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, once again, I agree with my colleague that we need to do more. Doing more involves the co-operation of all levels of government and all stakeholders, including the private sector, because the private sector is currently producing 95% of housing.

We also need to work with the municipalities to ensure that we can increase the supply of affordable housing. That is why we put in place a rapid housing accelerator for the municipalities. It will give them the means to contribute to the goal of 100,000 housing units across the country in order to increase both the number of homes on the market and the number of affordable housing units.

With regard to the advocate, she is saying exactly the same thing. We need to increase the number of affordable housing units, but we also need to work on housing as a right. The only party in the House that is doing that right now is our party.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, the member seems pleased. Suddenly, she is pleased, because she says it is happening. Who knows.

The CMHC projects a drop in housing starts in 2023. Is there a game plan? Are there any ideas for dealing with that?

The current situation is dire, and it is not easy. I think that everyone agrees with that. This is not going to get resolved in the next two or three years. If the market continues like this, the problem is not going to get resolved.

Does the party in power in Canada, in other words the Liberal Party, have any solutions for dealing with the drop in housing starts next year and in the coming years in Canada?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, that is why the national housing strategy must be used to work on projects and programs that support increasing supply across the country.

The private sector will be an integral part of this solution. Even though we are seeing a slowdown in housing starts, the private sector is at the table. It wants to contribute to solutions that will increase the housing supply.

Business of Supply

There are these kinds of projects everywhere, especially in Montreal, Quebec City and Trois-Rivières. The private sector is at the table because it wants to be part of the solution.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, in last year's budget, the government invested \$500 million in co-operatives. It was a significant investment, I must admit. There was \$500 million in last year's budget to help build co-operatives.

However, we have heard that negotiations with the Canadian Co-operative Association are not progressing very well.

Could we have an update on those negotiations?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, what I can tell my colleague about the co-op program is that it was developed with the Canadian Co-operative Association. The program was jointly developed.

When we have more news, we will be happy to share it. One thing is certain: It has been more than 30 years since there has been a program for co-operatives. I am extremely proud of it.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, there was a very interesting article in *Le Devoir* this morning. I am sure my colleague must have read it.

It talks about who is responsible for social housing in Quebec. In the article, community groups say that they “are concerned about the private sector managing the funding for housing”. We are not sure who they were talking about. They must have been talking about a government like this, but surely not the federal government here in Ottawa.

The Fédération des OSBL d'habitation de Montréal and other organization representatives expressed concern over the fact that, “in the long term, social housing financed by investment funds will be the victim of real estate market pressures”.

Is that something that my colleague is concerned about?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, we are very aware of the challenges of the market right now. What I can say to my colleague is that since 2015, in Quebec alone, the national housing co-investment fund has provided \$348 million and 8,000 housing units. The national average rent paid for housing built with the national housing co-investment fund is \$700.

As far as community housing is concerned, the national housing strategy has helped maintain 233,000 housing units. In my riding alone, 70 buildings totalling 700 housing units have been bought to maintain affordability.

• (2230)

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, I really enjoy my colleague's optimism. She spoke about 700 housing units in Quebec but today we learned that 360,000 households in greater Montreal do not earn enough to pay their rent.

What will we do with these people? What is the game plan for a little affordability for those people? We are talking about 360,000 households in Montreal alone. There must be some living in her riding. I do not believe that 700 housing units will be enough.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, there is no such thing as a small project. Every home represents an individual, a

family, a woman fleeing violence or someone who was homeless. There is no such thing as a small project or small housing.

Every home meets a specific need and that is exactly what the national housing strategy does.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, one of the big problems we have not talked about yet this evening is the financialization of housing. It is a major problem that is hanging over us, but we are not really diving in to talk about it.

In 1993, just a few years after the federal government turned its back social housing, 0% of all rental housing in Canada was owned by large Canadian or international conglomerates. We know that these individuals do not care about the right to housing, just profits. All the advocacy organizations say that this is a problem.

Today, in 2023, 22% of Canada's rental stock is owned by such large conglomerates. These people are not here to help or to build social housing. What is the government going to do about this threat?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, we must also talk about the right to housing and working on market speculation, and that is exactly what we have done. We have imposed a 1% tax on the value of real estate belonging to non-resident Canadians. We have banned foreign ownership for two years by imposing a moratorium. We are committed to reviewing the tax treatment of real estate investments.

Of course, there is a lot of work to do and a lot of programs to put in place, but one thing is certain: On this side of the House, that is exactly what we are going to do.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Chair, the government expects 500,000 new immigrants to arrive next year.

Did the government consult with housing organizations across the country when it decided on these new targets?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, of those 500,000 immigrants we want to bring to the country, we are hoping that one of the areas we can focus on is construction workers, who will enable us to build these units.

Yes, it is a great project. This is a good project for the future, to address the labour shortage in this country.

[English]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am thankful to have the opportunity to be part of the discussion about housing. To solve Canada's housing challenges, we need all hands on deck. It is great to see the interest from all sides of the House on this matter.

