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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 29, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), 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. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: 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. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I request that it be carried on division.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Richard Cannings moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour, once again, to rise to speak to this small but mighty bill, Bill S-222. It would require the minister of public works and government services to consider the environmental benefits of building materials when building federal infrastructure.

This bill has come a long way to get to this point. Today, we begin third reading with a real chance of seeing this bill become law in the coming days. I am very encouraged by the unanimous support that Bill S-222 has received here in this House at second read-

ing and in committee, where it was passed and returned here without amendment.

I would like to thank retired senator Diane Griffin for sponsoring this bill in the other place in this Parliament. It began its life as my private member's bill, Bill C-354, in the 42nd Parliament. It passed through the House in that Parliament but died an unfortunate and unnecessary death in the Senate. It was an innocent bystander of some other political manoeuvring. I will mention as well that an earlier version of this bill, one more specifically targeted at wood alone, was tabled by Gérard Asselin, a member of the Bloc Québécois, in 2010 as Bill C-429.

It has been a long and tortuous path to get to this place here today. I am really looking forward to seeing this bill become law at last.

One thing I have not mentioned in my previous speeches on this bill is the role that Natural Resources Canada officials played in helping move this bill forward in the 42nd Parliament. I want to mention in particular the efforts by Sandra Schwartz, who helped amend the bill and focus it on the environmental benefits of building materials.

I would like to concentrate my comments today on the testimony we heard at committee on Bill S-222.

One of the witnesses in the hearings was from the Quebec Forest Industry Council. They pointed out three ways that forest products can help decarbonize construction. The most obvious of these is the fact that long-lasting wood products store carbon that was taken out of the atmosphere as the trees were growing.

The second is that the new trees that replace the trees that were harvested continue to store carbon throughout their lives. This is a more complicated calculation that must take into account the full life-cycle analysis of harvest and production. The QFIC has asked that such life-cycle analyses be developed by the federal government. It is my understanding that those analyses are being developed. They have been developed for other building products but are being developed for wood products.

The third is the fact that forest products can help decarbonize construction because there is such a huge potential for growth in the use of these products. Only 5% of large buildings use wood as a primary component, so increasing that percentage would have an increasing beneficial effect.

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Both the International Association of Fire Fighters and the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs testified as well before committee. Firefighters are naturally concerned about the safety aspects of building construction in Canada, as they are the ones who literally put their lives on the line to fight fires within these buildings.

As building codes change to include new advances in mass timber construction, firefighters ask that their safety be an added objective in those new codes. I can add here the assurance from other committee testimony that mass timber construction has been shown to be as safe as or safer than standard concrete and steel structures after testing by the National Research Council and other agencies. Government officials pointed out that the procedures asked for by the bill are generally in place in government policy or are in the process of implementation, including the life-cycle analysis of environmental impacts of various building materials.

• (1110)

There is a real sense of urgency in the forest industry for any policy changes that would help that sector produce more jobs and create more wealth within our rural communities, all in the face of a reduced harvest. This bill would do that. By increasing the government procurement of mass timber products, it would increase the domestic markets for our lumber and create new jobs for turning that lumber into long-lasting mass timber beams and panels. We lead the North American mass timber industry, but it is still a small sector and needs careful attention or we will lose that lead very quickly.

Structurelam, the pioneer company in mass timber in North America, based in my hometown of Penticton, has recently been forced to restructure and sell its assets because of an unfortunate contract disagreement with Walmart. Hopefully, it will remain in Canada and regain its strength as the leading proponent of engineered wood on the continent. However, its story is a reminder that the sector is in a vulnerable position, still open to growing pains. A bill promoting government procurement could provide significant benefits at a critical juncture in the growth of the industry.

I spent much of last week in Washington, D.C., talking to American legislators about international trade between Canada and the United States. One of the big issues there obviously is the softwood lumber disagreement. The wonderful thing about mass timber is that not only is it beautiful and safe and not only does it create new jobs, but it can be exported to the United States without facing the illegal tariffs we have under softwood lumber. This bill would help create domestic markets so our mills that create two-by-fours and two-by-sixes will have more domestic markets, allowing them to grow and keep going in the face of this dispute, which has really harmed mills across the country.

I have to remind everyone that, while I and others have concentrated on wood products in this debate, the bill is open to any materials that provide environmental benefits. I met repeatedly with the cement industry and heard of its efforts to decarbonize the concrete that makes up so much of our infrastructure today. The cement industry believes it can be competitive with forest products in many cases in these full life-cycle analyses on environmental benefits. I commend those efforts and would simply say that this is what I hope to accomplish with this bill.

Buildings contribute up to 40% of our greenhouse gas emissions, and we must take all steps to reduce those emissions. Whether those reductions are achieved through the use of mass timber, new decarbonized concrete products or other sustainable products is not important. What is important is that we act quickly to change the way we construct buildings as part of our existential efforts to fight climate change.

Bill S-222 would be a step in that direction. I hope that today we will see continued support so that this bill can become law at last and create beautiful, safe and environmentally friendly buildings across this country, and support industry and mills across this country.

After unanimous support at second reading and at committee, we have the opportunity today to end debate and see this bill become law within a day or two. I hope that all other parties will allow debate to collapse so we can get to a vote quickly. I do not know why any party would want to prolong this process.

I thank everyone here for their support of Bill S-222 and look forward to a short and positive debate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing that has been underestimated is public awareness. I think a great deal of education could be espoused by making more people aware of the degree to which wood is making a comeback as a building product. We are now seeing skyscrapers being built with wood. Most people would be of the mindset that we require metal or steel to build anything above six or seven stories. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts with regard to the way that wood is making a comeback in that industry.

• (1115)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Winnipeg North for that comment, because this is really what is at the heart of this bill. It is not forcing the government to pick and choose winners or losers. What it is aimed at doing, which has been its aim from the start, is shining a light on wood to say that we have been building with concrete and steel for decades and centuries, so let us look at wood. To do that, we need education. We need to not only educate the public to realize that this is a possibility, but also educate architects, engineers and construction people on the benefits and the how-to of building large buildings and infrastructure with wood.

Private Members' Business

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, during his speech, spoke about a trip to Washington last week. The forestry industry has been reeling from the softwood lumber dispute between the United States and Canada. Perhaps the member could provide an update to the House about some of the discussions he had and the work he did in order to resolve this dispute.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I would really like to thank the member for the opportunity to comment on that. It is very important that Canadian legislators go to Washington, and anywhere in the United States, to put forward our case on softwood lumber. In their laws, the Americans have the right for the wood industry to put forward complaints about how international trade occurs, but there is no mechanism, for instance, for American home builders to be third parties to those complaints in the courts of the United States. We put forward that case. We spoke to American home builders. We spoke to legislators.

It is unfortunate that it seems the way the American timber industry is handling this is that it knows that, if it brings forward complaints, it will always lose to Canada before tribunals and courts. However, in the intervening years that those tribunals take, we lose mills. It almost seems that this is the aim of the United States, and that is precisely the case I brought up when speaking to the U.S. trade representative and other legislators in Washington.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to hear that we will finally be able to make the use of wood a priority is music to my ears.

I was around during the forestry crisis in Quebec back in the 2000s. After the decision to go green, it became clear how little information about the use of wood had reached insurers, schools and future engineers and architects.

Quebec has had a proven track record for more than a decade. In my colleague's opinion, is it not high time Canada passed this bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, it is past high time for this bill to be adopted. Quebec brought forward the wood charter many years ago. British Columbia brought in its Wood First Act. This is the kind of bill we need in the federal world to push for federal infrastructure to be built with wood and other environmentally friendly products so we can fight climate change, support the forest industry and have beautiful, safe buildings that will last for centuries.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not the first time I have had the opportunity to express some thoughts in regard to Bill S-222. In fact, it is an issue that has been debated for quite a while here in Ottawa. What surprises me, at least in part, is the fact that we have not ultimately seen its passage. As the member has referenced, this bill has been other bills in the past, and there does seem to be a fairly wide base of support for what the bill is actually talking about.

I think we constantly underestimate the true value of our wood products here in Canada, which can be broken down into different areas. The area that seems to get a great deal of attention is soft-

wood, the trading that takes place between Canada and the United States, and how the wood barons from the States want to upset the apple cart, believing that, by doing so, their own specific industry will benefit. However, that has proven not to be the case, and it is a thorn in the side that has caused a great deal of hardship here in Canada and, I would suggest, also in the United States. I appreciated the question posed to the member in regard to it, because dealing with wood tariffs and the trade-related issues and the impact they have on the industry here is an ongoing issue in terms of production and harvesting of wood, as well as impacts on the consumer in the United States who wants to be able to have Canadian wood to use in building homes and so forth. I just want to start off by recognizing the fact that this is still there and continues to be a thorn. As the Minister of Finance and the Minister of International Trade will tell us, what is important in dealing with that issue is that we make sure we get the right deal, a fair deal for Canada, and that we do what we can as a government to minimize the cost. There is significant cost related to companies and job losses and so forth in Canada when these types of trade issues surface, and it is indeed unfortunate.

When we think of timber buildings or timber, most people would be quite surprised not only to find the degree to which wood is better for the economy in many different ways, and for our environment, but also that it is something we can use in the construction of large buildings. In the late 1980s, I remember going downstairs in a house I had purchased and finding out it had a wood foundation. That was quite a surprise for me. I had always thought the foundation would be made of concrete. Then, after investigating the matter, I found that, in the late 1980s, people were talking about the insulating factor and the structure of the wood being more than adequate in terms of longevity and the life of the home. Ever since, I have been very much open to the idea of how we could better utilize wood.

The member spoke of it from an industry point of view, and there is no doubt that Canada is very well positioned in this industry. I am not sure we rank number one, but we would definitely be in the top three, possibly second. I think it is between Canada and the United States. However, wood harvesting is a strong, healthy industry, and there are multiple players, both advocating and ensuring that we have an ongoing stock of trees into the future. That is something critically important.

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● (1120)

When we look at timber buildings now, my understanding is that, more and more, we are starting to see them built higher than 10 floors. The record is probably somewhere between 14 and 20 floors; I do not know offhand. However, I know that, in speaking to the legislation in the past, I have made reference to a couple of the buildings. If one had the opportunity to take a look at the construction and see some of these towers of timber, they would be quite impressed by their strength and the tonnage that can be held by the construction of these buildings. They are becoming more and more popular. I think that, in the last decade or so, we have seen a growth in that industry that is fairly impressive. In fact, I was looking at one story that made a comment in regard to how, in the city of Toronto, a number of the skyscrapers, condominiums and so forth, are being made of timber. That is why I really believe this would expand opportunities.

Over the weekend, Winnipeg hosted the 2023 Skills Canada National Competition. Skills Canada does a fantastic job of bringing young people who have skills and are working in the trades to the city of Winnipeg, where there were literally thousands of students who attended in the convention centre. They got a sense of the degree to which those skills are there and are very real, producing jobs into the future. One would need to look only at the carpentry area and some of the construction being done with that component. I think there were somewhere in the neighbourhood of 45 different skill sets. Many of them are related to wood products and construction. Organizations directly and indirectly benefit from the development of that particular industry.

This morning, my colleague made reference to forest fires in her area, and there are forest fires virtually throughout the country. We all need to be concerned about that. It raises the environmental issues. It is an issue of stewardship and making sure that, as much as possible, we are minimizing the negative impacts on our environment and expanding where we can in industries that make us that much healthier as a nation.

I would suggest that, through the passage of the bill, we would see the promotion of timber and wood in construction areas, with the federal government playing a role; it could contribute to ensuring that the industry continues to grow, and that is one of the reasons I had posed the question to the member opposite in regard to public awareness. I really and truly do not believe that the public as a whole is aware of the fact that skyscrapers nowadays can, in fact, be built using wood products, that there is a surge taking place, and that it is becoming more common to hear of buildings six storeys or more being built primarily with wood.

I think, when we take a look into the future of the growth of our country, whether industrial, commercial or residential, the demand for wood is going to continue to increase. It is going to be important that the federal government work with the provinces, territories and indigenous leaders in ensuring that this is an industry that does well into the future because of the many positive environmental reasons, plus the creation of jobs and so forth. There are all sorts of opportunities there, and I am glad to see that the bill is once again before the House. I believe, as I am sure all members do, that it will pass through, and I look forward to it ultimately becoming law.

● (1125)

The Deputy Speaker: I am glad that the member did mention the forest fires back home. In my old constituency of Argyle-Barrington, a number of people have been shipped away, not knowing if they can go back home. I know that people in the riding of Halifax West are going through the same thing; thousands of people have been sent away, evacuated from the area. Of course, our thoughts and prayers are with them, and we hope their homes are there when they go back.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

● (1130)

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to reflect the sentiments you just expressed to our friends and neighbours in Nova Scotia and throughout the country who are continuing to battle forest fires. I thank our first responders and firefighters and their families for their huge sacrifice in making this recovery possible, getting these fires under control and protecting the good people of our region.

I rise today to speak to Bill S-222, which is regarding the use of wood, the increase in the use of wood and the effective use of wood in achieving our country's objectives. Any time we have the opportunity to discuss expanding the use of Canada's natural resources and Canada's forestry, I am passionate about it, because I think it is so important.

This is somewhat personal to me, because the region I represent has a lot of forestry-based industries. In fact, my dad worked for over 50 years in a pulp and paper mill in Nackawic, the little community I grew up in. In 1991, Nackawic was named Canada's forest capital. In fact, it may have been recognized as the forest capital of the world. It is the home of the world's largest axe, which is still there today, not far from where my office is located.

Any time forestry issues come up, I am going to be listening quite intently. My family and my upbringing were very positively affected because of the forest industry and the good-paying jobs it afforded those who worked in that industry. As well, my father-in-law was a private woodlot owner and worked in the woods, cutting wood, for years. That was not far from me, actually, in the neighbouring district of N.B. Southwest. Forestry is very related to my family personally, so any time we can talk about the increased use of Canadian goods, Canadian natural resources and Canadian forest products, I get excited about that.

The bill before us would provide an opportunity for the increased utilization of a renewable resource, which is our forest. Canada is blessed with an abundant supply of incredible forests across our vast country, and with that abundance, I think we obviously need to utilize it to benefit our people in a way that is responsible and will be sustainable for generations of forestry workers to come.

The reforestation practices that are being developed by both private sector and others is incredible. I have toured some of the tree nurseries in my region and the province, and the innovation, technology and incredible developments that are happening related to tree planting, reforestation and our tree nurseries are unbelievable. In Juniper, there is a large tree nursery operation, and there are others throughout the province.

Every time we can put another tree in the ground, we are doing the planet a huge favour. I think it is important that we continue to invest in proper reforestation, so that there will be an industry in the future that is very much sustainable. Those who are in that sector recognize the importance of that, as well as of responsibly harvesting and replanting.

With that in mind, I think we need to do everything we can as Canadians and as a government to promote Canadian natural resources, including our forest and wood products. We have some of the best wood products in the world, if not the best. I may be a bit partial, but I think they are the best; they are amazing, resilient wood products. Our craftsmen and those who work in the sector produce incredible goods with them.

It is amazing what has happened within the forestry sector as well. It has innovated, developed and transitioned. The mill in my hometown used to be a producer of newsprint, and then it went into magazine print. Of course, it was into Kodak finishing print, back when they used to print pictures off, which seems like a long time ago, and the mill used to make the high-quality type of finished paper. However, it had to go through an entire innovation, and now that same mill is producing wood-fibre product that is being turned into clothing. It is really remarkable, the innovation that has gone on to be able to be a sustainable industry and continue to provide good jobs throughout our region, let alone all the spinoffs that come from the forestry workers.

• (1135)

However, there are some areas that definitely need to continue to be addressed within forestry-related products. We have an ongoing softwood lumber tax issue that needs to be a priority for this government of the utmost importance. It directly affects mills in my region, which are being put at a definite competitive disadvantage. We need this to move up the chain of priorities, so that whether they are on the west coast, in British Columbia, or the east coast, in New Brunswick and throughout the Maritimes, these mills, their products and this industry are being stood up for. I believe this bill is one step toward doing that, to make sure we get more Canadian wood products into increasing numbers of markets and better utilization of those wood products even within our own country. That will be a good development.

What we also must ensure is that internationally we are doing everything we can to stand up for our natural resource sector in this country. That includes forests, but it also includes our oil and gas. It includes our other energy. It includes smelting and aluminum. It includes it all. Canada has great resources, and we need to make sure that the resource sector is stood up for, not apologized for and not talked down.

We have a great news story to tell when it comes to Canada's natural resources. It is time that all of us, as representatives of this country, stood up for our own resource sector, which has provided unbelievably good jobs for millions of Canadians from coast to coast. I am hoping that this bill, Bill S-222, will help lead to that by talking about increasing the utilization of wood products.

I think that in our good pursuits, if we do things more environmentally responsibly and sustainably, that is all good, but we can do that while continuing to develop our natural resources. Canada

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has the best-regulated sectors in the world relating to forestry, natural resource development, mining and energy extraction. That is nothing to apologize for, nothing to run from, but something to trumpet and something to talk about loudly and clearly and be enthused about.

When a sector is hurting, governments need to step up to the plate and say that they are standing and they have our backs because they know Canadians are relying on these sectors for their livelihoods and their employment.

I encourage the government to not only implement this bill and get it in place but expand the emphasis on Canadian natural resources, including our forestry sector, our oil and gas sectors and our mining sectors. That means every type of natural resource development. One thing is for sure: In a time of global economic insecurity and instability, the time for increased Canadian self-reliance is now. The time for increased Canadian natural resources and energy on the global markets is now. The time the world is looking for more Canadian food and natural resource products is now. This is not the time to retreat, back away and apologize. This is a time to step up and say we are here to make a difference. Canada can fill the void and the vacuum in the world with the best-produced products in the world.

I am thankful to all those who work in the forestry sector, including my dad, who retired after 50 years of carrying a bucket to a mill. I thank them for doing what they are doing in the forestry sector. I thank them for the innovation that is happening in that sector. Together, we can do some great things for Canada by developing our natural resources.

Thanks for bringing forward this bill. We look forward to doing whatever we can to see it get through.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate speech concerning Bill S-222.

It was interesting to see some enthusiasm, which is exactly what we want to see when it comes to wood construction. Unfortunately, we see nothing of the kind, especially from the government over there. I would even add that previous governments were no different, because I never saw past Conservative governments being any more proactive or enthusiastic about wood construction either.

Perhaps my colleague could convince me otherwise. I would like to give him the opportunity to speak to what past Conservative governments have done to promote the use of wood in construction.

The Deputy Speaker: It is not question and comment time. It is the turn of the hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères to speak.

The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

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Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I am so used to dealing with questions that I forgot that it was time for my speech. Thank you for the opportunity to give my speech.

However, I think what I just said is still relevant to any speech. Maybe my colleague could answer that question at another time.

Anyway, we are discussing Bill S-222. The “S” means that the bill originated in the Senate. Unelected representatives are making a contribution to the debate by introducing the bill that is before us. Quebec got rid of its version of the Senate. Eventually, at the federal level, some thought will need to be given to what to do with the Senate, with this group of people who do not represent the population, but who are simply appointed by the sitting Prime Minister. The very concept is hard to explain.

Let me get back to Bill S-222, which seeks to ensure that the government considers the benefits of wood in developing its requirements before launching calls for tender. That is not a bad thing. It is actually a good thing, because it means that there is a willingness to do more for wood construction. We cannot be against that. That is why the Bloc Québécois intends to support Bill S-222.

However, we think that this bill lacks ambition. It could have gone further. It could have pushed harder. That said, that may be just what Bill S-222 and its sponsor intended, namely to do something that is not overly ambitious and that does not go too far so that it can get the approval of the government, which itself does not have much ambition for wood or the forest industry in Quebec. Maybe the sponsor thought that a bill that does not go too far would stand a better chance of being supported by the Liberals.

That is too bad, because we in the Bloc Québécois have raised this issue in the past. In 2010, Bill C-249 was tabled by Gérard Asselin, the former member for Manicouagan, a heavily forested riding. He was keenly aware of the reality and needs of the forest industry and the need to look to the future on this issue. In 2014, the Bloc Québécois tried again with Bill C-574, tabled by Claude Patry, the former member for Jonquière—Alma. He had initially been elected as an NDP member, but he came to realize that that party did not represent Quebec, so he decided to join the Bloc Québécois. I should note that Jonquière—Alma is also a heavily forested region.

Those two MPs understood Quebec, its needs and the importance of pushing harder for wood construction. The big difference between Bill S-222 and the Bloc Québécois bills is the use of different terms to promote wood construction. The Bloc bills speak of “giv[ing] preference to” the use of wood, whereas Bill S-222 speaks of “consider[ing]” wood’s comparative advantages. Of course, “considering” is fine, but “giving preference to” is just that much stronger.