[Translation]

I talk to people in my riding and one of their main concerns is the cost of housing. Too many Canadians are having a hard time paying their rent or making their mortgage payments. Too many young people are worried that they will not be able to buy a house one day. They feel as though their dream of being a homeowner is getting farther and farther out of reach.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

The Government of Canada is committed to creating a fair housing system that works for all Canadians. I would like to use my time today to talk about the measures we are taking to level the playing field and make home ownership more affordable, especially for first-time homebuyers.

Let us start by looking at the reasons why housing prices continue to climb. Recently, supply chains, global inflation and the rising interest rates needed to temper inflation have all played a role in driving up costs, but the major factor impacting affordability is a lack of supply. Canada's population continues to grow, and we need housing construction to keep pace.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation published a major report last year, showing that to reach affordability by 2030, Canada needs 22 million homes. We are only on track to create 19 million homes, meaning we need to build an additional 3.5 million homes. It is clear that we need more homes and we need them fast.

- (2235)

[Translation]

That is why our government, in budget 2022, adopted the most ambitious measures that Canada has ever taken to address this fundamental problem.

Budget 2023 builds on that. It continues our government's efforts to increase the housing supply. With these measures in place, Canada will double the number of new houses built in the country over the next 10 years.

[English]

As the Minister of Finance said when she announced the budget, this would take a national effort, with collaboration between provinces and territories, cities and towns, the private sector and non-profits, all working together with us to build the homes that Canadians need. The good news is that this is happening.

[Translation]

Take, for example, the housing accelerator fund. This initiative was developed to respond to the concerns we were hearing from the housing sector that too many construction projects were being delayed because of local administrative processes.

[English]

Mayors of cities and towns recognize this and want to clear this up, but they need funding support to do it. That is where the housing accelerator fund comes in. This five-year, \$4-billion initiative would provide funding to encourage local governments to speed up housing development and approvals. It would help them to tackle barriers to development in ways that would provide immediate results and keep paying off for years to come.

[Translation]

We recently announced the details of the housing accelerator fund and will begin receiving applications from municipal governments over the summer.

[English]

In the meantime, we have been boosting supply through our other national housing strategy programs. Since the 10-year, \$82-billion strategy was launched in 2017, it has supported the creation of more than 120,000 new housing units, supported the repair of more than 298,000 homes and maintained the affordability status of 234,000 community housing units across the country.

So far, the measures I have mentioned focus squarely on the challenge of boosting housing supply. After all, that is the top issue affecting housing affordability. However, the government is committed to tackling affordability from all angles, and we are investing in other measures to give young Canadians a leg-up onto the property ladder and a chance to reach their dreams of home ownership. That is why, last August, we extended our successful affordable housing innovation fund with a new rent-to-own stream.

[Translation]

This is a \$450-million investment to create up to 6,000 affordable housing units over the next six years.

[English]

The rent-to-own stream will invest \$200 million, as a pilot, to yield 1,300 new units. The rent-to-own stream acknowledges that one of the biggest barriers to home ownership is saving for a down payment, especially while still paying rent. There are a few options for people to leverage the rent they pay toward making a home purchase.

[Translation]

This new funding source will help landlords develop and test rent-to-own models and projects across the country. We are exploring innovative and affordable projects, with guarantees that allow Canadians to move from renting to owning within five years.

[English]

We also launched a first-time homebuyer tax-free savings account to the tune of up to \$40,000. Like an RRSP, it is tax-deductible. When used to buy a first home, it is also non-taxable, like a TFSA. In other words, it is tax-free in and tax-free out.

- (2240)

[Translation]

So far I have talked about how our government helps make ownership more accessible by building more housing. I also talked about measures to help first-time homebuyers build up a down payment.

Business of Supply

[English]

I want to finish by touching on another factor driving up the cost of housing, that is, unfair practices in the housing market. Homes should not be commodities. Homes are meant to be a place where families can lay down roots, create memories and build a life together.

[Translation]

That is why we created new rules that will prohibit foreign investment in housing in Canada for a period of two years.

[English]

The Prohibition on the Purchase of Residential Property by Non-Canadians Act came into effect on January 1. In March, we responded to feedback and introduced amendments. These enhance the flexibility of newcomers and businesses looking to add to Canada's housing supply, all the while ensuring that housing in Canada is owned by Canadians, for the benefit of everyone who lives in this country.

[Translation]

We are also taking measures to combat the resale of homes, real estate flipping, by ensuring that the resulting profits from the sale of a house held for less than 12 months are fully taxed. This measure will be implemented this year and it will include certain exceptions for unexpected life events. This measure will help ensure that investors who resell homes quickly pay their fair share and play a role in lowering housing prices for Canadians.

[English]

I am thankful for the chance to highlight just a few of the actions that our government is taking to make the dream of home ownership a reality for more young Canadians. These actions are part of a long-term, comprehensive strategy to give more Canadians a safe, stable and affordable place to call home.

I would like to ask the minister to elaborate on the initiatives we are undertaking to help first-time homebuyers, such as the first home savings account, and how these programs are designed to protect the dream of home ownership.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, the first-time homebuyer incentive, the first-time homebuyer tax-free savings account, measures to increase supply, and banning the foreign ownership of Canadian residential real estate are all measures meant to encourage continued access to the Canadian dream of home ownership.

We know that it is getting challenging for a number of Canadians to access their dream of home ownership, so we are doing our part to make sure that first-time homebuyers continue to have access to the dream of home ownership by introducing the first-time homebuyer tax-free savings account of up to \$40,000.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, we hear the Conservative members opposite pay a lot of lip service to supporting the dream of home ownership, but I have yet to see any policies that will actually do just that. What are the minister's thoughts on this?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member is absolutely right. When we brought in the first-time homebuyer incen-

tive, the Conservatives voted against it, even though they claim to care about first-time homebuyers. When it came to introducing the first-time homebuyer tax-free savings account, it was the same story, and the Conservatives voted against it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, in my riding, Sherbrooke, a new 12-room house for women, Maison Margot, will soon open its doors and offer a home to women who are in crisis or in a period of transition. This wonderful project was developed by Habitations l'Équerre. It is a great example of collaboration between different organizations so that people in local neighbourhoods feel involved.

I would like the minister to comment on our overall approach to improving the housing situation in Canada.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for telling us about a project in her riding. There are projects like that one right across the country. One thing we wanted to ensure was that we created shelters for women fleeing violence. These shelters are built in such a way as to provide safe and affordable housing and also the social safety net they need to take back control over their lives.

• (2245)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, between May 1 and May 3, the minister and the parliamentary secretary held a series of round tables to gather stakeholder views and feedback on the national housing co-investment fund and the rental construction financing initiative.

Can they share with us the main points that have been raised by the various stakeholders in the housing sector?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, in terms of the national housing co-investment fund, we have listened to a number of people across the country. What we want is to make sure that this fund, which is primarily for community non-profits, is quick and easy to access because we want to increase the number of affordable housing units across the country.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, we talked earlier about housing co-operatives. I would like to know how the government intends to use housing co-operatives to help increase the housing supply. How much money has been allocated to support housing co-ops?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, I am very pleased to answer that question because I have lived in a housing co-op myself. I have helped establish two housing co-ops in my lifetime, and I am a firm believer in that model. After 30 years, we finally have a program dedicated to co-operatives. The government has allocated \$1.5 billion over five years for co-operatives across the country.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, how will prohibiting people who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents from flipping homes help keep prices low for Canadians?

Ms. Soraya Martínez Ferrada: Madam Chair, this comes back to what I was saying earlier. We need to work on market speculation. Slowing down market speculation will allow for more housing units and homes to be available for Canadians here and not for foreigners who do not live in the country.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Chair, we brought in the one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit. I would like the parliamentary secretary to talk to us about this top-up.

Who is eligible and how does this top-up help the recipients who are affected by inflation?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we are proud to have worked with members of Parliament here to introduce the top-up to the Canada housing benefit, which reached 800,000 vulnerable renters. We are proud that we got that into the hands of our Canadian renters.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with two colleagues.

Through you to the minister, what province has the region in Canada where it takes the longest to save for the average down payment to own a home?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, we are absolutely committed to making sure that Canadians have access to their dream of home ownership. That is why we introduced the first-time homebuyer incentive. That is why we introduced—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the answer is British Columbia.

In 2015, prior to the Liberals coming into office, how many years would it have taken someone in Vancouver to save for the average down payment?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we have done more than any other government to invest in more affordable housing options for British Columbians.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the answer is five and a half years.

As of 2022, after the Liberals being in office almost eight years, how many years does it take someone in Vancouver to save for the average down payment?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, if the party opposite had its way, it would not even offer any supports to first-time homebuyers to access their dream of home ownership.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the answer is 30 years. That is a staggering 500% increase from 2015 to 2022, for someone living in B.C. to save for the average down payment.

With this result after eight years of Liberal policies, does the minister take accountability for this 500% increase in the time it takes people to save for a home in British Columbia?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we know that Canadians are struggling to find housing that is affordable. That is precisely why we introduced measures to help Canadians access their dream of home ownership, by putting in place policies like the first-time homebuyer incentive.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, no wonder we have a housing crisis when the housing minister takes no accountability for his results in housing. We will move on to something else.

According to a Stats Canada 2022 report, which province ranks as the most unaffordable and has the highest number of renter households in Canada?

• (2250)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I wish the hon. member was tough on her own caucus, which believes that the federal government should have less leadership on housing and that we should withdraw from the housing sector completely.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the answer, once again, is British Columbia.

What is the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Kelowna, British Columbia?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, it does not matter because the hon. member believes we should do less on housing. Her party's leader has said that we should—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, it does matter to the people in Kelowna, British Columbia how much rent is. It is \$1,952.

What is the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Vancouver?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member and her party want to play games instead of dealing with the serious challenges facing Canadians. We are the party that is putting solutions on the table and they vote against those solutions.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the answer is \$2,787.

The housing minister does not know his file. He is not even trying. He is not even asking his officials to hand him sticky notes with answers on them anymore. We will move on to something else.

Does the minister believe that supply is one of the key factors for getting the housing crisis in B.C. under control?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we are the ones who delivered for British Columbians through the Canada–British Columbia housing benefit, which is now helping tens of thousands of British Columbian households get money directly to help them with rent. What did the hon. member and her party do? They voted against those supports. She can quote all the numbers she likes, but when it came time for action, they did not—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, these are actual results. According to the British Columbia Real Estate Association, how are housing starts forecasted for 2023 compared to the previous year?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member's logic is to do less on housing but somehow produce more housing. How does that make sense?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, they are on track to be down 18.6%.