That is what we would have liked to see in this bill, and we will be pushing for it if the bill returns to the House for third reading. We are very hopeful that this bill will get unanimous support in the House. There is hope that will happen. I have yet to hear from all my colleagues on that point, but it would be an encouraging sign for Quebec’s forestry industry, which, unfortunately, does not receive sufficient support from the federal government.

It seems like the federal government in Ottawa only has eyes for oil. Whenever oil comes up, dollar signs are not far away. The oil industry gets cheques and subsidies to the tune of billions of dollars. However, when it comes to the forestry industry, it is a whole other story. The government finds it really tough to provide the support that Quebec’s forestry industry needs. Often, it gives our forestry industry peanuts, while sending hundreds of millions of dollars across the country, with a bit going to British Columbia and a bit going to eastern Canada.

One year, I thought I was hallucinating, because I read that it was offering financial assistance to deal with spruce budworm. I thought it was great that the government was announcing financial assistance for that in its budget, but then I realized it was only for eastern Canada and British Columbia. There was not a cent for Quebec. It was as if there were no forests in Quebec, as if Quebec’s forestry industry did not exist.

• (1140)

That basically shows us what this government’s priority is, that is, everything but Quebec. That about sums it up. Quebec is more advanced than Canada when it comes to wood. Of course, we welcome and support Canadian initiatives like this bill, but Quebec already has its own policy for incorporating wood into construction. It is a useful policy that perhaps the Canadian government should learn from. The aim of the policy is to ensure that wood is systematically incorporated into all new buildings whenever possible.

Why should wood be used in construction? I think that it is an essential element, a crucial element. In fact, the Quebec Construction Code was actually amended in 2010 and 2015 to allow the construction of six-storey wooden buildings. Today, the Régie du bâtiment du Québec, Quebec’s building authority, even allows for buildings with up to 12 floors under certain conditions. A specific application must be submitted, and it must demonstrate that this would be feasible and that it would be done safely. In short, builders can construct wooden buildings up to 12 stories tall. That is significant.

What we know is that about 80% of all commercial, industrial and institutional buildings could be built of wood. Almost everything could be built of wood. We know that residential wood construction is already quite strong. In that respect, not much promotion is needed even though, at times, construction that could be done in wood is not.

For Quebec, forests are more than trees. They are much more than that. In fact, they are part of our identity, part of who we are. They are part of our territory, of our history. They are part of the collective imagination in Quebec.

For hundreds of years, as we know, the fabled settlers were farmers in the summer and lumberjacks in the winter. In our collective imagination, the forest is inseparable from Quebec’s identity. In a way, it goes much further than the famous two-by-four. Two-by-fours are interesting because they symbolize construction itself, but much more can be done. In the past, there was the craze surrounding newsprint, which was the main wood product for a long time. Today, that needs to be rethought and other stronger and more relevant products need to be found going forward.

The forest in Quebec is our past and our present, but it is also our future. Unfortunately, it is being neglected. I repeat: it is being neglected by the Canadian government, the federal government, for whom it is not a priority. Its priority is oil, and that shows in the investments.

Obviously, in Quebec, we are proud of our forests and we would like to be able to promote them more. Today, there is more and more talk about buying local and short distribution channels, for example. That is precisely it. Wood is taken from Quebec and is used in construction in Quebec. Is that not incredible? Jobs are created in the regions of Quebec with that wood. Is that not incredible? That is all our regions are asking for: the ability to develop our forests.

Unlike oil, wood is a renewable resource. The use of wood is environmentally friendly. When construction uses steel or concrete, for example, what happens? Greenhouse gases are emitted. When construction uses wood, the carbon is captured. The opposite happens. In fact, it is much better. It is magical in a way.

It is far more magical than those facilities receiving millions, not to say billions, of dollars in subsidies from the federal government for carbon capture and sequestration. We do not know whether it has been scientifically proven or whether anything will come of it. We know that there is one thing that works: timber construction. Why not take that direction? One cubic metre of wood captures one tonne of CO₂, which is a pretty big amount.

While Canada is pumping billions of dollars into oil, I encourage everyone to support our timber industry for a strong Quebec, a green Quebec, a Quebec that is proud of its forests, that does not neglect them, that takes care of them and that takes care of the planet.

I hope that the House will pass Bill S-222. The government has been taking a hands-off approach, in particular by allowing Resolute Forest Products to be bought out by Chinese interests. It needs to adopt a policy that will allow us to take care of our forests and promote our products, and it needs to invest the money needed to make that work.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this Senate bill.

First, I would just like to point out that the Conservative member who spoke earlier talked about how much the Conservatives support the bill. Of course, they could really show that support by ensuring that it receives speedy passage to move on to the next stage, instead of prolonging debate on the matter.

Canada's built environment is a significant contributor to GHG emissions, with more than 25% of GHGs coming from the construction, use and maintenance of residential, commercial and institutional buildings. The embodied carbon is the GHG emission arising from the manufacturing, transportation, installation, maintenance and disposal of building materials from building construction. It is responsible for 10% of all energy-related emissions.

Private Members' Business

In 2019, the World Green Building Council called for a 40% reduction in embodied carbon by 2030. To ensure that Canada meets its GHG reduction commitments, both energy use and carbon emissions need to be reduced simultaneously. This bill puts into law that, for most federal construction, GHG reduction must be a part of the planning process. It is the smart thing to do, and it is the right thing to do. Currently, this is only an internal federal policy.

Wood is one of the best materials for reducing the carbon footprint in buildings. The low embodied carbon of wood products stems from the fact that the manufacturing process is not energy-intensive, because it relies predominantly on electricity and uses long-lasting forest products that have sequestered carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Great advances have been made in tall wood construction. It is now possible to build more buildings in a safe, ecologically sensitive way than in past construction. These new technologies offer an obvious opportunity to increase the use of wood in building and thus support the forest sector in Canada, which has been beset by difficulties caused by American tariffs through the softwood lumber dispute, the pine beetle epidemic in British Columbia, catastrophic forest fires and reduced fibre supply because of past harvests.

As the largest producer in Canada, the federal government could give this sector a much-needed boost by using this cutting-edge technology at home. If passed, this bill would require the Department of Public Works to consider any potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and any other environmental benefits when developing requirements for the construction, maintenance and repair of federal buildings.

In 2009, B.C. passed the Wood First Act, which aims to “facilitate a culture of wood by requiring the use of wood as the primary building material in all new provincially funded buildings”. In 2013, Quebec adopted the Wood Charter, which requires all builders working on projects financed in whole or in part by the provincial government to consider wood in their construction plans; it also requires project managers to prove that they have calculated the greenhouse gas emissions of wood versus other materials in the pre-project stage.

Different versions of this private member's bill were introduced in past Parliaments, and they were supported by the NDP. Early versions of the bill explicitly asked the minister to consider using wood. However, that text was amended in the 42nd Parliament to direct the minister to consider any reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and any other environmental benefits instead; it may also allow the use of wood or any other thing, including a material, product or sustainable resource that achieves such benefits.

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That bill, Bill C-354 passed in the House but died in the Senate at the end of that Parliament. It was introduced as a Senate bill in this Parliament. This version of the private member's bill is inspired by new developments in wood construction technology. Large buildings constructed with mass timber can be built quickly. They are also cost-competitive, and they meet fire safety requirements.

• (1150)

Advances in wood construction technology have demonstrated that large buildings and other infrastructures can be built with wood. Recently, the University of British Columbia constructed the Brock Commons student residence; it is the world's tallest wood building, at 18 storeys. Toronto's George Brown College is currently building Limberlost Place, a 10-storey mass timber structure, at its Waterfront Campus; this will be the first institutional building of its kind in Ontario.

In 2014, the Cree community of Mistissini, Quebec, opened the Mistissini Bridge, a 160-metre-long bridge with semicontinuous arches made of glue-laminated wood beams. It is one of the largest wooden structures in Canada, and it won two national awards at the 2016 Canadian Consulting Engineering Awards.

Canadian companies lead the mass timber sector in North America, with production plants in B.C., Ontario and Quebec. Because wood has lower embodied carbon than most building materials do, this bill offers us the opportunity to support innovation in the forestry sector while, at the same time, helping the Government of Canada to meet its GHG emission reduction targets. This is especially the case in these difficult times, because the sector faces large duties from the U.S.

Given the developments in the technology, this idea is one that is being used more and more around the world. It makes sense to use this technology more at home. In budget 2017, the government provided Natural Resources Canada with \$39.8 million over four years, starting in 2018-19, to support projects and activities that increase the use of wood as a greener substitute material in infrastructure projects.

Bringing this forward is our way to call on the government to continue to support this activity through government procurement. It is time for us to move forward. This bill has been around and through the block a number of times. I repeat, as I stated at the beginning of my speech, that if the Conservatives say they support moving forward with this bill, then they should show it with actions and stop the delaying tactics. Let us get on with it, get it done, support the industry and do what is good for the environment. That is the path forward.

• (1155)

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be standing up today. I want to thank the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, my neighbour, for bringing this bill forward. I certainly do support the forestry sector, which is not only significant for Canada; it is very significant for Kootenay—Columbia. In fact, the forestry sector is 10% of the workforce in Kootenay. The only industry that is bigger is mining and that is metallurgical coal. Other than that, forestry is number two.

I just want to go through some of the sawmills that are in the Kootenays, to show the gravity of how large this is and how supportive we are in using wood for building, whether for housing, commercial buildings or industrial buildings.

For example, in Elko, we have a Canfor mill. It produces spruce, pine and fir dimensional lumber and it uses red lumber in other specialty products.

In Castlegar, we have Interfor, which produces high-quality dimensional lumber.

We have the Radium Hot Springs Canfor mill in Radium. It plays a large role in global operations in high-value forest products. The mill produces spruce, pine and fir dimensional lumber and red as well.

There is Interfor in Grand Forks, which produces dimensional lumber.

There is Downie Timber Selkirk, which is huge in Revelstoke. It produces specialty products like, for example, poles.

There is Kalesnikoff. I am going to come back to Kalesnikoff because I want to talk about that sawmill in South Slokan. It is a family-owned business for four generations, building standard dimensional homes, with up to 110,000 square feet of mass timber facility.

Then we have Canfor in Wynndel, which was owned by the Wigen family and was sold recently. It was Wynndel Box and Lumber and WynnWood.

In Galloway, we have the Galloway Lumber Co. It produces lumber for North America and for Japan.

There is Porcupine Wood Products in Salmo, which produces dimensional lumber from second-growth western cedar logs.

There is J.H. Huscroft. I am going to come back to J.H. Huscroft as well. That is from Creston and Erickson. It is a family-owned business and has been since the 1920s.

There is Joe Kozek Sawmills in Revelstoke. He works with red cedar, hemlock, spruce, pine, Douglas fir and more.

There is also the McDonald Ranch and Lumber company in Grasmere. I am going to come back to that as well. People have done some very interesting projects there.

There is the Bear Lumber company in Cranbrook.

There is North Star Hardware and Building Supplies in Invermere. There is Harrop Procter Forest Products; and Harrop is just outside of Nelson. There is the Greenslide Cattle Co. in Revelstoke. There is the Take to Heart Specialty Wood Products in Revelstoke as well.

What is important is what the sawmill owners and loggers and anybody involved in the forestry sector have done. They are getting to the point where they are specialty sawmills. They are not just a mill that takes all the wood. They actually separate it and sort the logs. They are trying to get the right log to the right mill where it can be produced to build and to be able to be more efficient because of the cost and the expense of staying in business.

For example, now, using laminate lumber, there has been a lot of talk about how we can use wood products to build 10-plus-storey buildings. For example, the Kalesnikoff sawmill in South Slovan uses glulam, which is a system where the operators glue wood together and it is actually as strong as steel and concrete. That is how companies are able to build these taller buildings. They also use a CLT, which is a cross-laminated timber, and that is for walls and roofing. Therefore, these new processes have given sawmill operators the ability to manufacture specialty wood to be able to build to the strength that is required for what was exclusively for concrete, but now to be able to use lumber.

Also, with respect to Kalesnikoff, the owner is a fellow named Ken Kalesnikoff, who is a good friend. He is a fourth-generation sawmill owner and he said to me one time, "Let me tell you about sawmills, cutting wood and tree lots. We have been doing this for four generations and I want my children, their children and children beyond to be able to do the same thing."

● (1200)

When it comes to the environment, planting trees and so forth, he and his company know they have to sustain the environment, and they are building forests for future generations. Their team strives for best practices to ensure renewable resources flourish as much today as they will tomorrow because they understand that this is their business. They are professionals in logging and reforestation. As an example of reforestation, 445,135 seedlings and 360 hectares of forest have been planted. That is the environment policy of owners such as Kalesnikoff, Huscroft or Glen McDonald at his place in Grasmere.

I will talk a bit about one other company, Spearhead, in Nelson. It has more architects than builders. It builds prefabricated large buildings that are numbered, so it is like putting Lego together. They are absolutely perfect because they are all built by architects who ensure that they are perfect. That is a very unique business just outside of Nelson. We helped it bring in some specialty equipment and specialists from Europe to help set up that equipment.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change) moved that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the

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Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill S-5, strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act.

Due to the vital work of parliamentarians, Bill S-5 has progressed steadily and it is now a stronger bill because of the parliamentary process and remarkable collaboration among partners, stakeholders and the public.

The government supports this bill and urges members in both chambers to pass it. The bill has reached a critical juncture. We must now turn our attention to ensuring the bill, as amended, receives royal assent without delay so that the government can get on with the very important work of implementing it in co-operation with partners, stakeholders and the public.

With this goal in mind, we wish to address some concerns raised during debates over the last couple of weeks. In particular, I refer to comments regarding the scope of information-gathering powers under CEPA, as well as the framework for assessing new living organisms under part 6 of the act.

The hon. member for Victoria spoke at length about tailings ponds and moved an amendment at report stage to restore amendments adopted in the other place that added explicit references to hydraulic fracturing and tailings ponds to the non-exhaustive list of information that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change can compel.

The ENVI committee reversed this amendment, removing the explicit references to hydraulic fracturing and tailings ponds, and the government was supportive. I will briefly explain the rationale behind the government's initial position on that change and then explain why the government ultimately decided to support the hon. member for Victoria's motion to reinstate the language regarding hydraulic fracturing and tailings ponds.

Section 46 of CEPA, the provision in question, gives the minister broad authority to compel others to provide information about substances and activities for various purposes, such as conducting research, creating an inventory of data, issuing guidelines, and assessing and reporting on the state of the environment. This is a very broad information-gathering authority and it provides the basis for the department's national pollutant release inventory, NPRI.

The NPRI tracks over 320 pollutants from over 7,000 facilities across Canada, specifically in relation to tailings and waste rock. Facilities must report the quantity and concentration of NPRI substances disposed of in tailings or waste rock management areas on site, or sent to another facility for disposal in such areas.

Section 46 is already being used to compel persons to report information regarding the use of tailings ponds, and Environment and Climate Change Canada then publicly reports this information through the NPRI.

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With respect to hydraulic fracturing, the NPRI also captures underground releases from certain in situ oil sands operations and the department provides guidance to facilities on how to report substances that are injected underground.

As introduced, Bill S-5 proposed to broaden the information-gathering power in section 46 by adding a new paragraph directed at activities that may contribute to pollution. Without question, such activities would include hydraulic fracturing and the use of tailings ponds, so adding additional explicit references to tailings ponds and hydraulic fracturing under section 46 of CEPA was not necessary for the minister to compel, collect and report information on these activities. I realize this is really getting in the weeds.

That said, recent events in Alberta underscore the importance of understanding the risks to the environment and human health from tailings ponds. Although adding specific references to hydraulic fracturing and tailings ponds to the bill would not, in and of itself, address the potential environmental and health risks associated with these activities, this change would make explicit that the government has the authority to compel, and does collect and report information related to tailings ponds. That is why this government supported the hon. member for Victoria's motion.

● (1205)

What else is this government doing to effectively reduce these risks?

Since the federal government was made aware of the seepage incident at the Kearl oil sands mine, we have been working to get to the bottom of it, support indigenous communities and collaborate on improving the reporting system for these kinds of incidents. We hear loud and clear the concerns being expressed by indigenous communities regarding the management of the tailings and the potential impacts on the local environment and communities. We have been in continuous contact with these folks.

In April, the minister sent letters to indigenous leaders about a new notification and monitoring working group, which would include the federal and provincial governments, indigenous communities and the Government of Northwest Territories, which is downstream. Northern indigenous communities will also be kept well informed and engaged. We are proposing a governance structure that includes co-chairs, with representation from the federal and provincial governments and indigenous communities. From the federal perspective, an enhanced communication protocol must be developed to improve notification at all steps in the notification process in cases of future environmental emergencies.

Environment and Climate Change Canada enforcement officials have also been very active on the ground. Just the other week, the department's enforcement branch opened up an investigation into a suspected contravention of subsection 36(3) of the Fisheries Act at Imperial Oil Limited's Kearl oil sands site. Subsection 36(3) of the Fisheries Act prohibits the deposit of a deleterious substance into water frequented by fish or in any place where the deleterious substance may enter such water.

Environment and Climate Change Canada enforcement officers and environmental emergencies officers have carried out inspections at the site since they became aware of the incident on Febru-

ary 7, 2023. In addition to the investigation, officers will continue to monitor the mitigation measures taken by Imperial Oil Limited to prevent impacts to fish-bearing water, as required by the Fisheries Act direction issued by Environment and Climate Change Canada enforcement on March 10, 2023.

This brings me to a very important point: Tailings ponds and, indeed, many other activities that pose risks to environmental or human health are not necessarily issues that can be exclusively addressed under CEPA. While CEPA is a large act that deals with many topics, it is not always the most appropriate act for addressing every issue or risk. In certain cases, it would be more efficient and effective to manage risks under another federal act that is best placed or specifically tailored for addressing those risks. It is for this reason that Bill S-5 proposes amendments that provide the flexibility to meet risk-management obligations under CEPA using other federal acts, including those for which another minister is responsible, like the Fisheries Act.

I wish to address concerns expressed by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands regarding the amendments to part 6 of the act and clarify a couple of things regarding the new proposed approach to public participation under this part.

Part 6 of the act deals with products of biotechnology, also known as living organisms, and provides for a robust framework for the assessment and management of risks associated with new living organisms. As introduced, Bill S-5 did not propose any amendments to this framework. However, thanks to the important contributions of stakeholders such as Nature Canada and others throughout the parliamentary process, amendments were adopted to part 6 that, if passed, would require that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and my colleague the Minister of Health consult with interested persons when assessing new living organisms that are vertebrate animals, such as AquaBounty and AquaAdvantage salmon, as well as other organisms that may be prescribed by regulation.

● (1210)

During the report stage debates, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands suggested that the term “interested persons” had a specific meaning, namely that it would preclude the participation of indigenous peoples, scientists and the public in the assessment process. That is not at all the case. Quite to the contrary, this amendment is intentionally broad to ensure that everyone can participate. In fact, “interested persons” is the exact same language in the provision of this bill that requires the Minister of Health and I to consult on the implementation framework for the right to a healthy environment.

Coming back to the amendments to part 6 adopted by the ENVI committee, there is also a requirement to publish a notice of consultation before undertaking the consultations themselves. This notice would be publicly accessible and would serve the purpose of allowing interested persons, including indigenous peoples, scientists and members of the public, to identify themselves so they can participate accordingly. This requirement to publish a notice of consultation was absent from the proposal moved by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. For that and other reasons, the government could not support it.

Lastly, on the topic of part 6, it is important to note that much of the act is implemented through regulations, specifically the new substances notification regulations for organisms, or NSNRO, a particular aspect of the regulations. These regulations set out the details of how new living organisms are assessed and managed.

In October of last year, the government published a discussion paper and launched consultations on the modernization of these regulations. The discussion paper highlighted themes of increasing openness and transparency, and responding to advances in science and technology. These are key components of this regulatory review exercise, and the new statutory requirement to consult under CEPA will be an important complement to this work.

I encourage stakeholders interested in the framework for assessing new living organisms under part 6 of CEPA to participate in the regulatory review process for the new substances notification regulations. After considering comments received, the government will make recommendations for amending the regulations and will invite additional feedback.

I would like to reiterate that the government appreciates the work of the members of the Senate ENEV and House ENVI committees to strengthen this bill and ensure that it will make a difference in the lives of Canadians. The government urges our colleagues in the other place to accept the amendments made by the elected officials in this chamber and send this bill to receive royal assent without delay. Only then can the government get to work putting these important changes into practice.

Once this bill comes into force, we will begin a range of regulatory and implementation initiatives. The two main initiatives will involve developing both the implementation framework for a right to a healthy environment and the plan of chemicals management priorities.

Within two years of coming into force, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change will develop an implementation framework with the Minister of Health to set out how the right to a healthy environment will be considered in the administration of CEPA. There will be opportunities for the public to participate in the development of the implementation framework, and progress on the framework's implementation will be documented annually in the CEPA annual report. We also need to develop and implement the plan of chemicals management priorities, also within two years of royal assent. Stakeholders and partners will be consulted as part of the plan's development.

Animal testing was a major theme throughout the parliamentary process. The government remains committed to taking steps toward

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replacing and reducing reliance on vertebrate animal testing. The government will continue to work with industry, academia and our international partners to develop and evaluate non-animal methods. Through Bill S-5, the plan of chemicals management priorities will include a strategy to promote the development and use of methods not involving the use of vertebrate animals.

● (1215)

Beyond these two key implementation deliverables, additional regulatory and implementation activities will be needed to operationalize remaining amendments, which will modernize Canada's approach to chemicals management. For example, regulations will need to be developed to define the properties and characteristics of the new subset of toxic substances that pose the highest risk. There will be opportunities for stakeholder input throughout the regulatory process.

The government will also work on developing policies and guidance for publishing and maintaining the watch-list and for facilitating a more open and transparent confidential business information regime. Similarly, policies and guidance will be developed to flesh out the process for the public to request the assessment of a substance. Finally, the government will continue to work on developing a broad labelling and supply chain transparency strategy, expected to be published later this year.

In closing, I urge all members of this House and the other place to vote for strengthened environmental protection and for a healthier Canada for all Canadians by supporting Bill S-5.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be participating in today's debate. I am also very pleased to see my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, again. I have a lot of respect and esteem for him. I will give him a moment to put his earpiece on properly so that he can hear the interpreters. Incidentally, I would like to thank them for doing such a great job.

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Before raising a substantive issue, I would like to point out that, in my opinion, the government has made a mistake. It is a logistical error, but it is annoying. We are here in the House to debate a bill on the environment, Bill S-5, on which the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development worked very hard. At the same time, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development is meeting to debate another issue. To my knowledge, this is the first time that an issue is being debated in the House and in committee by the same MPs. I think that this is an oversight on the part of the government House leader. I encourage him to be more careful in future.

My question for the hon. member is as follows. On January 30, in committee, the member and his party voted in favour of a motion moved by the Conservative member for Calgary Centre. The motion sought to withdraw an amendment that had been proposed by Senator McCallum. When the NDP presented its amendment here in the House two weeks ago, however, the Liberal Party voted in favour of it. That is the exact opposite of what it did in committee. Why take both sides on the same issue?

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his hard work and participation on Bill S-5 at the committee stage. We spent over 50 hours between the Senate and the ENVI committee studying this bill, so we did a thorough job. I compliment the hon. member on his contributions, which were frequent and very positive. For the most part we agreed.

The amendment to which he refers I spoke about extensively in my speech. The amendment related to tailings ponds and fracking was, I think, a happenstance of circumstances. We know there was an oil spill and seepage in northern Alberta that has caused heartache, worry and fear among indigenous communities. I think we as a committee wanted to highlight that and give it special attention. At the end of the day, those provisions were already covered under CEPA, but the committee, with that amendment, felt the need for emphasis. That is why we, in the end, went with that position.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the environment, there is often a huge difference between what should be done and what ends up being done. Bill S-5 is sort of symbolic that way, meaning that we are doing a little when we should be doing a lot more.

The Bloc Québécois, the Green Party and the NDP, which are other parties but can still contribute, wanted to add teeth to the bill so that it would have some clout and could make bigger and more beneficial changes to help the planet.

However, it appears that the Liberals' goal was to limit the scope of the bill, which I find disappointing. In its current position, the Liberal government knows full well that it can always count on the Conservatives' support when it wants to limit the environmental scope of certain bills. It also knows that, even when it is being extremely pro-oil, it can count on the NDP's support when it needs its budget to be adopted, along with its credits for oil companies.

Does the parliamentary secretary not realize that his government always sides with the oil companies? It is sad, because, in the end, the entire planet will have to pay the price.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member heard, but one of our Conservative colleagues just said that we had gone too far. That is an interesting contrast to his statement.

For the first time, we are introducing a right to a healthy environment. We are going to take our time. We are going to take the next 24 months to define that right and to define how it will be implemented. It will have teeth. It will help us better the environment for our kids, our grandkids and indigenous peoples.

In closing, I would add that the Bloc will be supporting the bill. We are very happy to hear that, because his colleague was very active and very collaborative, and made very good suggestions on improving the bill.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, rarely have I been so frequently referenced by a parliamentary secretary while bringing forward a bill, being Bill S-5, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, a bill with which I have decades of familiarity through the strange happenstance that I was in the Minister of Environment's office and worked on it before first reading in 1988. I will let that sink in for a minute.

I grieve the reality that this bill is weaker than what we brought forward in 1988, but let me turn quickly to the points that the parliamentary secretary made. I never asserted that the words "interested parties" would preclude the involvement of indigenous people or scientists. The amendment that I attempted to bring forward at report stage was to ensure that the opportunity to provide for relevant indigenous knowledge and scientific information was protected.

I will put it to the hon. parliamentary secretary that I did not claim that "interested parties" precluded indigenous peoples and scientific knowledge, but that it does not specifically include them, and "interested parties" in the jurisprudence usually means a party, such as a chemical company, that has a direct interest.

I would also like to put this to the hon. parliamentary secretary. When he says that part 6 of the act, which was essentially untouched over the last 20 years, dealing with genetically modified living organisms, in his words, has a "robust framework", could he explain how it is that Canada is the only country in the world to have approved genetically modified animals for human consumption?

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Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, if I reference the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands often, it is an indication of the deep respect that I have for her and the long time that I have known her as one of the foremost environmental activists in our country.

We are going to be consulting broadly on part 6, because we want to implement regulations that will have teeth and that will address some of the concerns about genetically modified organisms. In my speech, I referenced genetically modified salmon. This was raised at committee repeatedly. If a genetically modified organism escapes into the wild, it could literally pollute the gene pool of living organisms there.

With respect to indigenous people, I want to thank Senator McCallum, who happens to be from Manitoba, my home province. She really added so many important provisions that recognize the important role indigenous people play in our country in protecting the environment. UNDRIP is referenced; traditional knowledge is referenced, and those kinds of provisions are a great improvement in the bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my friend, for many years, has been a very strong advocate on the environmental file, in particular with regard to waterways. I know he was in charge of a press conference we just recently had in the city of Winnipeg, dealing with the Canada water agency, and I am wondering if he can provide his thoughts on how important that is to our country and to our city.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, CEPA and the Fisheries Act help protect our water, but the federal government needs to show more leadership on water, and I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, who repeatedly called for an independent departmental agency that would report directly to the minister, which we now call the Canada water agency. It would help to protect and manage our waterways, working with provinces, territories, indigenous governments and communities, and other stakeholders for time immemorial.

Canada is home to 20% of the world's fresh water, and we have to protect it.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said a few moments ago, I am very pleased to be participating in this debate.

As members know, since October, I have had the privilege of being the official opposition's shadow minister for climate change and environment. I am honoured by the confidence placed in me by the hon. member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition and our future prime minister. Of course, I intend to take this responsibility very seriously. In fact, this is essentially the first bill I have been able to devote 100% of my time to. I participated in almost every stage of the bill.

Climate change is real. Humans have an impact on the creation of climate change, which is why humans must find solutions. That is why we offered our full support to the committee, along with the government and the other political parties, to make sure that the bill

can be passed, balanced with the necessary political debate. Let me explain.

This bill seeks to update an act that was adopted nearly 24 years ago, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

[*English*]

It is totally normal and useful to review a bill that was tabled almost a quarter of a century ago, so this what we did in a committee of the House. The Senate also did that job of adapting what was tabled in 1999 to the reality of 2023 and more.

[*Translation*]

That is why we wanted to strike the appropriate balance between protecting the environment and the future of this planet and taking the Canadian economy and Canadians' lives into account. That is what this bill tries to do.

The bill has received support from environmental groups and the industry, but not unqualified support, not blind support. These two groups often disagree on the common good, but they did agree on one thing, which is that it was time to move forward.

[*English*]

I recall that the bill was tabled in the Senate, and all the people who are interested in environmental issues will say it is time to move forward and act. For sure, it is time to act, but unfortunately the bill, though it may be passed today or tomorrow, will be a year to two too late. This is because this piece of legislation was tabled in the old Parliament, and it was before the Prime Minister decided almost two years ago to call the shots and call an election during the fourth wave of the COVID pandemic. It was an election that cost more than \$600 million of taxpayer money for almost exactly the same result we had. This was only because the Prime Minister wanted to move by himself, but for that we lost a full year of parliamentary work on that piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

The bill as it stands is essentially the same as the earlier version that was introduced during the previous Parliament. This time, the government has decided, and that is its right, to introduce it in the upper chamber. It was debated in the Senate as Bill S-5. It was then sent to the House of Commons to be debated here. That is interesting, and this is where we have some concerns. I will come back to that.

Essentially, at the heart of the matter, as I said, this bill is a revision of the environmental laws that we have had for almost a quarter of a century. However, there are also new elements. First, we recognize the right of citizens to live in a healthy environment. That is a principle that we Conservatives support. This is obvious. However, it must be precisely defined.

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The bill provides for two years of work to be able to define the legal framework, since, as we know all too well in our business, the devil is in the details. We therefore have to be sure that we have a really good law and proper regulations. The profile of populations said to be vulnerable must also be defined. When there is mining or natural resource development, this may have a direct impact on people's lives, just as the construction of a plant or new infrastructure can have a direct impact on a population. This is what we define as vulnerable populations and we need to make sure that all this goes well.

• (1235)

There was an agreement to move forward. That is what we did.

In fact, as the parliamentary secretary said earlier, there have been more than 50 hours of committee work to be sure that we could directly address many aspects. Noting is perfect in this world, but we still worked well together, hand in hand. In addition, it always made me smile to see that we were finally getting along more often than we may have thought with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. As a resident of Quebec, I have known him for many years, as well as his very active role in defending the environment. Let us remember that 30 years and two weeks ago, he founded the group Équiterre with a few friends. As we know, Équiterre is now suing him for damaging the Canadian environment. Bill S-5 is off to a good start. We have clear objectives and we support them.

However, now in our parliamentary work, something surprising, if not disappointing, has happened. That is what we call a flip flop. A party voted for something during parliamentary committee work and, when it came to the House, changed its mind and voted against it. They have that right. We do not dispute that right. It is just that we were a bit surprised and shocked, particularly since the flip flop was not related to a misplaced dash or comma in the text of Bill S-5, but instead about a fundamental element, respect for provincial jurisdiction. In our view, the amendment adopted by the House, particularly with the support and assistance of the Liberal government, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP, the Green Party and the independents—in short, the Conservatives were the only ones who opposed it, and I will have the opportunity to clearly explain why—is an intrusion into areas of jurisdiction.

The amendment as presented was not in the main bill when it was introduced in the last Parliament and in the Senate a year and a half ago. That element was not in it. It is an amendment that was proposed on June 1 2022, almost a year ago, by the senator from Manitoba, an amendment that essentially seeks to regulate tailing ponds and hydraulic fracturing. Basically, when work on natural resources is being carried out and there is hydraulic fracturing, that leaves tailings. That is why a legal framework was developed for that situation. In our view, this amendment, as proposed and adopted by the Senate, is an intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. That can be challenged, but that is our view.

In fact, our perspective has been so well explained that, when we came before a House of Commons parliamentary committee, the member for Calgary-Centre suggested that these elements of the bill be withdrawn and that this amendment not be adopted. When the member for Calgary-Centre says something, it is because it has

merit and is based on facts. There is jurisprudence to support it and relevant documentation. I have learned a lot from the co-operation and work of the member for Calgary-Centre.

He was so convincing that he was able to persuade the government party in the parliamentary committee. All the liberal members, who are not the majority, but the largest parliamentary group in parliamentary committee, decided to support our proposal to set aside Senator McCallum's amendment presented in June 2022.

Let us review the facts: The bill does not provide for the regulation on hydraulic fracturing. Senator McCallum proposed an amendment to give teeth, depth and political weight to the federal government's authority over this event. We get to committee and our party says stop, this is an intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, and the Liberals vote with us. It is great, it is perfect, we agree. This is just one of many aspects, and I am focusing on that.

I am being honest, and I am sure that the Liberal MPs will agree with me. It is impossible to fully agree on all of the items.

• (1240)

In fact, I have been known to say that, if someone ever meets a politician who says they are completely in agreement with their leader, their party, all of their colleagues and the election platform, they are looking at a complete liar. It is humanly impossible, and the same is true for everyone. I see the hon. member for Winnipeg North, who I am sure is nodding in agreement with me.

What I am trying to say is that the more than 50 hours of work done in committee was an attempt to achieve consensus. Sometimes we succeeded, sometimes we did not. Sometimes we agreed, sometimes we disagreed. That is the big picture.

[*English*]

We are supportive of the big picture of this bill, but we have some disagreements, as all of the parties have disagreements with some aspects of this bill.

[*Translation*]

Everything was going well, it was great. We did our work in committee. When we got to the House to make a few speeches and accept the tabled report, three amendments were proposed: two by the Green Party and one by the NDP. The NDP's amendment is essentially the same as Senator McCallum's.

Government Orders

That was a surprise and a disappointment, a bitter turn of events. Although we had the support and the agreement of the Liberal Party to make sure there was no interference in provincial jurisdiction, the Liberals switched sides and voted in favour of the NDP's amendment. I acknowledge that that is their right. Anyone can change their mind. That is called evolution. Sometimes, when we change our minds, we evolve. I will say it that way to be polite.

Some of my colleagues suggested that that is the nature of the coalition. As we know, the government has been working collaboratively with the NDP for a year now, even though they were certainly not given that mandate during the election. Canadians were not asked to vote for a coalition. The NDP said Canadians should vote for them and against the Liberals, and the Liberals said they should vote against the NDP, since they were not the NDP. Now, everyone is perfectly cozy, working together. That is the reality.

The Liberals then flip-flop and support their coalition with the NDP, going against what they did in committee, against protecting provincial jurisdictions, against the fact that a bill should not lead to a constitutional dispute. On the contrary, we need to clarify the situation.

These people crashed the debate and created this situation. What a disappointment. That is why, unfortunately, we will be voting against the bill, which, as amended, creates a legal precedent rife with consequences.

[English]

This is why, last week, many of my colleagues from Alberta published a communiqué that says, "Canada's regulatory oversight framework is based upon clear division of responsibilities between the provinces and the federal government, as defined in our Constitution. The continued attempts to muddle this jurisdictional responsibility have led to a convoluted process of project approvals, duplication of costs, and uncertainty amongst investors."

[Translation]

Basically, what they are saying is that jurisdictional squabbles between the federal and provincial governments slow down projects, slow down the process and create uncertainty. They do not encourage people to move forward. People always hold back a bit. That is unfortunate because Canada is needed now more than ever. The world needs Canada's energy and natural resources more than ever, because we develop those resources responsibly and with respect for human rights in order to ensure they are sustainable. That is what Canada is known for.

When layers of debate are created between the federal and provincial governments, it stalls all of that. Canada deserves better than another squabble between the federal and provincial governments. That is why we do not support this bill. I must also say that I was rather surprised that, both in committee and in the House, the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of this interference in the debates between the federal and provincial governments. We know that the Bloc Québécois always says that it is there to defend the interests of Quebec and that, by so doing, it is also defending the interests of all the provinces on jurisdictional matters, and yet in this case, the Bloc is giving the federal government more power to intervene in an area of provincial jurisdiction, natural resources.

• (1245)

This should come as no surprise. As members will recall, the Bloc Québécois supported Bill C-69. This actually goes back quite some time. It goes back to June 13, 2019, during the first Parliament of this Liberal government. The Bloc Québécois supported this Liberal government's Bill C-69. One could say that this goes way back, and wonder what it has to do with today's subject.

Bill C-69 established a federal authority that supersedes the provincial authority for the development of hydroelectric resources. Everyone knows that Quebec has extraordinary hydroelectric potential, with dams that were all developed in the 1950s. Most were completed in the 1960s. We are very proud of them. Some that come to mind are the Beauharnois power station, which was expanded three times, or the Bersimis-1 and Bersimis-2 power stations, built in 1953 and 1956. There is also the Carillon generating station, which was given the green light in 1958, and the Manic-Outardes complex, which was developed in the 1950s and completed in the 1960s.

Quebec is very strong on hydroelectric production, but Bill C-69 contains a clause that says that the federal authority has the power to order environmental feasibility studies for these projects. This was well explained in an article by Alexandre Shields in *Le Devoir*. No one can really say that Mr. Shields and *Le Devoir* are Conservatives. That is the last thing anyone can say.

In an article published on September 29, 2022, Mr. Shields gives a clear description of the situation saying, "That means that a major project...would involve the submission of an impact assessment study [to the federal government]. The federal government would then lead a process including public consultations and the drafting of a report....Then, the federal Minister of Environment would have to publish a 'decision statement' to authorize, or not, the construction of the concrete work."

Bill C-69 granted the federal government the option to exercise veto power over hydro projects in Quebec, and the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of it. The Bloc Québécois voted for the NDP-Liberal coalition amendment, which allows for federal involvement in provincial jurisdictions. That does not make any sense to us. Natural resources are Canada's resources and we should be proud of that. We should be proud of the women and men who work in this sector. We should be proud of these people who, along with many others, create wealth in our country.

The last thing this industry and these people need is a jurisdictional squabble. That is what the Liberal-NDP-Bloc-Green-Independent amendment does. That is why we are voting against this bill.

In closing, I want to say this: This government prides itself on its fine words, but the results are sorely lacking. Let us recall what it said in 2015:

[English]

"Canada is back. Canada is back."?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Canada has far to go. The UN handed down a severe verdict in a report tabled at COP27 in Egypt concluding that Canada ranks 58th out of 63 nations on environmental issues. I am not the one saying this. It is written in black and white on page 11 of the UN's document. This is unacceptable from people who are constantly lecturing everyone. Need I remind members that the Liberals never managed to achieve their own greenhouse gas emission reduction targets? They will say that is not true, that it has happened. The only time it happened was when the country shut down its economy because of COVID-19. I hope that their plan is not to shut down the economy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Our plan is based on four basic pillars. First, we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through fiscal incentives to invest in new technologies. We need to give green energies the green light so they can be more accessible to Canadians. We need to export Canadian know-how. We should be proud to be Canadians and to develop our natural resource potential because, here at home, in Canada, we do it right.

The fourth pillar is that everything should be done in partnership with the first nations. Together we can meet the challenges of climate change and the environment. Unfortunately, this bill, because of an amendment adopted at the last minute following a reversal by the Liberal Party, with the support of the NDP, the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party and the independent MPs, is going to trigger another federal-provincial dispute.

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his remarks and his hard work on the ENVI committee.

As I mentioned in my speech, materially, the NDP amendment really does nothing to detract from the bill. It is because of the Kearl tailings pond spill that the committee, in the end, voted to draw attention to this particular issue, so that it gets special attention. It is not a jurisdictional issue. This was already covered under the act and we are very careful about jurisdictional matters with federal legislation.

My understanding was that the Conservatives were going to support the bill coming out of committee. Does this one change cause them to change their mind and to now vote against the bill after 50 hours of deliberations, during which the Conservatives mostly agreed with most of the amendments?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, my answer is really simple: Yes. Unfortunately, yes.

First of all, the hon. member said that amendment changed nothing. So why did he vote for it if it changed nothing? I do not understand why. The issue is what we have seen in Alberta following the tragedy there. Well, everything was said before. If I understand correctly what my colleague said, it changes nothing, and so if it changes nothing why did they vote for it?

We see, unfortunately, an attack on the jurisdictional procedure. Some people will say no, some people will say yes, and that is the problem. We are going to start another fight for that, and who do we think will win that? It will be the lawyers. I have nothing against them, but, yes, for sure, we would start a new fight with that, which is the last thing we need when we talk about climate change, environmental issues and developing our full potential.

Yes, we will vote against the bill, because it is not a minor agreement. We were surprised to see the flip-flop of the Liberals with the support of the NDP, Bloc, Greens and independents.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which, as always, was passionate, well illustrated, and provided some really good arguments.

We are probably experiencing the sixth mass extinction event for the species on our planet. I would like to ask my colleague a very specific question, since we are debating an environmental bill that protects species. Everyone is familiar with the monarch butterfly, that little orange butterfly. It is a species at risk that will now become an endangered species. A good part of the land where the monarch butterfly feeds on milkweed, its main source of food, is part of the Montreal airport. Over the past 10 years, the monarch butterfly population has declined by 85%. Our Minister of Environment says he defends biodiversity, but he is doing absolutely nothing to protect the monarch butterfly on federally owned land.

What would the Conservative Party do to save the monarch butterfly?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I must admit to the member that this is the first time I am hearing about this. I will take that under advisement, because I do not want to treat it like an insignificant detail. On the contrary, little things like that are what is hurting our environment and we need to take the work seriously.

Because we do need to take this work seriously, it would be very hypocritical of me to start pleading on behalf of that beautiful little orange butterfly. It would be like if I were talking about blue jays. Out of respect for this issue, for my colleague, for the House and for myself, I will not just rattle off any old answer, but yes, we need to be careful.