With housing starts down, does the minister believe this will help housing availability and affordability in British Columbia?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, if the hon. member cared about housing supply, why did she and her party vote against the housing accelerator fund, which is about building more housing supply?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, to the housing minister, what is your definition of housing affordability?

The Deputy Chair: Speak through the Chair, please.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Conservatives do not even believe that Canadians have a human right to housing. We are the ones who legislated a human right to housing.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, can the minister name one criterion being used to determine housing affordability?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, their plan does not include any mention of homelessness. Their plan does not really prioritize affordable housing.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Chair, the housing minister has no definition for housing affordability and has no criteria, so it is no wonder we are in a housing crisis and the Liberals' housing plan is failing Canadians.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Conservatives do not believe in the right to housing. They have no plan. All they have are gimmicks and buzzwords.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Chair, it is an honour to be here tonight.

My question for the minister is this: Is Canada in a housing crisis?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, does the official opposition actually believe that Canadians have a right to a safe and affordable place to—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, the answer is yes. Maclean's says, “[The housing minister] has a plan to solve Canada's housing crisis”, so that is a yes.

What is the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Victoria?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, does the official opposition believe in a right to housing, yes or no?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, he is to answer the questions and not offer them. It is \$2,000 per month.

What is the average home price in the Yukon?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Conservatives miraculously think that doing less on housing will build more housing.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, for anybody watching, whenever the minister does not answer a question, he means he does not know.

What is the average home price in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, on a point of order, the member was trying to suggest the motive of the minister, and I do not think that is appropriate.

The Deputy Chair: That is more a point of debate.

The hon. member.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, the question remains. Will the minister answer it?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I hope the party opposite actually comes around to appreciating federal investments in housing. They do not believe we should do more on housing.

• (2255)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, it is \$500,000, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association.

By the way, when the member gets up and does a point of order, it is code that the minister needs to read some of his notes. That is why he does it.

What is the average home price in Iqaluit, Nunavut?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, when that party was in office, it did not invest in northern housing.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, according to the Nunatsiaq News, it is \$706,950 for an average house. That is incredible.

What is the definition of “core housing need” according to the minister's own department?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Conservatives do not even believe in the right to housing.

Business of Supply

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, that was an easy one. It means when a household cannot afford suitable and adequate housing in their community.

This leads to my next question: What is the core housing need in the Yukon?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Conservatives did not invest in housing in the north.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, it is 13.1% in the Yukon.

What is the core housing need in Northwest Territories?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the Conservatives released a housing plan with no mention of homelessness.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, the minister does not know the answer. The answer is 13.2% in Northwest Territories.

What is the core housing need in Nunavut?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, why does the hon. member not believe there is a federal leadership role in housing?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, these are basic questions. We have 10 provinces and three territories, and the minister should know them. It is 32.9% in Nunavut. The need is over 3,000 homes and the shortage is very clear.

We have heard many announcements that the minister and the government have made. However, what makes matters worse is that millions of dollars are getting spent and houses are not necessarily getting built. We are seeing examples in the territories, where this is profound.

I asked the Minister of Northern Affairs about certain houses getting built in the territories, and he said he did not know. I then precisely asked the ministry and officials said they did not know because they do not track the information. It is pretty hard to hit a target that they do not even monitor.

How many mixed low-income units were promised according to this minister's own document, the "Northern Housing Report"?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member has asked a number of questions about northern housing, but guess what. They do not have any plan for northern housing in their so-called housing plan.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, the answer is \$248 million for 824 units in the territories. How many have been completed? According to my own numbers, because the minister could not answer, for Nunavut, 101 are listed as completed; in the Northwest Territories, 39 are listed as completed; in Yukon, zero were listed as completed, but we found that a triplex had been completed. Therefore, there are 143 listed as completed of 824 units, where thousands are needed.

Would you say you have done a great job getting the thousands of houses needed built in the territories?

The Deputy Chair: I would ask the member to direct his questions through the Chair, please.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, that number is inaccurate, but, worse than that, the Conservatives released a so-called housing plan with no mention of northern housing.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Chair, does the minister know what the average rent is for a one-bedroom apartment in Niagara Falls?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, why did the Conservatives vote against the Canada housing benefit that is helping renters?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, the minister refuses to answer questions. The answer to that is \$1,495.

Does the minister know the estimated wait time for an adult in Niagara Falls who is waiting for an affordable one-bedroom unit?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I do not understand why the Conservative members are opposed to getting real help to Canadian renters.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, again the minister refuses to answer, and it is a failure of the government. According to Niagara Regional Housing, the answer is a wait time of 21 years. That is unacceptable.

Does the minister know the estimated wait time for a senior in Niagara-on-the-Lake who is waiting for a new, affordable one-bedroom unit?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I was proud to work with Niagara Region to deliver rapid housing units for the most vulnerable in that region. On top of that, we are proud to have delivered rental supplements to Canadians. Conservatives voted against it, and now they pretend to care.

● (2300)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Again, Madam Chair, he is not answering the question. Again, according to Niagara Regional Housing, the answer is 12 years.