I understand very well the political spin that my colleague is putting on this, seeing how the Minister of Environment, the founder of Équiterre, is currently being sued by Équiterre because he decided to develop the full potential of Canada's natural resources through projects like Bay du Nord, which we applaud.

Beyond that, I will take the member's suggestion under advisement and come back to it another time.

• (1255)

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, sometimes I have a hard time following the Conservatives when it comes to fossil fuels, oil and the fight against climate change.

In the last budget, I do not know how many times I asked the government whether it would stop giving money to big oil. I want to remind members that, in 2022, the five major oil companies made \$200 billion in combined profits. In the most recent budget, our friends opposite continued to give those companies money in the form of direct and indirect assistance for carbon capture, which we now know does not work. That is greenwashing.

I do not understand why the Conservatives are voting against giving the oil companies money. I am trying to understand.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I am fully prepared to recognize, and that is the hon. member's love for Quebec and Quebeckers.

I know that he knows—as I said a few moments ago in a parliamentary committee—that Quebeckers do not exist in a vacuum, that they live on planet Earth and that, last year, according to a study by the École des hautes études commerciales de Montréal, Quebeckers consumed 18 billion litres of oil. Today's reality is that Quebeckers consumed 18 billion litres of oil last year.

I am more than willing to hear all the arguments about getting rid of oil, because it is terrible, because it is this or that. Yes, but the fact is that Quebec consumes 18 billion litres of oil. In addition, 47% of that oil comes from the United States. The last time I checked, neither Texas nor Louisiana contributes to equalization.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's comments and his speech.

I liked the part in his speech where he said that it was okay to disagree with people from his own party, or with the leader of his party. I agree with that.

I noticed a few things. There is a kind of division that I have a hard time rationalizing. For example, some Conservative members believe in climate change and some do not. In my opinion, the distinction seems geographic.

Can my hon. colleague from Quebec explain why he is being cautious about the oil and gas sector when it comes to this bill?

[English]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, let me pay all my respects to the quality of the member's French. We have all worked to learn a second language. When I talk about a second language, I am not talking about French. I am talking about the second language after our mother tongue language.

[Translation]

For as long as we need natural resources, including fossil resources, and for as long as we need oil, I will always stand for what is right for Canada, just as I support hydroelectricity and everything that comes from our country's natural resources.

Can we be proud to be Canadians? Yes, we can and we must. The same goes for all natural resources.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Green Party also opposes the bill. The two parties that will be voting against Bill S-5 are the Green Party and the Conservative Party, but they will do so for completely different reasons.

Government Orders

We think this is a bad bill. It runs counter to the goal of modernizing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

The hon. member talked about Bill C-69, which, for the Greens, was also a bad bill. I also voted against Bill C-69 because it establishes a system that is entirely at the discretion of a single minister, with no regulations across all federal regulation.

That was more of a comment than a question.

• (1300)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, as some often suggest, people on opposite sides of the world eventually come together. Perhaps that is why the Greens and the Conservatives will be voting the same way, but obviously for different reasons.

The only thing I would like to add about Bill C-69 is something Alexandre Shields wrote in an article on the subject. He said that the office of the environment minister declined to comment on the matter, because it remains a “hypothetical project”. However, the minister did recall the provisions of the act, which clearly stipulate that a new dam would be subject to the act.

If the Quebec government decides to go ahead with a new hydroelectric dam, Ottawa has no say in the matter.

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is an absolute failure. I have a two-part question.

Could the member address how the carbon tax is an absolute failure and how it has failed to reduce emissions?

We, as Conservatives, have significant concerns regarding the amendments passed in the Senate. There are 24 different amendments, 11 of which make the bill significantly worse.

After five years of consultation, how can this be drawn out further? Can he speak directly to the Liberal flip-flop causing the bill to collapse?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, we just have to look at the facts. After eight years of the Liberal government, people pay more taxes and we still have more pollution. These are the facts. This is why the Liberal carbon tax does not work.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois believes that the Quebec nation has sole jurisdiction over public decisions concerning the environment and Quebec's territory.

Government Orders

On April 13, 2022, parliamentarians belonging to all political parties represented in the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously adopted a motion affirming the primacy of Quebec's jurisdiction in matters of the environment. The elected officials of Quebec unanimously oppose “any intervention by the federal government in matters of the environment on Quebec territory”. The Bloc Québécois fully endorses that position and strongly advocates for the interests and values of Quebec in the federal political arena.

That said, in the existing legal framework, the federal government has certain environmental protection responsibilities. Bill S-5 is part of that effort. Unfortunately, what is lacking are ambitions to guide action on this important file that is environmental protection.

What is even more concerning is the fact that environmental protection, which has been undermined for some time, requires us to make up for measures that should have been implemented a long time ago. This was discussed in our last debate when my colleague from Repentigny called for prevention to be a fundamental pillar of this law.

Quebec's Environment Quality Act, adopted in 1978, underwent a major reform in 2017. The act seeks to protect the environment and safeguard the species inhabiting it. Quebec law prohibits the deterioration of the quality of the environment or the emission of pollutants or contaminants.

In addition to our Civil Code, the following laws are also related to environmental protection in Quebec and its support: the Sustainable Development Act, the Act to affirm the collective nature of water resources and to promote better governance of water and associated environments, the Natural Heritage Conservation Act and the Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife.

I had the honour of working on improving the first Quebec law on sustainable development introduced in 2004 at the National Assembly of Quebec and adopted in 2006. I remember the discussions we had about principles related to the foundation of sustainable development, including the precautionary principle. I will come back to that.

Obviously, I need to seek unanimous consent to share my time with my colleague from Repentigny.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, environmental policy requires trade-offs between health and environmental protection and commercial and industrial interests. If the committee had kept the improvements from the Senate and voted in favour of the amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois or the ones from the Green Party, this part of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act would have translated to a much more balanced approach. The refusal to improve the act by relying on best practices will unfortunately allow commercial and industrial interests to dominate and influence decision-making in Canada.

Nevertheless, my colleague from Repentigny secured a victory for environmental protection when it comes to the precautionary principle. In the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, the

phrase “precautionary principle” was translated as “principe de prudence” in French. In our opinion, this flawed translation did not capture the essence of the precautionary principle, which is to refrain from doing something in case of risk, while “prudence” in French suggests the idea of taking an action and managing its risk. That is very different. The Bloc Québécois believes that recognizing the precautionary principle is essential to framing the implementation of a bill that seeks to protect the environment. The Bloc managed to rally the committee members in favour of correcting this, and we are satisfied and proud of that.

The issue is this. Under the current regime, a substance must be proven to be toxic before it can be banned. In the meantime, such substances may be posing a threat to human or environmental health. Canada is falling behind when it comes to the pace at which new substances are being assessed. If we apply the precautionary principle rather than just being prudent, then, one would hope to see a reversal of the onus of proof, which would mean that authorization would be granted only once a substance has been proven not to be harmful to human or environmental health.

It is true that the intent of Bill S-5 is to give recourse to those who have been affected by issues involving environmental quality, environmental protection and the protection of living species. The bill seeks to make it mandatory to conduct an environmental impact assessment before carrying out any activity that could pose a high risk to the environment and to create a special access to information regime. It also seeks to regulate projects or activities that might impact wetlands or bodies of water and sets out criminal sanctions for those who break the law.

It is on that last point, the matter of crime, that we see the true scope of the right to a healthy environment.

Our political party is not fooled by the fanfare. Beyond the emotion and promises of the government about the inclusion of this right in the law, no one can deny that its scope will be very limited. If the government were serious about its desire to create a new right, if it had a little political courage, it would propose a round of constitutional negotiations with its partners in the federation to add this right to the Canadian Charter of rights and Freedoms. It would ensure that Canadians could be certain that this right could be enforced and that there would be penalties for breaching it. The government would clearly ensure that it paves the way to greater environmental protection with robust measures carrying penalties.

In case some members are not aware, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms is quasi-constitutional in scope. I mention that because this charter established the following in 2006: “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.”

Canada's environmental law does not have the same scope.

Enacting laws that are merely symbolic, and therefore not really enforceable, is just wrong.

Government Orders

• (1305)

The details of this right to a healthy environment will be defined and framed by an implementation framework that will not be shared with us until two years from now. The scope of its application will be limited to this single legislative measure. The amendments to Bill S-5, which proposed balanced, carefully considered legal mechanisms to allow recourse to the courts if that right is violated, were rejected out of hand by the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Since we are on the subject, it would be entirely justified to demand that Canada set an example in protecting the environment and human health, which are increasingly at risk because of the toxic substances at the heart of the part of the act covered by Bill S-5. The government can decide what message it wants to send but, notwithstanding the precautionary principle, are the provisions it describes as improvements in Bill S-5 really that much of a gain?

My colleague from Repentigny will argue that the absence of a preventive approach and the gutted Senate amendments on public participation perfectly illustrate the bill's missed opportunities.

• (1310)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that, at least in good part, we have support coming from the Bloc with regard to Bill S-5.

One of the issues that the hon. member raised was guaranteeing a healthy environment for Canadians. When I look at the legislation, it is a very strong and powerful step in the right direction. I think Canadians as a whole would see it as positive. I have no doubt that it would take a bit of time to work out how we best deal with ensuring that right.

Does the Bloc believe that the only way it could be dealt with is through a constitutional change? If so, does the member really believe that, whether in Quebec, Manitoba or any other jurisdiction, people want to see the Constitution reopened?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain: The government talks a great deal about this right to a healthy environment as if it were indeed enshrined in the Constitution. If it were really serious, this right would be constitutionalized.

When the government implements reform and revises laws only to go to committee and oppose improvements—amendments that could improve or, at the very least, guide the government's intentions and expressly reflect those intentions—we have to weigh all that.

When we look at the current government's investments in projects like Bay du Nord, I must say that there is some uncertainty about the government's real desire to improve things.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois member began his speech by talking about Quebec's primary jurisdiction over the environment and about how Quebec should have full power over environmental matters within its territory.

My question is this. The Bloc Québécois avoided saying much of anything about independence during the past two election campaigns, but this weekend, it talked about little else. Why did this party, which claims to be more separatist than ever, support an amendment by the Liberals, the New Democrats, the Greens and the independents that is a direct attack on a provincial jurisdiction?

More importantly, how is it that, on June 13, 2019, in the House, this member and other colleagues behind him voted in favour of Bill C-69, which gives the federal government veto power over hydroelectric dam projects in Quebec?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether my colleague followed the work that was done in committee. One thing is certain. If he wanted to be more accurate, he could have at least said that the Bloc Québécois worked really hard and that its amendment to have the federal government respect Quebec's jurisdictions was not adopted.

My colleague conveniently forgot to mention that because what he is known for in the debates that we have in the House is always putting a partisan spin on things that everyone should agree on and that should be dealt with in a non-partisan manner.

Talking about our convention when we are supposed to be talking about Bill S-5 seems rather obvious and pointless to me. I could have done the same thing, but that is his approach. That is why we are very different, and that is likely why we are not members of the same party.

• (1315)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a concern. We do a lot of work with environmental groups. It is good to have legislation that recognizes a citizen's right to a healthy environment. We support that principle. However, what happens if the Liberal government then goes on to approve oil and gas projects that will jeopardize that right to a healthy environment and exacerbate the climate crisis?

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, these oil and gas projects will indeed exacerbate the climate crisis and also negatively impact peoples' health. The primary determinant of health and disease is the environment. That is quite obvious. They cannot see the forest for the trees.

When it comes to the environment, there should be no compromise. Then the government is surprised that it needs to sink huge sums into taking care of peoples' health, at least in Quebec. It is all related. How the government is choosing to invest its money does not suggest a real intention to move forward and improve the right to a healthy environment.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, concerning Bill S-5, I think some members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development would agree that our work was very technical and challenging. I would like to commend my parliamentary assistant. As members, we have the microphone, but by our sides are hard-working people. If not for the tireless efforts of Ms. Grimard, I could never have accomplished the work I accomplished in committee.

Government Orders

Before I get to the heart of the matter, I would like to mention that of the 12 parts that make up the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, Bill S-5 essentially addressed part 5, on toxic substances and all matters related to public participation and its corollary, government transparency. Also included were classification procedures as well as evaluations of groups or classes of substances.

As we know, Canada waited 25 years before launching a review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Over the decades, and around the world, some mechanisms went through a major overhaul. Recognizing the progress made is only right and reasonable. We have examples, which I will now discuss.

We had an opportunity to learn from the regulatory regime in the European Union, the registration, evaluation, authorization and restriction of chemicals, or REACH. It is a regulation to improve the protection of human health and the environment from the risks that can be posed by chemicals, while enhancing the competitiveness of the EU chemicals industry. It strikes a balance.

It is not perfect, of course. It is exposed to lobby groups and regulatory capture, but the system provides for a true analysis per chemical family. If bisphenol A is evaluated, then there will also be an evaluation of the other molecules, such as bisphenol S. There ends up being an evaluation of a large number of chemicals at a time.

Also, products can be marketed only if there has been an analysis, a management assessment that is based both on the risk and the hazards. The confidentiality of corporate data is not in fact protected, but industry must instead justify the need for confidentiality. This regulatory system, with help from the European Chemicals Agency, allows assessments to be done much quicker. Through this mechanism, we can better prevent these substances from entering the market or being present in our consumer products.

It also makes it possible to take a hybrid approach to the management of toxic substances based on both the risks and the hazards. In our opinion, this approach is essential to promoting the prevention of pollution by these substances. It means that when risks cannot be managed, the authorities can restrict the use of substances in various ways and, eventually, the most dangerous substances must be replaced with less dangerous ones or are simply banned.

In committee, I asked Joseph F. Castrilli, an environmental law expert with the Canadian Environmental Law Association, questions about the benefits of the European regulation, with which he is familiar. He replied that the Canadian Environmental Law Association had incorporated part of the REACH regulation into its proposed amendments.

These proposed amendments were brought forward by the Green Party, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois. Unfortunately for us, these proposed amendments were not accepted as the Liberal-Conservative coalition voted against them.

The president of the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada attended the same meeting. I asked him the same question about the European regulation. He told me that that was already being done in Canada.

There were two different stories. I did not have time to delve any further, so I could not follow up on issues that should have been raised during the meeting. Clearly, the industry representatives did not like the fact that I had brought up REACH. Within minutes, the Bloc Québécois received an email to further explain REACH. That was not my first time seeing something like that. When someone disagrees with the industry, it is because they lack education, so the industry will simply try to do a better job of explaining things.

● (1320)

I would say that the email was a bit misleading, but the Bloc Québécois had done its homework to get a good sense of this European system. REACH puts the burden of proof on companies, and that is fine. Industry may well recommend designations, but there are sectoral committees of experts and specialists such as the expert group on persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic substances. I will use imagery that everyone can understand. It is as if there are clearly visible lines on the pavement and REACH adds guardrails to prevent us from falling over the edge.

The European federation's regulatory framework includes various mechanisms that do not exist, or are very tentative, in Canada. That is the truth. These are tools that, although they do not make it entirely safe, certainly have the merit of slowing down what I call the gangrene of regulatory capture and leaving "everything to the industry".

In Europe, REACH strikes a balance between the risk-based approach advocated by industry and the hazard-based approach, which it wants to avoid at all costs. Furthermore, the REACH process and that of the European Chemicals Agency clearly make room for public consultation. Yes, ordinary citizens have their say, but so do experts in toxicology and medicine, as well as specialists in regulation and standardization. The public consultation process provided for under REACH really does exist. A person would have to be acting in bad faith to say that REACH makes no room for public consultation.

This consultation is so comprehensive that in European public processes, calls for comments and evidence allow interested parties to register their interest, express their views in the preparatory phase and comment on the various documents relating to restrictions. There is transparency; reports are accessible. The public can also submit additional information to justify or support their comments. Canada could have followed that example. Unfortunately, I have to say that it was a missed opportunity.

Let us come back to Bill S-5. Bill S-5 was sent to the House with impressive improvements regarding public participation and transparency. Amendments were proposed to clarify and relax some sections without compromising rigour. However, it is a disappointment. We had hoped that, after over 20 years or two decades of waiting, the government would enshrine its oft-repeated claims in law. This could have been such an extraordinary moment. Unfortunately, I would say that transparency, consultation and science were left by the wayside, which I found disappointing.

Government Orders

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has reminded the House many times that his department's work has been applauded by environmental groups, which is true. However, he mentioned only the praise and none of the criticism that we see when we read the rest of the news release.

The government and the official opposition both said no to prescriptive language that would have increased the public's access to the consultation process. That would have also helped the government to be more transparent and considerate towards the individuals and civil society groups concerned. Unfortunately, the Liberals and the Conservatives voted against this progress, which came from the Senate, and against the amendments proposed by the opposition.

I will close by saying that I will continue to be involved in the upcoming legislation to review the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has committed to. As members can see, I do not give up easily. I do have one wish. I hope that when it counts, the government will build and play its role as legislator with integrity for the public and not just for industry.

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member could provide some thoughts in regard to the issue of toxic chemicals. Given the way technology has advanced and given chemists' contributions to many aspects of life in general, we know there is a need to stay on top of the issue of toxic chemicals and chemicals that could be listed as toxic. Does she have any insights that she would like to share with the House with respect to that?

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the question.

The advantage, for example, in Europe, is that assessments are done by family of toxic substances, allowing much more to get done. What happens here is that the substance is put on the market and the assessment is done afterward. In the meantime, if the substance is unfortunately declared toxic, it ends up in our consumer products and in the air. That is what I really wanted to see change.

Yes, in Quebec we have our department and our laws, which are much stricter and more restrictive than federal legislation, but the thing is, the environment is across Canada, it is across the planet. Essentially, we have to try to adopt best practices. Unfortunately we had the opportunity to do that, but we did not.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, important things are happening here in Parliament, but important things are also happening in society. On behalf of the NDP, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the sudden passing of the Quebec actor Michel Côté and to offer our condolences to his family and friends. This is an immense loss for the Quebec theatre community and the artistic community. I am sure my colleague shares these sentiments.

On the subject of the environment, it is all well and good to have the right to a healthy environment, but many folks would argue that this does not go far enough and that we should be using a new term, "ecocide", which would put environmental crimes on the same level as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Instances of massive environmental destruction could then be prosecuted before the International Criminal Court. There is a whole movement known as Stop Ecocide Canada and Stop Ecocide International.

Is this something my colleague could see being useful for defending the environment?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. Seriously, I was running around all morning and I did not look at the newspapers. I did not know that Michel Côté had passed away. Truly, when my colleague mentioned it, I was in shock and could hardly believe it. I extend my condolences to Michel Côté's family, and I am certain we will take the time to do so at the appropriate moment.

Now, as for ecocide, I invite parliamentarians to attend an event from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesday with the people from Stop Ecocide Canada. It is an extraordinary idea, an idea that is serious and goes a long way. However, if we do not start talking about it now, it will never happen. I think these people are very courageous to propose the idea of ecocide in an oil-producing country. We have to start somewhere and I congratulate them for it.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy once again to rise and speak to Bill S-5, a bill that updates the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

I have spoken a couple of times on this bill at various stages, and I will repeat some of the messages I gave in those speeches. Here we are at third reading. We have responded to the committee report, which brought forward a few amendments, including one from the NDP that was voted on at report stage. At committee, Conservatives and Liberals took out a statement about tailings ponds in particular. The NDP proposed a report stage amendment that put those words back into Bill S-5 that were put there originally by the Senate, which dealt with this bill before us, and I was happy that amendment passed.

Government Orders

Now, I am a bit discouraged that Conservatives seem to be indicating they are withdrawing their support for this bill just because of those two words, “tailings ponds”, going back into it. I am not sure why they consider the words so toxic that they cannot support the bill, but we are very much of the opinion that it really needs to be highlighted as one of the points in protecting the Canadian environment. We have had so many issues around tailings ponds, not just in the last few months at the Kearl project in Alberta, but in British Columbia with the Mount Polley disaster, and various other situations. This bill, Bill S-5, and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act really deal with how we should deal with toxins that are put into the Canadian environment, and tailings ponds are one example of where, when we have disasters, an inordinate number of toxins are poured into the environment at once. I think that requires special mention, and I am glad we see that wording back in this version of the bill here at third reading.

Just to give some background, this bill was first introduced in the previous Parliament as Bill C-28. It was never brought to the floor of the House to debate, and, months later, the government called an election, so it died on the Order Paper. However, it gave Canadians and environmental law experts and scientists a chance to look at this long-overdue bill to update the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, as it has been over 20 years. Those people found a lot to be concerned about that was missing from the bill. The government had a year to answer those concerns, yet in this Parliament it introduced the bill exactly as it was in Bill C-28, so there was no attempt to fix things ahead of time, which has caused real problems.

I have even heard Liberals saying in debate at report stage that we need a new version of CEPA, so we need a new bill to update it as quickly as possible to fix those things, because they were found to be out of scope. We cannot expand the scope of bills here in this place once they come to us, and this bill requires some of that desperately, which I will talk about later.