Does the minister know the estimated wait time for a family in Fort Erie who is waiting for a new, affordable four-bedroom unit?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the member and his party have opposed all our investments in affordable housing construction and repair, which are precisely to help families like the ones that he mentioned, but then he has the audacity to come to the House and pretend to care about this issue.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, the Liberals' programs are failing. Again, according to the Niagara Regional Housing, the answer is eight years.

Minister, under the first two streams of the government's rapid housing initiative—

Business of Supply

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member has to address his question through the Chair and not directly to the minister. The member is starting his question with “Minister”, so he needs to be careful how he phrases his question.

The hon. member.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, under the first two streams of the government's rapid housing initiative, the government committed \$2.5 billion to projects. How much money was allocated to construction in the Niagara Region?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member was denigrating the national housing strategy. We have delivered almost half a million newly built or repaired units for Canadians and we are supporting, through the national housing strategy, almost two millions households.

That party and the member can continue to denigrate those results, but we know that this program is working for Canadians, and we need to do more, of course.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, the program is not working. The answer is \$10.5 million out of \$2.5 billion.

Can the government answer how many new, affordable housing units have been built in the Niagara Region through this program?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, that is not only inaccurate, but misleading. The hon. member is taking one program among many programs and pretending that is the only investment we have made in Niagara Region. Nothing could be further from the truth, and he knows that.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, the minister fails to answer the questions. He does not even know the details of the rapid housing initiative and how many units were built in Niagara. The answer to that, out of the \$2.5 billion, is only 42 units in Niagara.

Do the government and minister know how many households in Niagara Falls were on the centralized housing wait-list last summer?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I would encourage the hon. member to learn more about the national housing strategy because he is isolating one program among many and then extrapolating that and saying those are the only investments we made in the Niagara region. That is inaccurate. I am happy to provide details to him on all the different programs in the national housing strategy.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Chair, again, according to Niagara Regional Housing, the answer is 4,500 households as of July 2022.

Does the minister know how many households and Niagara residents are on the Niagara region's affordable housing wait-list?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, what I know is that, through the rapid housing initiative, we have invested \$900 million in Ontario, resulting in 2,800 deeply affordable permanent housing units, and that is just one program among many.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Iksivantali*, in 2021-22, the CMHC provided \$29 million to Nunavut under the national housing strategy. This is half of what the investments were in previous years. Why is that?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, we do recognize that many north-

ern communities face unique housing challenges. That is why, since 2015, we have invested close to \$1.1 billion to help over 18,000 families in the north.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, I would like to also say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Kitchener Centre.

According to Inuit-Crown partnership, \$845 million was provided in housing for distinctions-based funding in previous years. How much of that was for Nunavut?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I am happy to provide detailed numbers on federal funding in Nunavut since 2015. The affordable housing innovation fund got \$3.2 million. The national housing co-investment fund got \$17 million. The rapid housing initiative got almost \$5 million.

• (2305)

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, the minister did not answer my question, but I will move on.

Forty per cent of Inuit live in overcrowded housing. When will the government uphold the housing rights of Inuit in Nunavut?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I do agree with the hon. member that we have to prioritize funding for housing in the north, and I am happy to provide more details in subsequent questions.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, the minister still has not answered my question, so I will ask again. When will the housing rights of Inuit be protected?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we are protecting housing rights for Inuit in partnership with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, as well as investments in Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, as I said, 40% of Inuit are living in overcrowded housing, but I will move on.

There have been reports that 90 evacuations of first nations communities have occurred. There are many first nations communities that have been evacuated for over four years. When will the housing rights of these first nations communities be upheld?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we know that there are long-standing housing gaps in indigenous communities. We will continue to work with first nations, Inuit and Métis nation partners to co-develop and implement community-led housing strategies. Out of a number of different investments, I will just point to a few: \$400 million over 10 years for Inuit-led housing and the new \$4-billion commitment for the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, it has long been known that communities such as Kashechewan, which will most likely have to be evacuated again, have been evacuated for longer than four years.

When will their housing rights be upheld?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we are committed to making sure we address the needs of indigenous peoples through a co-developed indigenous, distinctions-based housing strategy. We have provided significant investments over—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, commitment is not reconciliation. Commitment is not action. When will the government act to uphold the rights of indigenous peoples' housing needs?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we do uphold those rights, as evidenced by our co-development approach for the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, the urban, rural and northern housing strategy the minister mentioned will not happen until next fiscal year. How much of these funds will go toward Nunavut, Yukon and the NWT?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, that is not quite accurate. In fact, the \$4-billion allocation builds on the existing money of \$300 million, which is going to urgent needs while we build on the larger strategy.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, urban, rural and northern housing funding will go toward urban, rural and northern communities that are not in the territories. How much of the urban, rural and northern housing strategy will be outside of this funding and will go toward the NWT, the Yukon and Nunavut?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the total amount outside of the funds that the hon. member mentioned is \$400 million as part of the northern housing strategy.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, when will these funds be available to the territories?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, they have been available. It is a long-term commitment that flows through different streams. One is through the bilateral agreements. Another one is through the northern—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, if these funds have already been allocated, why is there still such a huge housing gap in all three territories?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member is right. We have, of course, allocated significant resources that are making an impact on the ground, but there is more work to be done. We are committed to doing that work.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, while there is more work to be done, when will the government actually make sure that there is action rather than making more promises?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, that is not fair. In Nunavut alone we have helped over 5,000 families and supported individuals to meet their housing needs. Yes, there is more work to be done, but to say that there has been no action—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, I have indigenous women coming to me saying they cannot leave their violent partners because there is no housing available to them. When will the government protect the rights of indigenous women so they can live in safe and comfortable housing?