Since CEPA was first introduced over 20 years ago, the number of chemicals that people in Canada are exposed to in their daily lives has grown exponentially. I think it has grown by over 50 times since 1950 and is expected to continue on that trajectory. All these chemicals are toxic in their own way. These are brand-new chemicals that natural environments have no experience with, and we are only discovering, year after year, the impacts of these chemicals on our environment, our health and the health of plants and animals in our environment, even at very small levels. Over the last two decades, science has discovered more about the cumulative effects of even small doses of these toxic chemicals, and without this modernized legislation, Canadians would continue to be exposed to unregulated and harmful chemicals.

• (1335)

This is long overdue. Environmental scientists and environmental legal experts have long recognized that. Some of the changes that Bill S-5 would make to CEPA that are significant are the recognition of the right to a healthy environment, and I will talk more about that later; the commitment to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, under the act; strengthening the chemicals management plan, including to take into consideration vulnerable populations, cumulative effects, reproductive

and endocrine toxicity, carcinogenicity, mutagenicity and neurotoxicity; alternatives and class-based assessments to avoid harmful substitutions; and labelling and other-risk communication.

I would like to back up now and just say how Canadians are so proud of this country, and one of the great sources of that pride is our environment. We are blessed to live in a vast country, and our relatively small population, concentrated at the southern border, has given us the impression that our environment will remain clean, healthy and sustainable, no matter what we do to it and no matter what we throw at it. That attitude has, obviously, gradually changed over the last 50 years or so, and now over 90% of Canadians believe that it is important that we have the explicit right to live in a clean and healthy environment. It is very timely that this bill finally recognizes that right.

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. One hundred and fifty-nine countries already have legal obligations to protect the human right to a healthy environment, but Canada does not. There are environmental bills of rights in Ontario, Quebec, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, but there is no federal law that explicitly recognizes the right to live in a healthy environment. Bill S-5 would 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. In fact, the Senate committee studying Bill S-5 wanted to fix this enforceability and, quite remarkably, the senators attached this note to the bill when they sent it forward to the House. After they had passed it with the amendments that they could make, they attached this message. I have read this message in each of the speeches I have given, but it is so remarkable that it bears repeating. This is what the Senate committee said:

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.

As I said before, the reason the Senate did not amend this bill to make it enforceable is that it was considered out of scope. The real disappointment here, of course, is that the government had a year to fix this. It knew that this enforceability was one of the main concerns people had about Bill C-28 in the previous Parliament, but the government did not fix it. I don't know whether that was just out of incompetence or whether it really did not want to fix it.

This relates directly to the welcome new declaration in Bill S-5 that Canadians have a right to live in this healthy and clean environment, but we need a transparent and open process to hold the government to account with respect to that declaration and to that right.

● (1340)

As I have said, CEPA is primarily concerned with protecting Canadians and their environment from the toxic chemicals we are so good at inventing, producing and pumping into our environment. There has been a fiftyfold increase in those chemicals over the past number of decades. However, CEPA does not concern itself in general with other matters of federal legislation around the environment, such as environmental impact assessments, fish habitat, migratory birds, species at risk, etc., so this declaration of the right to live in a clean, healthy environment has rather narrow coverage. It covers only matters within the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

I have a private member's bill, Bill C-219, that is called the Canadian environmental bill of rights. It was first written and presented by Linda Duncan, the former NDP MP for Edmonton Strathcona. Ms. Duncan is an expert environmental lawyer who produced this environmental bill of rights and introduced it over three Parliaments during her time here. It passed second reading in 2009 or 2010 and went to committee, but each time she presented it, it did not make it through the full Senate procedure, so it never became law. I was very honoured and happy to present it again as Bill C-219 in this Parliament.

Among other things, it basically takes that right to live in a clean, healthy environment that Bill S-5 talks about and expands it to the other Canadian federal legislation that we have that deals with the environment. It is not a broad-brush approach, but specifically attached to those pieces of legislation. In fact, when the House of Commons legal team was asked whether it was constitutional, the answer was that of course it is constitutional because it is not really an environmental bill; it is a human rights bill. It holds the government to account for doing what it should be doing under those different environmental pieces of legislation that we have at the federal level.

I would like to make it clear that the NDP will be voting in favour of Bill S-5. We are happy that the government has ceded to some of the amendments that we wanted to bring in to improve Bill S-5. We did not get all that we wanted, but we think this is an important step forward, and we are certainly happy that there is language about the right to live in a clean and healthy environment that is finally recognized within federal legislation. We are happy that this bill confirms the government's commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples under the act.

Government Orders

This bill has many shortcomings, some of which I have listed, but one that I have not mentioned is the total lack of anything around air pollution, toxins in the air. This is something that we really have to get into federal legislation, because it is just as important, if not more so, than some of the other forms of pollution we have to deal with.

I am heartened to hear comments from Liberal members that they would welcome a new version of Bill S-5, a brand new update to CEPA that would bring in some of the problems that have been considered out of scope here, especially around enforceability.

As I say, most Canadians, including myself, would be happy to see this bill pass. I know that most parties will be voting for this bill, albeit some reluctantly. I am disappointed to hear that the Conservatives seem to be pulling their support over the tailings ponds issue. I hope that the Senate will deal with it promptly, so that we can enjoy its benefits and quickly start the process of crafting that new bill that will make CEPA even stronger. That act would truly protect Canadians and ensure that we, along with our children and grandchildren, can continue to live in the clean and healthy environment that is our right.

● (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. Going out of second reading, there was a sense that we would be receiving virtually unanimous support. Although the Green Party had reservations in regard to Bill S-5, it looked as though it was going in a forward direction, with the Conservatives actually supporting it. Having listened to Conservatives earlier today, the best I can tell is that they do not want to support the bill because of an amendment related to tailings ponds.

The member was there at the committee stage. Can he explain to the House what he believes is so substantial within the amendment that it is now causing the Conservative Party to vote against the legislation as a whole?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I was not there at the committee stage to hear that, but I have heard comments in debate here about it. It was an issue during the debate at report stage. However, the member would have to ask the Conservatives that question. I can only guess, and I would rather not put my suppositions onto this. However, I am disappointed.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we originally talked about supporting the bill. We are absolutely for the environment. We are conservationists at heart across the way in the opposition here. However, one thing we are deeply worried about is the government's over-regulation.

Government Orders

I come from northern B.C., where oil and gas is a big part of what we can give the world in terms of reducing pollution. I was also just up in Yukon, talking to them about critical minerals and getting those developed. However, they say that with the government's over-regulation, instead of getting it developed within eight years, it is going to take at least 30 years. Therefore, here we are seeing more red tape being added to getting our resources developed with this legislation.

Can the member answer this question: What is he going to do to actually see some of the good things that Canada produces get to world markets?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I spent much of last week in Washington, D.C., with the international trade committee. We talked to quite a number of legislators and congressmen, and almost every one of them brought up this issue: How are we going to get materials mined so that we can get the clean tech of tomorrow going? They all said that what the United States needs is a mining impact assessment system like Canada's system. They held up Canada's system as the shining example of how things should be done.

Therefore, I do not know what concerns the Conservatives have. Apparently, from the outside world, we are seen as leaders in developing mines and developing them properly, so that we have not only a clean environment but also the materials we need for the future.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, now that we are at the last stage of the bill, third reading, it is not that the Green Party has reservations, as my colleague just said. Unfortunately, the Green Party is now against the bill because it would weaken our ability to regulate toxic chemicals across Canada and because it only pretends to create the right to a healthy environment. It is a right that cannot be enforced; it is basically a bumper sticker and not a right.

Again, everyone who is concerned about the environment across Canada and various environmental groups are being told that the government will bring out a new version of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act really soon. What is my hon. colleague's honest assessment of how likely this is and when it may happen?

• (1350)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. However, I am not holding my breath. I think that if the government wanted to do this right, it would have done it right the first time.

All I would say is that my private member's bill has that enforceability part baked into it and extends it to the other parts of the Canadian federal legislation on the environment. It carves out CEPA, because of issues around that legislation, but I would hope the government would use this as a model to fix CEPA once and for all.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I tend to disagree with the leader of the Green Party and the suggestion about looking at the right to a healthy environment. At the end of the day, it is incorporated into the legislation. I suspect that what we will see will be more information being provided on the issue of those rights in the coming days, weeks and months ahead.

I think we need to recognize that this is a significant step forward, where we have a government policy, in essence, making it very clear. It is more than just a policy; it is done through legislation. Canadians have a right to a healthy environment.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to how important it is to talk about this. There has been a lot of discussion about the environment in general, but when we get a statement of that nature in law, it is a significant step forward. Obviously, it is not going to resolve all the issues. Mechanisms, protocols and so forth need to be established. At the very least, we have a government for the first time that is actually incorporating that sort of a principle in legislation.

Would he not agree that the incorporation of a right to a healthy environment is good for all Canadians?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, obviously, I think it is a good idea that we have a right to a healthy environment embedded in some legislation. I would say that the government was so timid about this that when they first brought forward Bill S-5, that right was only in the preamble. It had to be moved into the body of the text to have any legal impact at all. However, we are hearing now that it is unenforceable, as all kinds of civilian actions towards this bill are, and we need that changed.

Yes, this is a step in the right direction. As in so many things with the government, better is always possible. I would hope that we would see some movement very quickly to fix this so that Canadians can truly have that right to live in a healthy and clean environment and back it up with some accountability for government actions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and speak to legislation that will have a very positive impact on Canadians.

If we listen to what Canadians are talking about, we often hear the issue of the environment coming up. Within the Liberal caucus, I can assure people who are following the debate that, whether it is me or members of the Liberal caucus, we have a high degree of sensitivity in wanting to ensure that what we are doing here in Ottawa reflects Canadians' desires and interests in terms of what they are telling us.

Canadians tell us that the environment does matter and that it counts. We have a government in a minority situation. They would like to see members of Parliament, on all sides of the House, recognize the importance of the issue of the environment and start taking actions to support the words we use during an election.

We see the position that the official opposition is taking on the environment. I want to use two examples. Today, it is all about Bill S-5 and what is happening with it. It is about how the Conservative Party has once again made a change towards the environment. I would suggest that this is a negative change. This is consistent with what the Conservative Party did in the last federal election.

We constantly get criticized by the Conservatives regarding a price on pollution. Most Canadians see and recognize the value of this, as do other countries and jurisdictions around the world. They see that pollution should not be free and that there should be a price on pollution. However, only the Conservative Party of Canada here in the House of Commons, from the get-go, said it opposed a price on pollution. After being tuned up by Canadians, it actually said it is now in favour of a price on pollution.

In the last federal election, every one of the members sitting here today actually said they agreed with a price on pollution in their election platform. They all campaigned on it. However, with a new, shiny, ultra-right leader, they now say they do not support a price on pollution.

How is that relevant to the debate we are having today? It is relevant because not that long ago, about two weeks ago, the Conservatives were telling Canadians that they voted in favour of Bill S-5 and they thought Bill S-5 was a good idea. They were right two weeks ago when they were telling that to Canadians. They were ultimately responding, in part, to what their constituents were telling them.

One of the biggest things in Bill S-5 deals with the right to a healthy environment. Imagine taking a statement of that nature and incorporating it into law. This is why I asked my NDP colleague to provide a comment on it. Given what Canadians are telling us about the importance of the environment, how could someone oppose that? How is it possible that the Conservatives would vote against it?

If we want to talk about popping the bubble of hope, that is what the Conservatives have done in recent days. The Conservatives have said that they now oppose Bill S-5. Why did they flip-flop?

An hon. member: Because of you. You flip-flop.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, they say it is because of me. I do not think I carry that much influence within the Conservative caucus.

I can say that the Conservatives are on the wrong side of yet another important environmental issue. They need to understand that the environment does matter. When they say they are now opposed to it, what are they voting against? They are voting against what their leader often talks about: common sense.

• (1355)

Why would one oppose the right to a healthy environment? Yes, a lot of regulations and protocols need to be established to ensure that right, but, again, for the very first time, we actually have that now in legislation, the very same legislation that the official opposition is going to vote against when it comes up for a vote.

Statements by Members

Maybe we should wait another week or two. Maybe they might change their mind again on this issue.

It is an important vote. We are dealing with additional regulations to deal with toxic chemicals. What is it about toxic chemicals that the Conservative Party of Canada feels, within this legislation, is bad? We are not hearing that.

The Conservatives are not saying that they do not like this legislation because of this particular aspect. They are talking about tailings ponds and apparently that is what caused them to flip, even though, before the amendment, it came to the House from the Senate with it.

One has to start questioning where the Conservative Party is on the environment. I will give part two when we begin debate again after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Indo-Pacific region is growing in terms of population and economy. It is also a strategically important region in the current turbulent global situation. The region offers much-needed markets for Canadian exports and a secure place for Canadian investments. Canada has a well-formulated Indo-Pacific strategy. Among other things, this highlights the importance of our relationship with India.

India is a growing market for our exports, with pulses today and potential products like small nuclear modular reactors in the future. India is also a secure place for our increasing need to diversify our investments. Our pension funds and the private sector have already invested \$84 billion there.

India is also the leading source of our much-needed skilled immigrants and a major provider of international students.

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NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of the 58th annual National Prayer Breakfast and leadership dinner here on Parliament Hill. The Canadian National Prayer Breakfast is the longest-running parliamentary event in Canada and is the longest-running national prayer breakfast in the world.

Statements by Members

I am deeply grateful and honoured to be serving as chair for this year's event that is seeing people from coast to coast and around the world come to be part of it. In these times of great uncertainty and instability throughout our world, it is of vital importance that we remember that there is a source higher than we are to which we can turn. As the psalmist, King David, once said, when our hearts are overwhelmed, lead us to a rock that is higher than we are.

I encourage all members to join me in welcoming all those attending this year's National Prayer Breakfast, leadership dinner and young leaders summit, and may God continue to keep our land glorious and free.

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SHALEM MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Shalem Mental Health is a Hamilton-based organization providing critical mental health services to children, youth, couples and families in more than 100 communities across Canada, including in my riding of Hamilton Mountain.

We know that social inequities can affect physical and mental health. Shalem delivers thousands of hours of subsidized therapy every year to those who would not otherwise be able to afford it. Its inclusive and often creative approach to mental health has established it as a leader in the areas of trauma-based attachment therapy and psychotherapy.

Shalem regularly collaborates with local community and child welfare agencies to reduce or eliminate barriers to healing, such as with its art outreach program for street-involved youth. May is mental health month, and I would like to thank Shalem Mental Health for continuing to broaden the scope of its important work, which it now delivers through employee assistance programs across the country.

Shalem will be celebrating its 60th anniversary next month, and I wish the organization hearty congratulations.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL CÔTÉ

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, we have lost one of the greats. Michel Côté has left us.

He always made us laugh and now, leaving us like this, he has broken our hearts. He had a spectacular career, first with Marcel Gauthier and Marc Messier in *Broue*, the most popular play in Quebec history. A record 6 million people have gone to see it. That is phenomenal. His television hits include *Omertà: la Loi du silence* and *La petite vie*; we all cherished Pierre Gauthier and Jean-Lou, two characters who were polar opposites. His movies include *Cruising Bar*, *Liste noire*, *Le dernier tunnel*, *C.R.A.Z.Y.*—in which I had the honour and privilege of starring alongside him—and *De père en flic*, to name but a few.

He is a giant who has left his mark on generations of Quebecers, and will continue to do so for a long time to come. Quebec's artistic community has just lost one of its most extraordinary representatives.

To his family, friends, loved ones and all Quebecers, I offer my deepest condolences.

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LE CENTRE D'ACTION BÉNÉVOLE DE GATINEAU

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have the opportunity to acknowledge the 35th anniversary of the Centre d'action bénévole de Gatineau this past May 25.

For more than three decades, the centre's team has delivered a host of services directly to the Gatineau community, services such as meals on wheels, transportation support, friendly visits and more.

I applaud the team's energy; they have made volunteerism and community involvement their priority for the past 35 years. These volunteers have given the Gatineau community something very special. Without their dedication, our community life and the help provided to the more vulnerable would not be what they are today. We owe the centre a debt of gratitude.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank the entire team, the centre's board members and its many volunteers.

I thank them and wish them a happy 35th anniversary.

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• (1405)

MICHEL CÔTÉ

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of Quebec is in mourning today. Iconic actor Michel Côté has left us far too soon at the age of 72.

This immensely and uniquely talented man, who was proud to call Lac-Saint-Jean home, had a profound effect on generations of Quebecers who saw him perform on the stage and on screens big and small. From *Broue* and *C.R.A.Z.Y.* to *La petite vie* and *Omertà*, Michel Côté made us laugh and he made us cry. He had a singular knack for bringing to life the characters he played, as varied as they were. Regardless of what part he was playing, we believed it. Wherever he went, we followed.

Michel Côté was a respectful and respected man who has left an indelible mark on our history. He is no longer with us, but he will live on forever in our hearts and minds as one of the greats.

On behalf of my colleagues, I want to offer my heartfelt condolences to his lifelong partner, Véronique Le Flaguais, to his sons, Charles and Maxime, and to his many friends.

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[English]

ROCK LACROSSE TEAM

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Toronto Rock lacrosse team had its playoff run end recently, and while heartbreaking, I want to extend congratulations for another terrific season.

Statements by Members

I am proud that the Rock owner, Jamie Dawick, chose Oakville as the team's home for its state-of-the-art practice facility and head office. The TRAC, as it is fondly known, hosts the Rock's pre-season games before Christmas, when they accept donations to the food bank and the Oakville firefighters toy drive.

Players like Oakville's own Dan Dawson, who gives his all on the floor every game while working as a firefighter and giving back to his community, exemplify the culture of the team.

This summer the Rob MacDougall Memorial Tournament to be held at the TRAC will raise funds for KidSport. I have been a proud season-ticket holder for over 20 years and want to say thanks to the Rock for another great season. "Go Rock Go."

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INNOVATIVE AGRI-FOOD BUSINESSES

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with a once-in-a-century global pandemic, worldwide increase of agricultural commodity prices, energy costs and, most importantly, climate change and population increase, maintaining access to sustainable and affordable food systems is an important priority.

In parallel with our government's initiatives, Fresh Green Farms, a Vancouver-based private enterprise run by brothers Bahram and Shahram Rashti, has championed the path towards sustainable food systems using vertical farming.

Last week, I had the pleasure of visiting their facility in B.C., where I saw first-hand how UP Vertical Farms is doing its part in helping Canada navigate its food security issues by developing Canada's largest, most advanced and cost-effective hydroponic vertical farms to locally grow high-density leafy greens, all while maintaining the operation's environmental impact at a minimum. At full capacity, they would be able to serve not only B.C. but western Canada.

I would like to congratulate the Rashti brothers for the inspiring work they are doing for their community and for Canada.

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OPIOIDS

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the serving and retired members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for their dedication and service to Canadians, keeping us safe for the last 150 years. Congratulations.

The price of everything continues to rise, as do, unfortunately, opioid deaths. Over the last eight years, Canadians have witnessed an overdose increase of 300% as the Liberal government continues to flood our streets with taxpayer-funded drugs. In communities like Cranbrook and Nelson, addicts are taking free government drugs, selling them, using the proceeds to buy fentanyl and dying of overdoses. Safe supply inhalation sites are not a solution, and our communities are in chaos. The sounds of children laughing outside the local fast food restaurants have been replaced by the sounds of emergency service vehicles dispatched to yet another overdose, dispatched to yet another repeat violent crime.

An overwhelming number of residents in Kootenay—Columbia are calling for the government to immediately reverse its deadly policies and redirect taxpayer-funded drugs to rehab, detox, treatment and recovery programs. Let us bring our loved ones home.

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● (1410)

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to welcome representatives from my alma mater, Queen's University, to Parliament Hill today.

Queen's is a leader in Canada and around the globe. Last year, it was ranked seventh in the world by the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, which measures contributions to the United Nations sustainable development goals. That real-world impact is thanks to Queen's exceptional students, faculty and staff.

Quickly emerging as a leader in critical minerals and EV batteries, Queen's is helping to move Canada toward a low-carbon and prosperous economy. Queen's is working to train more family doctors and nurses to address the critical shortages faced in our communities.

There is exciting and groundbreaking work happening across all disciplines. The McDonald Institute is building on Nobel Prize-winning research to unlock the mysteries of dark matter, and position Canada to lead breakthrough scientific discoveries.

Once again, I welcome Queen's University. I hope my fellow parliamentarians will join us for a reception this evening at 5:30 p.m. in Room 228 of the Valour Building.

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NOVA SCOTIA WILDFIRES

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking from the fire command centre in Shelburne County on the wildfire crisis at both ends of my district, here and in Halifax.

A massive wildfire in Halifax, where I was this morning, forced the evacuation of 18,000 people. That is as many people as are evacuated currently in western Canada. Most left with only the clothes on their backs, as the fire moved extremely fast. There are no fatalities and no missing people so far. The Halifax fire continues to burn out of control, and many homes have been lost.