• (2310)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we do prioritize housing for indigenous women through our investments. We just recently announced \$103 million to fund projects in over 21 communities, particularly for indigenous women fleeing from domestic violence.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, all I am hearing are more promises. All I am hearing are promises to spend money. At the same time, I am hearing from my communities that these investments are not helping my communities. They are not helping indigenous communities.

When will the government actually act on ensuring that indigenous peoples have the same access to housing, which it says is a right of indigenous peoples?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, how can the hon. member say this when we committed \$400 million as part of the northern housing priorities in budget 2018 and then an additional \$845 million over seven years for Inuit distinctions-based housing recently? These are significant dollars and they are in addition to the rapid housing initiative investments and other investments.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Iksivantali*, all I will say at this point is that all these promises and all these investments have been in significant decline going back to 2016. We need to make sure that reinvestments are increased again to make sure that—

The Deputy Chair: I am sorry. There is no more time.

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Chair, CMHC's mandate is to help Canadians in housing need by improving access to affordable housing.

Business of Supply

I am concerned this is not currently the reality across the country, and I am not the only one. From her 2022 report on chronic homelessness, the Auditor General found “Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation did not know whether it was addressing the housing needs of and improving housing outcomes for vulnerable Canadians”.

This deeply concerns me because in my community, home prices and rents have skyrocketed, while homelessness has more than tripled since 2018. No wonder the national housing advocate recently shared that the national housing strategy is failing. I have several questions and suggestions for the Minister of Housing to push for CMHC, and the federal government, to get closer to meeting its mandate.

First, we know that real estate investment trusts, REITs, one of Canada's largest corporate landlords, contribute to worsening the housing crisis by buying up existing units and raising rents as they seek to maximize their profitability. Oddly, CMHC has recently loaned \$60 million to Choice REIT, one of Canada's largest REITs, which made over \$744 million in net profits last year. This is just one of four such agreements with REITs.

Will the minister ensure our national housing agency, with a mandate for improving housing affordability, stops loaning public funds to for-profit corporate landlords at a time when funds are being reduced for non-profit housing providers?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, I welcome the hon. member's questions and the prioritization of housing and action against homelessness.

I can assure the member that our government prioritizes funding to support organizations supporting those who are experiencing homelessness on the ground. We have doubled that funding, in fact.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Chair, another option that the minister could consider is the one untapped source of significant revenue to expand affordable housing across the country, which would be to remove corporate tax exemptions for real estate investment trusts.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates this could generate at least \$285 million in government revenue over the next five years. This is what could be used to supplement funds for the affordable housing we need. Does the minister believe that removing REITs' tax exemption and directing these revenues to affordable housing would help to address Canada's current housing crisis?

• (2315)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Chair, we have answered a couple of my colleague's questions around speculation of the market, and we agree. We have engaged in doing a reform of the investments in residential estates. There is a lot more work to be done.

I think the member would recognize that we are moving forward with legislation that supports the right to homes and supports working on breaking speculation of the market. We agree that there is more to be done.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Chair, the 2022 Auditor General report on chronic homelessness recently called for the definition of affordable housing to be consistent across CMHC's programs.

For example, in the national housing strategy, affordable rent is calculated as less than 30% of before-tax income. However, under the national housing co-investment fund, affordable rent is based on rent being less than 80% of market rent. What that means is that rental housing funds would not be going to the lowest income households.

Will the minister ensure that CMHC uses one consistent definition, and put an end to this use of the 80% of market rent definition?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I do appreciate the questions. I just want to clarify a few things. I think there are some inaccuracies in some of the assertions made.

Of the rental construction financing initiative, for the over 190 projects funded by CMHC, only four are connected to or are real estate investment trusts. That means that these projects are really increasing supply. They also have to meet the affordability criteria that is imposed on them to access federal dollars, as well as making their units accessible and energy efficient.

In terms of deeply affordable housing, I would point the hon. member to the significant investments we have made, and continue to make, in affordable housing, whether it is the rapid housing initiative or the co-investment fund, which delivers an average of \$700 in monthly rental payments for tenants living in those units across the country.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Chair, just to develop the question, will the minister commit to a consistent definition of “affordable housing” across all the CMHC's programs?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, every Canadian has a right to an affordable place to call home. The housing needs and economic circumstances of Canadians vary widely, which is why the national housing strategy has different programs for different people.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Chair, to increase the affordable housing supply, as one last idea for the minister, such advocates as ACORN Canada called for a dedicated acquisition fund to enable non-profits, co-ops and land trust organizations to buy at-risk rental buildings when they come on the market, preventing them from being bought by for-profit corporate landlords. Will the minister listen to these advocates and implement a dedicated acquisition fund?

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I have news for the hon. member; the housing accelerator fund will enable local governments to do exactly that. They can use some of the proceeds and incentive amounts of money through the housing accelerator fund to actually buy land and build more affordable housing.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Chair, I certainly hope that the housing accelerator fund matches the acquisition fund that ACORN and others are calling for.