Statements by Members

I was at the Halifax comfort centres last night and this morning. The stories are heartbreaking. People rushed to their cars as the fire swept into their backyards, forced by 40-kilometre-an-hour winds.

Here in Shelburne County, we are battling an out-of-control wildfire covering 20,000 acres. The communities from Port Clyde to Barrington West have been evacuated and are under threat. More than another 2,000 people have been evacuated.

To professional and volunteer firefighters, saying thanks does not seem like enough as they risk their lives to save our communities. I thank the countless volunteers helping these families. Our prayers go out to the families in these uncertain and tragic days. Please pray for our communities.

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NEW BRUNSWICK FOREST FIRES

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a forest fire is currently uncontained a few kilometres outside of Saint Andrews, New Brunswick, in Bocabec and Chamcook. Yesterday evening, the fire was approximately 100 hectares in size. Today, it has grown by over 400%. Four hundred families have already been evacuated, and it is not known how many homes have been destroyed. This morning, seven fire water bombers resumed work, but on-the-ground resources are needed.

My deepest gratitude goes out to the firefighters, volunteers and other first responders working hard to get these fires under control in my riding, elsewhere in New Brunswick and in Nova Scotia. I know the federal government has reached out to my premier and I appreciate that. I urge the federal government to offer any assistance to maritime provinces, local emergency personnel and my constituents to control and extinguish these fires. Godspeed.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL CÔTÉ

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today all Quebecers and Canadians are mourning the loss of a great actor, a creative force, a great man. Michel Côté was the perfect blend of passion and discipline. He was a charming and extremely sensitive person.

As an actor, he had great range. He could go from playing Jean-Lou in the sitcom *La petite vie* to playing Pierre Gauthier in *Omertà*, not to mention his inspired portrayal of four separate characters in *Cruising Bar*. On stage, he was one of the pillars of the play *Broue*, which was performed more than 3,000 times. He was a caring man and a family man. He actually played several father roles, including in that masterpiece of Quebec cinema, the film *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, and in the comedy *De père en flic*.

Michel will remain forever in our hearts.

• (1415)

[English]

INDIGENOUS POLICE SERVICES

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago, I asked that tripartite first nations policing agreements be renewed and their core funding be increased. As of March 31, funding has stopped flowing for Treaty 3, the Anishinabek Police Service and the UCCM Anishnaabe Police Service.

Police services under the first nations and Inuit policing program, unlike other police services, are under threat because of contract imposition instead of fair negotiations. An expedited judicial order against the federal government has been filed just to get basic core funding back. There is deep concern about increasing crime rates, which puts the safety of first nations communities at risk.

The Crown has a legal obligation to ensure first nations policing is an essential service, negotiated based on identified needs and funded at a standard comparable to non-indigenous communities. Let us not repeat the mistakes of our colonial past. Let us ensure these indigenous police services immediately have the resources and specialized training they require to better protect their communities. They need a fair contract with clear terms of reference and adequate funding now.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL CÔTÉ

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is in mourning. Quebec is in shock. Michel Côté is no longer with us. Our thoughts are with his family and friends. We extend our deepest condolences to them.

We are also thinking of those close to him, but we now realize that we were all close to him. Michel Côté was a part of our lives, and we are collectively and individually in mourning.

There are great actors we admire, and there are popular actors we adore. Michel Côté was both: part Gilles Latulippe, part Jean Duceppe. He left his mark with roles in *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, *Cruising Bar*, *Omertà* and *La petite vie*.

He gave us moments of laughter, joy and pure emotion—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the member. This is a serious topic, but I am hearing people chatting.

[English]

I want to remind everyone that S.O. 31s reflect what is going on back home, and we all want to hear what the hon. member has to say. I would encourage everyone, if they are going to talk, to please whisper and not speak loudly.

[Translation]

I will ask the hon. member from Drummond to start from the top.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, Quebec is in mourning. Quebec is in shock. Michel Côté has left us. Our thoughts are with his family and friends. We extend our sincere condolences to them.

We are obviously thinking of those close to him, but we suddenly realize that we were all close to him. Michel Côté was a part of our lives, and we are collectively and individually in mourning.

There are great actors we admire, and there are popular actors we adore. Michel Côté was both: part Gilles Latulippe, part Jean Duceppe. He left his mark with roles in *C.R.A.Z.Y.*, *Cruising Bar*, *Omertà* and *La petite vie*.

He gave us moments of laughter, joy and pure emotion, for which we will be eternally grateful. It was fun having him with us. It is sad that he is no longer here.

I invite everyone to watch one of his movies, one of his shows or even one of his interviews. Let us take the time to see what an amazing human being he was, what a great actor he was, and to enjoy his sense of humour, his playfulness and his humanity.

Michel Côté was one of the greats, and he was one of us. We miss him already.

* * *

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Prime Minister's watch, Beijing interfered in two federal elections, set up illegal police stations and targeted the family of a sitting member of Parliament. In a blatant conflict of interest, the Prime Minister appointed a family friend and member of the Beijing-financed Trudeau Foundation to investigate Beijing's interference.

From the start, the report had no credibility, because by the time the Prime Minister's fake rapporteur decided to meet with the former leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Durham, the report had already been written. The report has no credibility because its author is not independent, but rather the Prime Minister's Beijing-compromised friend.

If the Prime Minister had any integrity, he would fire his fake rapporteur and call a truly independent public inquiry.

* * *

● (1420)

PARLIAMENTARY SOCCER

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, spring has returned and with it parliamentary soccer. Yes, indeed, the FC Commoners are back for another season of the beautiful game, with MPs from all parties taking the pitch against an assortment of foes.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Last week, we had our annual game against the pages. This was the first match since the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The pages were well prepared. Some of their players were in full uniform, and their pre-game warm-up was intimidating.

[English]

To boot, they brought a cheering squad and had chants, makeup and even signage. My favourite poster said, "GET YOUR OWN WATER!"

A great time was had by all, including some post-game merriment over pizza and beverages, of course those suitable for minors. Though the final score favoured the aging squad of MPs, helped by some younger staffers, I admit, the big winners, as usual, were the pages. Their dedication on the pitch is only surpassed by their dedication to this chamber and all of us who serve in it.

Three cheers for the pages. Hip hip hooray!

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after Beijing interfered in two elections to help the Prime Minister, after Beijing threatened several members of Parliament, after Beijing paid \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation to influence the Prime Minister, he finally appointed a rapporteur to investigate. However, that rapporteur is himself a member of the Trudeau Foundation and a friend of the Prime Minister, who is now trying to hide the truth.

Will he finally fire the rapporteur and call a public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only person here who is trying to hide the truth seems to be the Leader of the Opposition himself.

The Privy Council Office offered him access to the most sensitive documents that the special rapporteur reviewed in order to reach the conclusions that were made public last week. The Leader of the Opposition refused, because he would rather play petty politics on an issue that affects Canadian democracy.

It should be in the interest of all members of the House of Commons to support measures that will strengthen our democratic institutions.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no, what I refused is to be silenced.

Oral Questions

The government will not pull me into a room, stamp public documents “secret” and then tell me I cannot speak, because we need to speak about the fact that Beijing interfered to help the Prime Minister in two successive elections, that Beijing threatened members of Parliament to try to win influence and that Beijing gave \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation to buy the favour of the Prime Minister. Then he named a former member of the Trudeau Foundation and a ski buddy to look into the matter, who has now only tried to cover it up.

Will he fire this fake rapporteur and call a public inquiry now?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada who is silencing himself by refusing to take the briefings. It is the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada who is covering his own eyes from the same information that Mr. Johnston had access to, which other non-partisan professional public servants had access to. It leaves Canadians wondering why. Is it because he would rather play partisan games than do the hard work? I think we know the answer to that question and it is yes.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one does not need a fake briefing or a “secret” stamp to know what the documents say. They have already been quoted verbatim in the media because of leaks by a seriously distressed security agency that is trying to expose what has gone on behind the scenes.

We now know what is surreal. There are at least two police stations run by Beijing, a foreign dictatorship, in Canada. The minister said they were closed. We have now found out that not only are they open, but they got tax dollars from the government.

Will they shut the police stations and call a public inquiry now?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada is sinking in the quicksand of his own logic when calling the briefings fake. What does he think the public servants who work in the security establishment have been doing, other than advising the government on how we can protect the people who defend our democracy every day?

If he is seriously about it, he will take the briefings, roll up his sleeves, sit at the table and help us defend our democracy from foreign interference.

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what do I think the public servants at CSIS have been doing? I know what they have been doing. They have been picking up the phone and calling the media to blow the whistle on the cover-up on that side of the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

They have proved that there are at least two police stations that are still open and that got tax dollars from the government. These are police stations run by Beijing, not Canada.

Will the government finally shut down these police stations and call a public inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader is the one who wants to cover his eyes from the information.

[*English*]

We have insisted that we are prepared to work with the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada to make sure that he has access to the same classified information that Mr. Johnston had, that the two panels who verified the integrity of the 2019 and 2021 elections had, that NSICOP will have and that NSIRA will have. It is he and he alone who refuses to take this issue seriously because he refuses to take the briefing.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I refuse to be silenced, unlike members of the government.

Given that the tradition in this place is that opposition members can pose questions to any member of the government, my question is for the leader of the NDP. He has said that he wants a public inquiry. Now is the time for him to prove it.

Will the member leading the NDP state clearly now that either the government calls a public inquiry or he will break off his coalition?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have watched as a party that once recognized David Johnston as one of the most outstanding—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt and ask that the hon. member start over. It just got noisy all of a sudden. I am not sure exactly what happened. I will ask everyone to take a deep breath.

Please restart.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, what we have seen is that members of the party opposite, which once recognized David Johnston not only as an outstanding Canadian but also as somebody worthy of being the Governor General of this country, appointed under Stephen Harper, now, because his report does not conform to the party's politics and does not conform to its political interests, are attacking and maligning his character. This is part of a pattern of the party opposite. It is more interested in politics. It is more interested in making partisan points than it is in the facts on the ground.

There is not a member of the House who does not stand strongly and firmly in support of democracy and against those—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Let us get right to the point, Mr. Speaker. David Johnston's report on Chinese interference is a farce. No one accepts it except the Prime Minister and China, which is having a great laugh.

There is no way we are going to let the Prime Minister get away with not calling a public inquiry.

Oral Questions

What would it mean if there were no public inquiry? That would mean no inquiry into the threats against elected officials, no inquiry into the Trudeau Foundation, no inquiry into the intimidation of the Chinese diaspora and no inquiry into the 11 candidates who were funded by China. This charade serves only to protect the Prime Minister.

When will there be an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I once again encourage the leader of the Bloc Québécois to accept the government's offer to access the most sensitive and specific details that Mr. Johnston and the committee of parliamentarians, which includes a representative from the Bloc Québécois and from each of the other opposition parties, had access to. I would encourage him to access all that information and get all the facts before coming to unfounded partisan conclusions.

This is a serious matter that requires a serious response. I invite the Bloc Québécois to do exactly that.

The Speaker: There are some distinct voices that we can recognize in the House. I am sure that they would not want to be named publicly.

[*English*]

There are some distinct voices, in both languages, I might say. That is very Canadian, but it is still not parliamentary. I am sure the hon. members do not want me to name them, so we will just go on to the next question.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this report seeks to protect the Prime Minister, not to shed light on Chinese interference. That is why no one has changed their mind about the need for a public inquiry. Quebeckers and Canadians alike are calling for an inquiry. The polls are clear.

This report that is soft on the Prime Minister was written by a man who was selected by the Prime Minister. That is not what the public and the House want.

News flash: The Bloc Québécois will hound the Prime Minister every day until he launches this inquiry.

Does he understand that he will not get away with this that easily?

• (1430)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I invite my colleague from La Prairie to talk to his leader and convince him to take advantage of the government's serious offer to share highly sensitive intelligence, so that the leader of the Bloc Québécois and his colleague who sits on the committee of parliamentarians in charge of looking into precisely this type of issue can look at the very facts that Mr. Johnston and the committee of parliamentarians will see to reach their conclusions.

I think that is the least the Bloc Québécois can do on such an important issue.

[*English*]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned this weekend that negotiations with Stellantis to resume the production of the EV battery factory in Windsor are not going well. I do not know why the Conservatives are moaning about this. This is very serious. There are 2,500 jobs at stake, and it is the future of the automotive sector of our country.

Will the government ensure that those jobs do not end up going to the U.S. and that, instead, we keep those jobs here in Canada and do everything possible to make this deal go forward? While the Conservatives want this deal to not go forward, we want it to go forward.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer, absolutely, is yes. We will ensure that the deal goes forward. We will ensure that the jobs will stay in Canada. That is why we have a \$120-billion clean economy plan.

What else will we ensure? We are going to ensure that Ontario pays its fair share, because this is an investment in a particular province, and we know Canada is a country of regions and regional equity is really important. We are going to ensure that the company comes forward with a reasonable offer as well.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government needs to back up those words with action and protect the factory.

[*Translation*]

Across Canada, rent prices are skyrocketing, and Quebec is no exception. Rent keeps increasing at a breakneck pace. In Montreal, rent for a one-bedroom unit is now more than \$2,100. For most Quebeckers, that means there is not much left to pay the bills and buy groceries.

When will this government finally step up and put an end to this crisis?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I would like to remind him that, since our initiative with the national housing strategy, Quebec has received more than \$5 billion to build or renovate thousands of housing units. We will continue to work with the Government of Quebec, particularly on the third round of the rapid housing initiative that we have just come to an agreement on with the province.

Oral Questions

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am in trouble. I am being investigated, and my company is being investigated, but my colleagues should not worry; it is going to be okay. I have appointed my long-time neighbour and friend to investigate. Wait; sorry, I thought for a moment I was the Prime Minister.

Appointing one's friend to investigate oneself is unethical, absolutely. No one other than the Liberals puts any faith in this old friend's report.

What will it take for the Liberals to finally call a public inquiry?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I quote: "Mr. Johnston has a strong record of public service, a broad base of support and an impressive list of achievements. He has extensive legal expertise, a comprehensive understanding of government and a deep appreciation of the duties and tasks now before him.... David Johnston represents the best of Canada." That was said by Stephen Harper.

It is interesting that somebody whom the Conservatives lifted up and venerated as one of the greatest Canadians, when he disagrees with them, suddenly is roadside trash. Suddenly, the things he says mean nothing. It is despicable, and I have great disregard for the way in which somebody—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1435)

The Speaker: Are we okay to continue? There is a lot of chatter going on. It is nice to see members getting along, but if they want to talk among themselves, they should go into the lobby or leave. They do not have to be here. If they want to talk among themselves, that is okay, but they should not do it here when people are trying to hear the question and the answer. Do I have everyone's agreement on that? Very good.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a conflict of interest arises when there is an appearance of conflict. Appointing an old friend to investigate oneself is an absolute appearance of conflict. To do that knowingly is completely unethical. Therefore, we get to the point where we have to ask why. Why would someone appoint a friend? What are they hiding? Why would a public inquiry not be called? The question Canadians ask every day now is this: What are they hiding?

I will ask again. What will it take for the Liberals to finally get rid of this conflict of interest report and call a public inquiry?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, David Johnston has been a great friend to Canada. He is somebody who has dedicated his entire life. The idea that Mr. Johnston, after a lifetime of dedicated service, including service that the party opposite called him into—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will ask the government House leader to start over. I am having a hard time hearing. There are some comments being made and some shouting taking place. We will wait until everyone calms down.

The government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that David Johnston has dedicated his life to this country.

The reality is that national security is something that I know every member of the House is deeply seized with, and that is precisely why we are having a hard time understanding why the Leader of the Opposition refuses to take information, why he refuses to take his hands from in front of his face and look at the information he has been asked to look at in the interest of national security so that we can work together to preserve the democracy we all so deeply care about.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister appointed a family friend and Trudeau Foundation member to investigate, more like cover up, foreign interference by Beijing in our democracy. That family friend then appointed another Trudeau Foundation member to supposedly clear them of their conflict of interest, and then hired a lifetime Liberal donor to work for them. This has been a sham from the very beginning. Canadians do not have confidence in this process.

That is why they want a public inquiry, and that is why that was what was passed in the House. Will the Prime Minister call one today?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives can continue to malign Mr. Johnston despite the fact that he has distinguished public service, which was recognized by a former Conservative prime minister, Stephen Harper.

The fact is that his first report speaks for itself in its quality. It looked at the most accessible information and verified that the 2019 and 2021 elections were free and fair, and it carves out a path in order to bring Canadians along in a way in which we can protect our democratic institutions. It is solely the Conservatives who want to continue to engage in partisanship rather than defend the national interest. They should reverse course.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister does not know what a conflict of interest is, let me give him an example. The Trudeau Foundation takes \$140,000 from the dictatorship in Beijing. Then, in investigating foreign interference, the Prime Minister, who shares the same name as the foundation that was the target of a foreign influence operation, appoints a member of that very foundation, two members of that foundation, in fact, to investigate foreign interference.

They do not understand what a conflict of interest is, and that is exactly why we need a public inquiry: to get to know what these Liberals knew and when they knew it, and so we can restore confidence in our democratic institutions.

Will they call the inquiry today?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the person whose character they are maligning is actually David Johnston, the person whom they appointed to look into the allegations against former Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney. It was okay for them to choose him to look into malfeasance for their former prime minister and former leader, but now, all of a sudden, they do not trust him. All of a sudden, he is not a credible Canadian.

It is beyond all reasonableness that they attack and malign, frankly, anybody who stands in the way or disagrees with advancing their political interest.

• (1440)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it turns out that the Prime Minister's special rapporteur was not that special after all, except maybe for his ties to the Prime Minister's family and his attachment to Communist China.

What other reason could there be for Mr. Johnston to reject an independent public inquiry into Beijing's interference despite a majority vote in the House, the recommendations of national security experts, and the wishes of the majority of Canadians?

The Prime Minister picked the title, the mandate and the findings of the possibly special, but definitely not independent, rapporteur. Will the Prime Minister end this circus and order an independent public inquiry today?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken the threat of foreign interference seriously from the moment we formed the government.

The former Conservative government was in power in 2013 when intelligence agencies detected the growing threat of foreign interference. The Conservatives, however, did absolutely nothing to strengthen our democratic institutions. We have done exactly the opposite since we formed the government.

We will rely on reports by experts from everywhere to strengthen our democratic institutions.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what makes the Prime Minister's special rapporteur so special: Beijing's President considers him to be an old friend of China; he established a Confucius Institute, which is linked to the Beijing regime, at the University of Waterloo; he received an honorary doctorate from a member of the Chinese Communist Party; three of his daughters studied at universities in China; he was a member of the Trudeau Foundation, which received \$140,000 from the Beijing regime; and he himself boasted about being a close friend of the Trudeau family.

Will the Prime Minister end this glaring conflict of interest today by launching an independent public inquiry, which will now also have to shed light on the appointment of his friend as special rapporteur?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my colleague opposite should consult his former boss, Mr.

Harper, the former Conservative prime minister of Canada, who asked this individual, Mr. Johnston, to serve not only as the Governor General of Canada, but also as an adviser to the former Conservative government about an issue as important as a public inquiry into the Airbus situation.

If they were confident that this individual had sufficient judgment carry out those duties, I think it is unfortunate that they have lost that confidence for partisan reasons.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all human rights groups in Canada from the Chinese diaspora community are calling for a public inquiry into Beijing's interference.

Mehmet Tohti, representing the Uyghur nation in Canada, pro-democracy dissidents in Hong Kong, the Falun Gong and Tibetan independence fighters—all of whom were already experiencing Chinese intimidation tactics on Canadian soil long before this scandal broke—denounced the Liberals in *The Globe and Mail*. These Canadian citizens have been abandoned by their own government.

The Liberals must now do right by these individuals and call an independent public inquiry.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the member and all of my colleagues in the House.

It goes without saying that if any diplomats here in Canada fail to comply with the Vienna Convention, we will, of course, declare them *persona non grata*. That is exactly what we did with the former Chinese consul in Toronto, Zhao Wei.

Under the circumstances, I would be happy to work with my colleague to ensure that we continue to support the Uyghur community and shine a light on human rights violations in China and around the world.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am not the one asking for this. They are.

The government needs to stop using security reasons as an excuse whenever the issue of Chinese interference comes up. We do not have the memory of a goldfish. We remember the case of Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen who was tortured in Syria. There were plenty of security issues in that file. However, there was an independent public inquiry into the matter that, moreover, was initiated by a Liberal government. Clearly, when they want to, they are able to launch such an investigation.

Why do they not want to do that in this case?

Oral Questions

• (1445)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, the independent special rapporteur, Mr. Johnston, meticulously reviewed classified information. He verified the findings of two other independent panels regarding the fact that the 2019 and 2021 elections were free and fair. Now, he is recommending that we invite all Canadians and everyone to have an open and transparent conversation about creating new tools to defend our democratic institutions.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, am I to understand that the Liberals can organize a public inquiry into events that happened in Syria and that involved the secret services of three countries, but they cannot organize one into Chinese interference in Canada?

Something is missing, and that something is political will. It would take political will to rise above partisan politics and protect our democracy. It would take political will to protect citizens of Chinese origin who are really feeling the sting of the regime's intimidation.

When will the Liberals get their act together and order an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague about putting Canadians and members of all the diaspora communities at the centre of our approach. This is exactly what Mr. Johnston recommends, namely, that we hold public hearings to engage in a conversation based on facts, not on fear, and to study all our options for creating new tools to protect our institutions.

This is not a partisan issue. It is a Canadian undertaking.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, NDP-Liberal tax hikes make life cost more for struggling Canadians. The first carbon tax makes everything more expensive, and it fuels inflation, so most Canadians are paying more than they will ever get back. The second carbon tax will add over \$1,100 more per household, and there is no fake rebate scheme for that one.

Combined, that is almost \$4,000 in new taxes per Alberta family, and it hurts low-income Canadians the most. When will the costly coalition axe the carbon taxes so Canadians can afford gas, groceries and home heating?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time we put forward an affordability measure, whether it is dental, rental or the Canada child benefit, the opposition votes against it. Its members have no credibility on affordability.

By the way, the climate action rebate is an affordability measure. Eight out of 10 families will get more back than they pay at the pumps. While the opposition is focused on cryptocurrency and conspiracy theories, we are focused on Canadians, affordability and fighting climate change.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the most recent report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirms that the Prime Minister's new fuel regulations are regressive and that lower-income households will pay proportionally more than higher-income households.

However, the Prime Minister's website says that the Liberals will cut taxes for the middle class, while asking the wealthiest Canadians to pay a bit more.

Since the Prime Minister does not know how to tell the truth, can he explain to single mothers in Quebec why this new tax is going to cost them so much?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree that we need to make sure that life is affordable. We have implemented a lot of measures to ensure that things will be affordable in the future.

However, it is also important that we reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We need a plan to fight climate change, which we and almost all of the other parties in the House have. The Conservatives are the only ones who do not have a plan to fight climate change. They want to leave our children and grandchildren with a poor future.

We need a plan to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. Our plan is to leave money in the pockets of Quebeckers and Canadians, something this government cannot seem to grasp.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer was clear. This will cost Quebeckers and Canadians an extra \$436. Is this a plan to help the environment? No, it is a plan that makes everyone poorer.

Does the single mom who has to put gas in her car to take her kids to soccer understand that this new tax is going to cost her an extra \$436 a year, while the government tries to make everyone believe the opposite?

Who is telling the truth? Is it the Parliamentary Budget Officer or this government?

• (1450)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what he plans to say to mothers when their children no longer have clean air to breathe because of problems caused by climate change. I would like to ask my colleague what the price should be for a healthy environment.

Not only do the Conservatives have no plan to act on climate change, but when we propose measures to help Canadians, the Conservatives vote against them.

We are here to fight climate change, protect our children and make life more affordable.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Halifax is over \$2,500. That is a 25% jump from last year, and workers' wages are not keeping up. People can no longer afford to pay rent because the Liberals are allowing big housing corporations to buy up rental units and jack up the rents.

Families should not have to compete with multi-million dollar corporations to find a place to call home. When are the Liberals going to stand up for Canadians and make rent affordable?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague on the fact that speculative investments in real estate contribute to higher prices. That is why our government imposed a tax on residential real estate owned by non-Canadians. We have imposed a moratorium to stop foreign investments in this country.

We will continue to work with all the provinces because it is a shared responsibility.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wrote an urgent letter to the ministers of public safety and immigration about 700 Punjabi international students who are victims of a targeted exploitation scheme. A consultant used fake university admission letters for their student visas without their knowledge. As a result, 150 students are scheduled to be deported.

This is unacceptable. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship says that victims of fraud should not be punished. We need more than words. Will the government immediately stay the deportation orders for these students and provide them with a pathway to permanent status?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear, our focus is on identifying culprits, not penalizing victims. Victims of fraud would have an opportunity to demonstrate their situation and present evidence to support their case. We recognize the immense contributions international students bring to our country. We will continue supporting them.

Oral Questions

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, thousands of Nova Scotians had to flee their homes as wildfires spread across the province.

One fire is ongoing and still not under control in the Upper Tantallon and Hammonds Plains areas of my riding of Halifax West. People's homes have been put at risk in the blink of an eye. The situation is so serious that Halifax regional municipality has declared a state of local emergency.

Could the Minister of Emergency Preparedness update the House on the situation on the ground and the conversations our government has been having with the province?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Halifax West for this very important question and for the strong advocacy of all of our colleagues from Nova Scotia.

Let me first take the opportunity to commend the incredible hard work being done by firefighters, first responders and community volunteers, who have been working tirelessly to protect Nova Scotians throughout this event.

We are hearing reports that many homes have been lost, and our thoughts are with the over 16,000 people who have been displaced during this extremely challenging time. My office has been in regular contact with our provincial counterparts. I spoke with Minister John Lohr of the provincial government this morning to ensure that they will have the support they need. Our shared priority is the safety of all Nova Scotians. We will be there to help all of those impacted as they recover from this tragic event.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, pay their mortgages and put gas in their cars, the Liberals are doubling down on their disastrous carbon tax, a tax that will increase the cost of a litre of gas by 41¢ and increase the price of everything.

Now, the Liberals' second carbon tax would add 17¢. Including GST, that is 61¢. Just how high does the Prime Minister want prices to go?

• (1455)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not seem to realize that there is a cost to climate change.

There was a \$9-billion impact to the Canadian economy, in B.C. in particular, from the fires, drought and floods. Six hundred people died under the heat dome, and there was a \$4-billion impact from hurricane Fiona. Fires are raging in Nova Scotia and northern Alberta.

What is it going to take for the Conservatives to stop the denial and take climate change seriously?

Oral Questions

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister does not care about monetary policy, Canadians pay the price.

These combined carbon taxes would cost Saskatchewan families \$2,840. That means fewer available dollars for groceries, gas and mortgage payments. The Liberal financial crisis has already forced 1.5 million Canadians to use food banks in a single month.

With gas prices already at \$1.60 a litre, just how high does the government want prices to go?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are barely at the start of the hot summer season and fires and forest fires are burning in several places in Canada, which will entail extraordinary costs for families, municipalities, the provinces and the federal government. It is totally irresponsible of the Conservatives to want to not only get rid of the price on pollution, but also vote against the budget that proposes meaningful measures to help families while inflation is high. It is irresponsible.

[*English*]

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, carbon tax 1 and 2 would hammer Atlantic Canadians, with it ranging from \$2,081 in P.E.I. to \$2,166 in my home province.

Atlantic premiers, including the premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, begged the Prime Minister to not put carbon tax on home heating fuel. Their request fell on deaf ears.

Now these premiers, including Premier Furey, ask the environment minister to not implement carbon tax 2. Will the Liberal government stop trampling over the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and axe this useless carbon tax?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from our colleagues on both sides of the House about the devastating fires in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. I would like to remind my colleagues about the devastation of hurricane Fiona. All that comes with a price. It is sad that the others do not have a plan to address all this because there is more coming. I hope and pray that no one is hurt in this because there are more disasters coming. We have a plan to address this climate change. I wish the people across the aisle did.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there they go again with that stupid guilt trip. Fishermen like the Jacobs brothers—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry. I know it is an emotional word, but I do not think it is a parliamentary word. I am going to let the hon. member start over and use proper language, please.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Speaker, there they go again with that unbelievable guilt trip. The Jacobs brothers from Fogo Island and fishermen like them who take to the ocean in Canada's most dangerous profession are going to be hammered when a carbon tax is placed on the very fuel that they need to feed their families. Will

the current government that knows its carbon tax is a failure axe this useless carbon tax and stop trampling on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that we can all agree that affordability is very important. That is why we have put into place programs like the heat pump program, which will directly benefit Atlantic Canadians disproportionately across the country.

However, it is also important that we actually have a plan to fight climate change, which is an existential threat to the future of the human race. It is appalling that the party opposite has no plan to fight climate change. It has no plan for the economy of the future in terms of building an economy that can thrive in a low-carbon future. Later this week, I will be in Newfoundland to make a major announcement that is the direct result of having an appropriate, thoughtful plan to fight climate change.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to rapporteur David Johnston, Chinese interference is everyone's fault. Yes, it is the fault of the media, CSIS and officials. In short, it is everyone's fault except that of China and, above all, that of the government.

Seriously, the government wants an inquiry into Chinese interference that does not talk about China's interference or about the Liberals, who were the targets. No one will accept such a charade.

When will there be an independent public commission of inquiry?

• (1500)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the government, we took action from the start to create authorities to review our measures to counter foreign interference in our democratic institutions.

A committee of parliamentarians representing all parties and having access to the most sensitive information will evaluate all measures that are in place and make recommendations to the government on how we can further strengthen the measures we implemented.

That is precisely the work we look forward to doing with all parliamentarians.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible what the government would have us swallow if we were to accept Mr. Johnston's findings.

The investigation into Chinese interference would not be about interference, simply about the bureaucratic process. David Johnston, the man chosen by the Prime Minister, would be at the helm to the very end. Furthermore, his findings would only be disclosed behind closed doors to people who would then be sworn to secrecy for the rest of their lives.

That is ridiculous. If that is not an attempt to obfuscate, what is it?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of Canada's national security allies are taking appropriate action to protect Canada's most secret national security information. I know the Bloc Québécois does not like that, but that is exactly how a responsible government works.

However, we have accepted the special rapporteur's recommendations on the difficulties in order to share information with political leaders within the government. The good news is that my colleague from Public Safety and the Prime Minister have addressed these deficiencies.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister is dropping the hammer on Canadian families who are already struggling to put food on the table. He is crushing Canadians with yet another carbon tax on July 1.

Here is what is going to happen: Canadian farmers are already facing \$150,000 a year in carbon taxes on carbon tax 1. Carbon tax 2 will make farming financially impossible. It will also increase diesel prices 25¢ a litre, further driving up the cost of food. Eight million Canadians are already using a food bank every single month. The Liberals should be embarrassed. Why does this Prime Minister not realize that when the government increases taxes, farmers go bankrupt and Canadians go hungry?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I find very disturbing is that we have not heard a single word about the wildfires from the Conservative Party of Canada that are raging across the country right now. Instead of talking about the impacts—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I just want to remind people that shouting someone down can be considered a form of bullying, and nobody wants to be accused of being a bully.

The hon. minister from the top, please.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I guess I hit a nerve with the Conservatives, because they are quite agitated about the fact that I pointed out—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan has a very strong voice and tends to drown everyone out. I just want to remind him to keep it down.

Oral Questions

The hon. minister from the top again, please.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I guess I hit a nerve with the Conservatives, because they are recognizing that they have not spoken about wildfires and the thousands of their own constituents who have been driven from their homes.

Instead of talking about the real impact and cost of climate change, they choose to talk about the fact that we have a plan and are actually fighting it because we care about Canadians, we care about their future, and there is no future for Canadians if we are not protecting their livelihoods, and their lives quite frankly, and making sure that we are fighting climate change while protecting them.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not hear the Liberals talk about agriculture.

Carbon tax 1 is already driving up the cost of food production. Now carbon tax 2 will increase the cost of diesel, pricing our farmers out of the market.

Inflating the price of groceries makes it more expensive for families to put food on the table. Rising input costs put our Canadian farmers at a competitive disadvantage to the point where we are going to be bringing in food from South America cheaper than we can grow it in our own backyard here at home.

Why is the Prime Minister set on crushing Canadian farmers with taxes and starving Canadian families?

• (1505)

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, farmers are the first to be affected by climate change and extreme weather events. Encouraging the biofuels industry means encouraging canola farmers, so I am rather shocked that our Conservative colleagues do not see how this is a good thing for canola farmers.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is not doing anything to make food more affordable. With its plan for a second carbon tax, farmers will be even more overburdened and the price of food will continue to rise. A record number of people are visiting food banks, like Moisson Beauce in my riding, which does not have enough resources to keep the shelves stocked.

We need policies that reduce the price of food and inputs for farmers. When will the Prime Minister make feeding Canadians a priority?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to remind my colleague of some of the measures that we put in place to help those who need it most, including the Canada child benefit and the various benefits for low-income workers and caregivers.

Oral Questions

I also want to take this opportunity to remind the House that the local food infrastructure fund is now open. Money from this fund can be used to pay for equipment for food banks, community gardens and many other organizations in our community.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the first Filipina member of this House, I join my colleagues in working to strengthen ties between Canada and the Philippines.

Canada is home to nearly one million people of Filipino origin, and that number is growing every single day. As we conclude Asian Heritage Month, and on the eve of Filipino Heritage Month, can the Minister of Foreign Affairs outline the vital role that this relationship plays as part of our government's ambitious, new Indo-Pacific strategy?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend from Mississauga—Streetsville for her important advocacy and her fantastic work.

It was my first trip to the Philippines, and we know the country is extremely important in the context of our Indo-Pacific strategy. I had the chance to meet with government members, as well as civil society and business leaders.

Of course, as we head into Filipino Heritage Month, I look forward to engaging even more with the Filipino community. I was in Winnipeg just last week doing that, and I look forward to working with my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville on this very issue.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$300,000: that is how much the Liberal government has gifted to charities identified as hosting Beijing's illegal police stations in Canada. The government famously disqualified faith-based charities from the same student summer jobs funding for not agreeing to Liberal ideology.

Apparently, though, charities identified as hosting Beijing's illegal police stations do qualify as matching the Liberals' values attestation.

Why is the government funding Beijing's illegal police stations instead of shutting them down?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every single one of us in this chamber has a responsibility to take the issue of foreign interference seriously. What we have seen from the Conservatives is the exact opposite.

They have voted against legislation to give our national security establishment more powers to fight this scourge.

We heard their own national campaign director in the last election say that members of their caucus did not take this issue seri-

ously and now we have the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada who refuses to take the briefing. To him, I say, "Take the briefing and take this issue seriously, so that we can fight foreign interference together."

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I spent most of my adult life working in the criminal justice system and I can say, unequivocally, that I have never seen bail in such a precarious state. After eight years of the Liberal government, violent crime is up 32%.

The wheels really started to fall off with the passing of Bill C-75 and now the Liberals have tabled amendments to bail that, in my reading, would not have applied to Constable Pierzchala's alleged killer.

When will the Liberal government undo the harmful effects of Bill C-75, to end catch-and-release and keep Canadians safe?

● (1510)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-75 codified a number of Supreme Court of Canada decisions and did not fundamentally change the law of bail in Canada.

However, listening to provincial premiers, provincial ministers of justice and public safety, and police officers, we have proposed amendments to the bail regime to answer their concerns.

Here is the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police: "We commend the government for acting on the urgency for legislative change and for recognizing that our...amendments were not calling for a complete overhaul of Canada's bail system".

We are listening and we are getting results.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of these Liberals, violent crime is up 32%. Recently, in Toronto, a 75-year-old woman was approached from behind and stabbed in the neck.

This Liberal bail legislation fails on bail reform. Under the proposed bill, the accused killer of OPP Constable Greg Pierzchala and countless other repeat violent offenders would still have been released on bail.

Will the government stop the catch-and-release agenda, stop making our streets more dangerous and undo its irresponsible changes in Bill C-75?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police: “We are convinced that the legislative changes put forth in Bill C-48 will go a long way to help eliminate the preventable harm and senseless tragedies attributable to violent and repeat offenders across Canada.”

We heard from provincial justice ministers and public safety ministers that we needed to attack repeat violent offenders with weapons. That is precisely what we are doing. We have done it in consultation with stakeholders. We have worked and listened to police associations across Canada and we have a bill that will strengthen our legislative framework.

* * *

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Coast Guard protects our coasts and oceans from the Pacific all the way to the Atlantic and everything in between. Its work keeps Canadians safe on the water and creates the conditions for a thriving blue economy.

Can the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard please inform the House how we are making sure that the Coast Guard has the ships it needs to serve Canadians?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for his great work on coastal matters.

The Canadian Coast Guard does provide critical services in our waters, everything from aiding navigation to spill cleanup and saving lives, which is why I was so pleased to announce \$2.5 billion in federal investment to build up to 61 new vessels for the Coast Guard. That will give it the modern capabilities that it needs while creating good-paying jobs right across Canada.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the development of a co-managed marine safety centre with the Pacheedaht First Nation in my riding seems to have been abandoned by the government. This project is supposed to be a meaningful effort for reconciliation and protecting our oceans.

When I previously raised this issue with the minister of fisheries and oceans, she did not answer my question. Moreover, there was no mention of the agreement with the Pacheedaht, who have now been waiting for over three years.

Therefore, I will ask this again: Why does it appear that the government is ignoring the Pacheedaht First Nation and stalling the development of this important project? When will we see the commitment?

Oral Questions

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our and my commitment to indigenous reconciliation is absolute. It is a really strong focus of our government, including our funding. It is a very strong focus of the fisheries ministry, the department and me personally. I will investigate the situation that the member has just raised. I commit to our government doing everything it can to ensure that any commitments are met. Reconciliation is one of our government's very top priorities.

* * *

• (1515)

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, on June 19, 2019, as some members of this place will recall, we voted that we were in a climate emergency. The next day, we bought a pipeline. Now, Canada is hotter and drier; we are experiencing wildfires across this country. We have to thank our firefighters and be so grateful to them.

I know the hon. Minister of Emergency Preparedness is working very hard. Could he tell us how many provinces have wildfires right now? How much earlier in the season are we experiencing that Canada is in flames?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are currently 179 wildfires burning in Canada, 68 of which are out of control. Those fires are in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Over 20,000 people have been evacuated from their communities, and nearly a million hectares of forest have been lost to these fires. Frankly, this season has begun weeks ahead of what we would normally anticipate. These fires are occurring at unprecedented levels.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL CÔTÉ

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in honour of Michel Côté.

I would invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

Business of Supply

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during question period, the MP for Burlington did something indirectly that she is not allowed to do directly, which is to imply that two of the members of this House were not here.

Both myself and the MP for South Shore—St. Margarets raised the fires that are burning out of control in our provinces. It is disgraceful that the member said otherwise. She also misled the House.

I think she should reconsider her words and apologize. We raised this issue. We are here, and we are doing our jobs.

The Speaker: I am not quite clear on what the hon. minister said.

Does she want to respond to that?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honestly not sure what the member opposite is talking about. I did not refer to someone being present or not in the House. I was referring to questions in question period.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—OPIOID CRISIS

The House resumed from May 18 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:19 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 amendment to the motion of the member for Carleton relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1520)

[Translation]

The Speaker: The question is on the amendment.

[English]

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of amendment to House]

• (1530)

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

(Division No. 334)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCaulley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shiple
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 114

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron

Business of Supply

Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Casey
Chagger
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garon
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski

Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Chabot
Chahal
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough

Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 208

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]**The Deputy Speaker:** The next question is on the main motion.[*English*]

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.[*Chair read text of motion to House*]**The Deputy Speaker:** 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. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I suspect there is a willingness to have a recorded vote.

● (1550)

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

(Division No. 335)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
Doherty	Dowdall

Business of Supply

Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Damoff	DeBellefeuille
Ellis	Epp	Desbiens	Desilets
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Fast	Ferrier	Dhillon	Diab
Findlay	Gallant	Dong	Drouin
Généreux	Genuis	Dubourg	Duclos
Gladu	Godin	Duguid	Dzerowicz
Goodridge	Gourde	Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Gray	Hallan	Fergus	Fillmore
Hoback	Jeneroux	Fisher	Fonseca
Kelly	Kmiec	Fortier	Fortin
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Fragiskatos	Fraser
Kurek	Kusie	Freeland	Fry
Lake	Lantsman	Gaheer	Garon
Lawrence	Lehoux	Garrison	Gaudreau
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gazan	Gerretsen
Liepert	Lloyd	Gill	Gould
Lobb	Maguire	Green	Guilbeault
Martel	Mazier	Hajdu	Hanley
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean	Hardie	Hepfner
Melillo	Moore	Holland	Housefather
Morantz	Morrison	Hughes	Hutchings
Motz	Muys	Iacono	Idlout
Nater	O'Toole	Ien	Jaczek
Patzer	Paul-Hus	Johns	Joly
Poilievre	Rayes	Jowhari	Julian
Redekopp	Reid	Kayabaga	Kelloway
Richards	Roberts	Khalid	Khera
Rood	Ruff	Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Scheer	Schmale	Kwan	Lalonde
Seeback	Shields	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Shipley	Small	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Soroka	Steinley	Larouche	Lattanzio
Stewart	Strahl	Lauzon	LeBlanc
Stubbs	Thomas	Lebouthillier	Lemire
Tochor	Tolmie	Lightbound	Long
Uppal	Van Popta	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Vecchio	Vidal	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Vien	Viersen	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Vis	Vuong	Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Wagantall	Warkentin	Masse	Mathysen
Waugh	Webber	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Williams	Williamson	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Zimmer — 113		McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
		McLeod	McPherson
		Mendès	Medicino
		Miao	Michaud
		Miller	Morrice
		Morrissey	Murray
		Naqvi	Ng
		Noormohamed	Normandin
		O'Connell	Oliphant
		O'Regan	Pauzé
		Perron	Petitpas Taylor
		Plamondon	Powlowski
		Qualtrough	Robillard
		Rodriguez	Rogers
		Romanado	Sahota
		Sajjan	Saks
		Samson	Sarai
		Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
		Schiefke	Serré
		Sgro	Shanahan
		Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
		Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
		Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
		Sorbara	Sousa
		Ste-Marie	St-Onge
		Sudds	Tassi
		Taylor Roy	Thériault
		Therrien	Thompson
		Trudeau	Trudel
		Turnbull	Valdez

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Bérubé
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin

Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 209

van Koevorden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, if possible, I would appreciate it if my vote in the first vote could be recorded as nay as opposed to yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to change his vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 29 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2023-24

A message from Her Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (A) for the financial year ending March 31, 2024, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the supplementary estimates (A), 2023-24.