I just want to thank the minister and team for—

The Deputy Chair: I am sorry; there is no more time left.

I want to remind members that they are not to eat while they are in the chamber.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

The minister sat and watched Manitoba's largest lowest-income seniors housing complex, Lions Place, be sold off to a for-profit company. Gerald Brown, chair of the Lions Place residence council senior action committee, wrote two letters to the minister, but he has never responded. Is the minister planning to respond to him?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, that is not fair. I met with the Manitoba housing minister, Rochelle Squires, precisely on that project. By the way, we built 50,000 units of affordable housing for seniors.

• (2320)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, that is not true. I was not asking about the minister. I was asking about an actual senior, Gerald Brown. Maybe the minister needs to look at his emails.

The Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network has called the crisis "so severe for women and gender-diverse people that the advocate will be addressing it as one of the top human rights issues in Canada." Will the minister acknowledge this truth, or is he going to say that what they are saying is a lie?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, of course, there is more work to be done, but I just want to remind the hon. member that we have already invested over \$228 million in Winnipeg, representing over 6,266 units.

We are aware of the issue involving the sale of Lions Place, and we know that residents are concerned about it. We are committed to working with all the stakeholders to reach a conclusion.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, does the minister acknowledge that housing is a major human rights crisis?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we are the party in government that legislated the right to housing.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, clearly he does not want to answer the question, because the minister has spent only 1% of the \$438 million of the CMHC portion of the violence prevention strategy that has been in place since 2020. People are dying. Why is it taking so long?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her question. She knows very well that we are working on that. We have recognized that many women across the country are fleeing violence, and we must do more to ensure that every one of these women has housing that will give them the sense of safety they need.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, actually, the government does not care about gender-based violence. In fact, it is planning to cut \$150 million from shelters. Is the government willing to revoke the \$150-million cut to shelters in September?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague, and she is quite aware of that. I visited her riding in the first few weeks after I was named parliamentary secretary.

I would like to remind her that our goal is to have 2,000 shelters for women who are fleeing—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, they are clearly unwilling to answer my question. It is going to cost lives when the government cuts that \$150 million from shelters across the country.

Again, last week, the government reannounced funding for shelters, because I think that the government thinks the Canadian public is really stupid. When is it going to announce actual new funding for shelters for indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse folks?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, wow, that is the kind of over-the-top rhetoric and denial of the facts that will have the hon. member lose credibility on this issue. Is she saying \$724 million over five years is not real money for women fleeing gender-based violence? Of course, there is more work to be done, but to say that we have not done anything is really unfair and inaccurate. We are doing a lot in this space and the hon. member should recognize that.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, I do recognize that the Liberals have only spent 5% of the \$724.1 million and have reannounced money from that funding from 2020. He is talking about credibility when I come from a riding where we are literally searching for women who have died from violence in landfills. That is pretty bold and really demonstrates the arrogance of the government.

Business of Supply

Going to the Winnipeg street census that is talking about the housing crisis in Winnipeg, the Winnipeg street census indicated that over half of the respondents were kids aging out of care.

Does the minister plan to fund housing for kids aging out of care, or is his government going to continue to watch kids be thrown out onto the streets?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, I understand that more needs to be done. My colleague and I agree on that.

I find it rather deplorable that she cannot even acknowledge that, in her own riding, our government has worked with representatives of Velma's House.

[*English*]

It was to make sure that we were taking women off the streets and giving them a place to call home. That is what we did and we did that with her community with \$8.4 million for Velma's House.

• (2325)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, I find it funny that the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network has called this crisis so severe that it is calling it one of the great, most severe human rights crises in the country. Are we supposed to be thankful, in Winnipeg Centre, when women and girls are dying on the street, for a little tuppence that the Liberals are giving, when they are giving billions of dollars to corporations?

Again, is the government going to fund a place in Winnipeg for kids aging out of care, or is it going to watch while kids age out onto the streets?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member would have us believe that investing \$228 million to build over 6,200 housing units in Winnipeg is a pittance. Those are her words. We believe that we are delivering for provinces and territories. We are delivering for communities. We are delivering for vulnerable people. Of course, there is more work to be done, but to deny \$228 million invested in Winnipeg for deeply affordable housing is a shame by the member.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, I can tell the minister what is a shame: All of my neighbours who are living in tents right by where I live. I am going to ask him again: Does his government plan on building housing for kids aging out of care? It is something that has been called a pipeline for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, and gender-diverse people, or is he going to continue to watch kids age out on the streets?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, we have not abandoned the most vulnerable in this country. In fact, we have doubled our investments in Reaching Home from just over \$2 billion to almost \$4 billion to support 5,000 projects and organizations across the country that are doing the work the hon. member is talking about. We are there. We will continue to be there and we are proud of that work.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Chair, I wish I was a fridge at Loblaws because it got \$12 million. What was given to housing in Winnipeg Centre in the last round when people are dying on the streets?

I am going to ask the minister again: Is he planning to invest in housing for kids aging out of care, or is the government going to continue to watch kids aging out onto the streets, something that has been called a pipeline for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, over 32% of the national housing strategy is focused on working with women and children to ensure they get the housing they need.

We will continue to increase funding because we want all women across the country to be safe.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Chair, absolutely absent from the debate tonight is the correlation between the market-driven luxury condo spree that has been happening in this country for years and the death of our tradespeople to the opioid crisis.

On the Government of Canada's own website, it says "Men in trades: the opioid overdose crisis in Canada". In B.C., it said, in 2020, that men's life expectancy has been down for a third straight year based on the opioid crisis. We know that this market-driven condo frenzy that has been going on in this country for the last five years is killing men in this country and there has been no discussion about it.

Does the minister agree that there is a correlation between the death of tradespeople from opioid overdoses and this frenzy of market-driven condos?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Chair, of course, any Canadian that we lose to the overdose crisis in the country is real. Of course, we want to make sure that there is enough skilled labour to build the housing that Canadians need. We are doing everything that we can, through different measures, to make sure that this is the case. That also requires investments in local communities to make sure that more young people join the building trades and pursue a life in the construction industry.

It is something that we support and I join the hon. member in highlighting the importance of making sure that we keep people safe and that we keep people alive by investing in community programs that help people.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Chair, I just want to mention that the money for mental health needs to be spent. As this government continues to talk about how they are going to get supply on the ground, they need to make sure that they have the social safety net as well.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary on a point of order. We have to stop the clock.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Chair, I would like to invite my colleague to ask questions about the national housing strategy and not about the programs that fall under the purview of the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and the Minister of Health.

• (2330)

[English]

The Deputy Chair: I am sure that the hon. member is going to bring it around so that the questions are on housing today.

The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Chair, the thing is that the housing crisis is causing the social crisis in our communities. It is causing homelessness. It is causing opioid overdoses. It is causing social problems in our community. Although it may seem that they are not connected, they are.

I will change my questioning, though. In my riding, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment has increased by 21% in just the last year.

In Port Moody—Coquitlam, I have knocked on doors and have spoken to single mothers with children with disabilities, who have been displaced and are having to go into new rental homes because of these luxury condos that are taking away purpose-built rental.

For one woman I was speaking to recently, her rental home costs went up 50% when she had to find another house for her and her daughter. It is the same thing for seniors and persons with disabilities who no longer have access to stable rental housing in my community. People are living in cars, tents and outside in parks.

What is the government going to do to bring down the price of rent in the country? What the government is doing now is not working in my community.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, the hon. member points out the challenge of access to safe and affordable housing that meets the needs of each and every Canadian. At the end of the day, different people in the housing spectrum have different types of needs.

There is absolutely a need for more deeply affordable housing. That is why we are investing more federal resources into building more co-op housing, by investing \$1.5 billion in a new generation of co-op units. We are providing supports to municipalities through the housing accelerator fund, to build more housing of all types, including affordable housing, but also bringing forward investments in the national housing co-investment fund, to free up more affordable housing for Canadians, as well as reinvesting in the third round of the rapid housing initiative.

All of these measures are a recognition of the importance of deeply affordable housing to meet the needs of Canadians.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Chair, here is breaking news out of UBC. A UBC report says that B.C. renters are the most likely to be

evicted and 10.5% of B.C. renters are forced to move versus 5.9% in the rest of Canada.

Why and what is the minister going to do to keep people in their homes?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Chair, I just want to remind my colleagues about the co-investment fund. It is \$979 million. Since 2015, it is more than 8,000 units. If we take the rapid housing initiative, one and two, there was \$200 million on one, \$185 million on two and more than 1,000 units.

Those are the numbers for British Columbia.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Chair, this is the problem with the government. It does not matter that it is saying it is spending money. It is not spending it fast enough. It is not spending it in the right places and more and more people are going homeless every day.

We are now more than halfway through the government's 10-year national housing strategy, with more than \$31 billion spent, yet costs are not going down. More people are going homeless and CMHC says that we need more “financialization” of housing to solve the problem.

Does the minister agree with this statement?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, this is the reality of our investments in British Columbia. Since 2015, we have invested over \$7.8 billion in housing in British Columbia to help nearly 147,000 families and over 153,000 households get the housing they need. This includes a joint investment of \$517 million in the Canada-B.C. housing benefit, which is targeted at supporting over 25,000 British Columbians.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Chair, does the minister know what an agreement to above-guideline rent increase is?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, I am happy to discuss the intricacies of the rental market with the hon. member, but what is more important is to talk about housing supply, to talk about supports for renters and to talk about affordability.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Chair, my colleague, the member for Vancouver East, explained this earlier today. We are losing 15 units of affordable housing while the government is trying to build one. In B.C., these above-guideline rent increases are affecting seniors who have lived in their home for 10, 15 or 20 years. How is the government going to use its housing program to ensure that people can live in stable—

• (2335)

The Deputy Chair: Sorry, I need to allow the hon. minister to respond.

The hon. minister, with his last response.

Business of Supply

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Chair, if one listened to the NDP, one would think we are the only order of government that is responsible for housing. Housing is a shared priority. We are doing our part, but the provinces and the municipalities also have a role. We are doing our part to support renters and build more affordable housing.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Chair: It being 11:35 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will now rise.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

Good night, everybody.

(The House adjourned at 11:36 p.m.)

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