* * *

• (1555)

[English]

PETITIONS

OPIOIDS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition of deep concern to the residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands. I mention in particular Leslie McBain, a resident of Pender Island, one of the founders of Moms Stop the Harm. She lost her son tragically in the opioid crisis. So many moms have lost their kids. The efforts of this one group have definitely influenced policy across Canada, and at this point, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Global Commission on Drug Policy, the World Health Organization and the United Nations all recommend drug decriminalization.

We are not so much in an overdose crisis, as the petitioners point out. We are in a poisoning crisis and a public health crisis. We must

Routine Proceedings

listen to the recommendations of social workers, frontline workers, nurses, doctors, drug users and individuals directly involved in the drug-using community and decriminalize drugs in Canada. The only way to save lives is to ensure that there is a safe supply and that there are adequate mental health supports to stop the slaughter of people across this country from fentanyl poisoning and opioids.

JUSTICE

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise once again on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime.

The common people of Swan River are demanding a common-sense solution to repeal the Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies, which have fuelled a surge in crime throughout their community. A surge in robberies by repeat offenders has forced nearly every business to install bars on their windows and buzzers on their doors, and now many local businesses are considering closing their doors for good. To say that crime has significantly impacted the local economy is an understatement.

The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, as they directly threaten their livelihoods and their communities. I support the good people of Swan River.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As you know and I am sure the member knows, we are not supposed to give our own editorial comments on a petition. At the end of presenting his petition, even though the member said he supports the people, he was indirectly doing what he cannot do directly. He was basically saying that he supports the petition.

The Speaker: The point is taken.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise this afternoon to present a petition signed by over 160,000 Canadians across the country and initiated by Caitlin Glasson, a strong trans activist in my community.

The petition recognizes that the world is becoming increasingly hostile to transgender and non-binary folks. It also recognizes that transgender and non-binary people's right to live as themselves is being restricted and removed in many places, including places that have historically been presumed safe. This includes, they point out, more than a dozen U.S. states that have enacted or are considering legislation to eliminate or criminalize gender-affirming care. They also point out that Canada has prided itself on being an inclusive, tolerant and welcoming society for everyone, regardless of gender identity or gender expression.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to extend to transgender and non-binary people the right to successfully claim asylum in Canada, regardless of where they may be applying from.

Government Orders

MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a number of petitions today. The first one comes from Canadians across the country to draw the attention of the House to the report calling for the clergy of religious affiliation to be removed from the Department of National Defence.

The petitioners are concerned about this. They say that this report slanders mainstream Canadian religions. They are concerned that the Canadian Armed Forces might remove chaplains. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to reject the recommendations of this report. They are also calling for the Government of Canada to affirm the rights of all Canadians, including Canadian Armed Forces chaplains, to religious freedom.

• (1600)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting today comes from Canadians across the country who are concerned about the risk of violence increasing to women while they are pregnant.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to quickly pass a bill, which is in front of the House right now. They are calling on the House of Commons to recognize the abuse of pregnant women and the infliction of harm on these women as an aggravating circumstance for sentencing in the Criminal Code.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is from Canadians across the country who are concerned about a Liberal Party platform of 2021 to deny charitable status to organizations with convictions about abortion that differ from those of the Liberal Party.

This would jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters, food banks and other charitable organizations that do not necessarily agree with the Liberal Party of Canada on this matter of conscience. Many Canadians depend on the benefits of these charitable organizations, and the government has previously issued a values test that discriminated against worthy applicants of the Canada summer jobs program, denying funding for any organization that was not willing to check a box endorsing the political positions of the governing party.

Charities and other non-profit organizations should not be discriminated against because of their political views or religious values, and they should not be subject to politicization or a values test. All Canadians have the right, through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to the freedom of expression without discrimination.

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

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I have today is from Canadians from across the country who are outraged and concerned with the comments of Louis Roy of the Quebec college of physicians. He recommended expanding euthanasia to babies, from birth to one year old, who have come into the world with serious health challenges.

This proposed legalized killing of infants is deeply disturbing to these Canadians, and they want to state emphatically that infanticide is always wrong. The petitioners are urging the Government of Canada and the House to block any attempts to allow for euthanising children.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to continue speaking to Bill S-5, which we began debating again a few hours ago. When I started my comments, I made reference to the fact that I think there is a great deal of disappointment from many stakeholders due to the Conservative Party's change of heart. If we were to check Hansard from a couple of weeks back when we were talking about Bill S-5, I suspect one would see that I even implied that the Conservative Party was in favour of Bill S-5.

Something has happened in the last little while that has convinced the Conservative Party to vote against Bill S-5. I do believe that it is a bad decision by the Conservatives. They still have a little bit of time to think about what they are doing with Bill S-5. I hope they will considerate it once again and adopt their original position of voting in favour of Bill S-5 because it does a wide variety of things, all of which, I believe, support the wishes and desires of many Canadians, the constituents we represent.

Government Orders

It is interesting to look at the legislation. It covers a number of areas that I know Canadians are very concerned about. I wanted to highlight a few of those spots and then maybe go into depth on the issue of our environment and how important it is that, as parliamentarians, we do what we can to support legislation of this nature and broaden that support so it goes beyond just legislation. There are many budgetary measures.

Canadians are watching. They are very much concerned about how politicians are voting on important issues of the day, the environment being one of them. It has been really interesting to listen to the debates, not only now but also during second reading. I had the opportunity to not only address the issue in part but also to listen to a good number of people. Whether it was in the House of Commons, the Senate of Canada, or the standing committees of Parliament, we have had a great deal of debate on this issue.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, a substantial piece of legislation that provides a great deal of comfort to Canadians, is being enhanced and given strength after a couple of decades. There are some areas that I know people would be very, very pleased with. There are areas of concern, such as animal testing, for example. We are seeing non-animal testing methods being incorporated to a degree that it is going to be encouraged. I see that as a very strong positive. It is something that should be mentioned during the debate.

It deals with the issue of reconciliation. Thinking about the environment and the stewardship of our environment, how can one not factor in our first nations that have taken such good, quality care of our environment? If we get into the beliefs, heritage and culture of indigenous peoples, we get a very encouraging reflection on our environment and how important it is that we are there for mother earth. We can think of UNDRIP and the recommendations through reconciliation. As a government, we made the commitment to respect UNDRIP and its ruling. We will continue to support that. That is also incorporated into the legislation.

There are ideas about the toxic substances out there and how those substances could be labelled. It is important that the minister has the ability to ensure there is more transparency and accountability on this issue. Again, this is within the legislation. The expectation from the public as a whole is that information is knowledge. Finding out the content of many of these substances through labelling so the government can ensure there is higher transparency is a very strong positive. Those are three of the things I want to provide a brief comment on, as well as emphasize a couple of other points that are really quite encouraging.

• (1605)

I talked about the idea of a right to a healthy environment. This morning there were a number of members who made reference to that aspect of the legislation. It is encouraging to hear members, whether from the Bloc or the NDP in particular, supporting that right in a very tangible way. It was interesting when one member of the Bloc suggested it should be incorporated into Canada's Constitution. Even the principles of protecting the environment and what could be incorporated into the Constitution interest me, but I do not think Canadians as a whole want to see that debate on the Constitution opened up, not at this time, and I suspect, not for quite a while.

However, it emphasizes the point, which is the reason I make reference to it, that people are very much concerned about environmental rights. This bill not only talks about the importance of a right to a healthy environment, but also, for the first time, incorporates it into legislation. I see that as a very strong positive. We will get more details as time goes on as to how that is going to be assured, as well as the protocols and procedures that will be established to ensure Canadians feel comfortable knowing not only that they have that right to a healthy environment, but also that it is incorporated into the legislation for the very first time.

I know the Green Party has some concerns with the legislation. It is with some admiration that I look to the leader of the Green Party and her history on this particular file. She had pointed back, I believe, to 1988. That was the year I was first elected, and I can say that, back in 1988, there was not much debate inside the Manitoba legislature about the environment. There is no doubt that over the last three decades we have seen a substantial growth of public debate and discussion on the issue of the environment. I would acknowledge that she is one Canadian who has been at the forefront of some of these environmental pushes.

Where we disagree would be when I talk, for example, about the right to a healthy environment, I believe it is substantive, but I know members of the Green Party would have liked to have seen more to it than just the statements being referenced in the legislation. The idea of providing strength to the regulations regarding toxic chemicals, and the way in which government needs to play a very strong role, is absolutely critical, and this legislation deals with that.

When I posed questions earlier to, and listened to comments from, in particular the Conservative Party, it was a Conservative member who seemed to be upset with the fact that there are too many regulations and too much paperwork involved with environmental policy. That is what he was making reference to. I would suggest that these regulations are really important.

When we talk about toxic chemicals, legislation does not deal with every aspect of it. Rather, it establishes the framework. We rely on our civil servants to be able to provide the details, through regulations and other forums, so we know we are in fact doing what the principles of the legislation set forward in good part. Therefore, unlike what the Conservative member earlier today was trying to imply, I would suggest to members that good, solid environmental regulations are absolutely critical to supporting the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Government Orders

• (1610)

The member should not be shy in terms of recognizing that, but that was the only member who actually made reference to that. When the critic brought up the issue, I had posed the question in regard to why the Conservative Party had changed its positioning on this legislation, because the only thing we had really heard, officially, coming from the Conservative Party was in regard to the tailings ponds. If the Conservatives were to look at the tailings ponds issue, they would find that there is no substantive difference in terms of what came into the House of Commons during second reading, went into committee and then came back. I would challenge the Conservatives to explain that difference in terms of the degree to which it has caused the Conservative Party to reverse its policy position on the legislation.

The bottom line is that, in regard to the issue of the environment, there is an obligation for legislative measures and budgetary measures. I asked the question in terms of how we mix those things in together, and I want to provide what is a fairly extensive listing of the types of things that we do to complement the legislation. Let us think of it in this way. This is what the Government of Canada is doing today: clean electricity investment tax credit; clean technology manufacturing investment tax credit; clean hydrogen investment tax credit; enhancing the carbon capture, utilization and storage investment tax credit; expanding the eligibility for clean technology investment tax credit; a clean electricity focus for the Canada Infrastructure Bank; supporting clean electricity projects such as the Atlantic Loop; securing major battery manufacturing here in Canada; delivering the Canada growth fund; enhancing the reduced tax rate for zero-emissions technology manufacturers; and supporting clean technology projects.

There are so many things that one could actually make reference to with respect to the environment, including banning harmful single-use plastics and making zero-emissions vehicles that much more affordable. I have already commented extensively in the past about the price on pollution. These are all things, both budgetary measures and legislative measures, which the Government of Canada over the last number of years has put into place as a direct response to listening to what Canadians' expectation of the government is. We are bringing that to Ottawa, listening to what our constituents are saying and developing legislative and budgetary measures that support the desires of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and for good reason.

All one needs to do is take a look at what is happening in our environment today and listen to what is happening around the world. Canada does have a leadership role to play, and this is a government that is living up to that leadership. We see every day, through the minister, with respect to the car he drives, the policies he announces and the budgets he presents to the House of Commons through the Minister of Finance, that this is a government that is committed to protecting our environment.

• (1615)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting. It is almost as if my colleague from the Liberal Party has not actually paid that close attention to the developments that have taken place regarding Bill S-5. When this bill came from the Senate, there were some concerns. In fact, his party

shared some of the concerns that the Conservative Party shares. At the environment committee, which I am pleased to be a part of, we were able to address some of those concerns and not play politics. We worked very diligently to try to find the appropriate balance that we thought would be acceptable to industry, to environmental advocacy groups and to those involved across the board. Not everybody was happy with the way Bill S-5 came out of committee, but certainly the result at that point in time was something that could be supported fairly broadly.

What is interesting is that NDP members moved this amendment at committee, and the Liberals voted against it. Instead of working together, and instead of putting politics aside for the best interests of industry and environmental groups, the Liberals decided to kowtow to their coalition partners and to throw out the jurisdictional issues surrounding provinces and surrounding some of the very sensitive concerns with tailings ponds. Can this member say why, instead of working together, they decided to play politics with an issue that is so important to so many across this country?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting in terms of everything this legislation has actually gone through, whether in the Senate committee meetings or the House of Commons committee meetings. I was not present during those House of Commons standing committee meetings, but I can tell members, from everything I have heard, that the Conservative Party's decision to not support Bill S-5 was because of an amendment that was brought forward by the NDP and then supported. It is an amendment that raises an issue in a public fashion. In terms of substantive action, though, I am not too sure.

Can the member, who will likely get another question, tell us specifically what it is with that particular amendment that would have an outcome such that the Conservative Party has made the decision to ultimately change and flip-flop its position on Bill S-5, given the importance of this legislation? I would suggest that the member cannot clearly demonstrate that.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will start with a little aside to congratulate my colleague from Repentigny for her exceptional work in committee.

In his speech, my colleague spoke about the issue of labelling. The Senate proposed all sorts of amendments concerning labelling, toxic substances and even GMOs.

Why did the Liberals vote against these amendments? Will the Liberals promise to make labelling a focus of the next study to be undertaken soon?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we do know that there would be an ongoing review, because it is mandated from within, with regard to labelling. As I indicated to the member who just provided another question, I was not actually at the committee. What I do know is that there were committee amendments brought forward from different political entities, and I thought there was a high sense of political co-operation. We saw government amendments and also opposition amendments pass, and I suspect there would have been a more detailed answer to the specifics at the committee stage.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, air pollution has very well documented human health risks, and we now know much more about the human health impacts of air pollution, especially particulate in the sub-2.5-micron range, such as from wood smoke. I am wondering why the bill would not address anything, in terms of binding and enforceable standards for air quality. It seems like a considerable omission.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am a former health critic for the Province of Manitoba. The quality of air, whether from stubble burning or forest fires, is an issue that came up periodically when I was acting in that capacity. There is no doubt that emergency facilities, doctors and so forth, fill up. Air pollution is very real. It is tangible. I was not part of every aspect of the legislation. I do not necessarily know exactly what the legislation would do with regard to air quality, but I would concur that it is an issue we should all be concerned about, and I suspect that, at some point in the future, we will even be dealing with it in a more detailed way.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary was speaking before question period about this, and I know he spoke at length about the Conservative Party's flip-flops when it comes to the environment, in particular on the fact that all 338 candidates for the Conservative Party of Canada in the last election ran on a platform that priced pollution. Now, suddenly they do not, and I have heard only one member in the House actually say she regrets having run on that, and I applaud that member for that. I will not call her out by name, but she did such a great job in doing that.

I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary would agree with me that more Conservatives should heed her leadership and stand up to say they regret having run on that commitment, considering they do not believe in it now.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, who am I to defend the Conservatives? I can say that it would be awfully awkward when they take a look at their own party platform. We know that, as candidates, when we go knocking on doors, we are there supporting the party platform. All 338 Conservative candidates made it very clear in the last election that they do support a price on pollution.

Some members have heckled that they take it back, but hindsight is 20/20. The bottom line is that they did do a flip-flop on that. The relevance to that issue, to what we are debating today, is that, once again, we see the Conservative Party taking a flip-flop on an important piece of environmental legislation. I think that Canadians would be very disappointed, given that it includes things such as

the right to a healthy environment. The Conservatives are actually going to be voting against it.

• (1625)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the member for Winnipeg North for recognizing the more than three decades of work that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has put into environmental protection, such as what is in this bill.

He spoke about working in a collaborative fashion. The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands put forward two dozen amendments, amendments that, for example, would have ensured that the so-called right to a healthy environment is not just considered. We need rights protected. That is what her amendment would have ensured. However, as with every single amendment she presented, the same thing happened. They were all voted down.

If the member for Winnipeg North believes in a collaborative approach and in the right to a healthy environment, could he speak to why the governing party did not support ensuring that the right is actually in this bill?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, coming from the province of Manitoba, where the Liberal Party is maybe not as strong as it could be, where we did not have party status, I often found it most effective, when working with the government members and ministers, to work alongside them, to provide suggestions, ideas and amendments and so forth. There are different ways in which one can try to get things passed through. I know there are challenges to not having party status. I faced those challenges for many years in the Manitoba legislature.

There is no doubt the committee could have given more attention to a number of the issues that the leader of the Green Party had brought forth.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple. Why did the Liberals flip-flop from how they voted at committee, in the collaborative environment that we had come to, on a bill that the Liberals were obviously happy with, opposing a similar NDP amendment at committee? Why did they flip-flop and betray the collaborative initiative of a committee that was endeavouring to find that right balance? Why are they prioritizing politics above the environment, industry and what is best for Canadians?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, he did not answer the question I actually posed to him, to tell us what within the tailings ponds the member is so offended by. Instead, he says that we are taking a flip-flop. He should look in a mirror.

The Conservatives are actually saying no to Bill S-5. They are going to vote against Bill S-5 because the leadership within the Conservative Party has given them that instruction. I think there are a number of Conservatives who are scratching their heads and asking why they are doing so. At the end of the day, there is no real rationale other than that the Conservative leader told them to.

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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 Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Correctional Services of Canada; the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Rail Transportation.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and speak to the government's attempts to modernize the Canadian Environmental Protection Act with Bill S-5.

CEPA has not been significantly updated since it was passed in 1989. Through Bill S-5, the government is attempting the first major update since CEPA's inception. However, as members might be aware, Bill S-5 does several things, and some are better than others. I would like to take a minute to run through some of what this bill proposes to do.

Bill S-5 adds language to CEPA that recognizes every Canadian's right to a healthy environment and requires the Government of Canada to protect this right. Within two years, the minister is required to develop an implementation framework as to how that right to a healthy environment would be considered. Bill S-5 also puts language into CEPA that highlights the government's commitment to implement UNDRIP and recognize the importance of considering vulnerable populations when assessing the toxicity of a substance. Bill S-5 also aims to create a stronger regime for substances that are identified as toxic under CEPA and are of the highest risk by creating a schedule, schedule 1, to replace the list of toxic substances.

The industry impacted by CEPA has concerns about the list of toxic substances. While the word "toxic" is being removed, the substances to be regulated are still referred to as "toxic". The plastics industry, for instance, would have an objection to this, in my opinion.

Bill S-5 also sets out the criteria by which the government would look to manage or regulate a substance. Essentially, the bill would create a watch-list. Bill S-5 also claims to allow for environmental risk assessments for drugs to be done solely under the food and drug regulations, and it removes the duplication of such monitoring under CEPA as well. This would be a first, I think, in the government's history, where it has actually tried to reduce red tape and the regulatory burden. Bill S-5 also allows any person to request that a minister assess whether a substance can become toxic; this is toxic in itself. It is very concerning to me, because it could open the government to thousands of requests, and frivolous requests at that.

The environment minister is a very ambitious minister. He likes to create all these plans that say a lot but do very little. He sets targets to be achieved, and he misses them time after time. The minister has a poor track record of meeting targets. Asking him to ensure that the assessment processes are correctly in place and to develop the framework for what a right to a healthy environment looks like, while trying to meet net-zero targets, is a big ask.

Bill S-5 does a lot of potentially complicated things. Moreover, the minister has difficulty drafting a substantive action plan for the environment. How are Canadians to trust that the minister will get these things right, when his track record shows us otherwise? More importantly, how can the industry trust this?

When we speak of the environment, we need to speak of some of the things that are being said. Back when I was a young lad in the early 1960s, I remember we had a civil defence system that was made up of volunteers. This had to do with the fact that we were just a few years out from the Second World War, and there was a concern about nuclear bombs. These things were scaring us at that particular point in time: the missile crisis and the nuclear bomb attacks.

In the 1960s, we were talking about global climate cooling, and we had everybody scared then as well. In the 1970s, we spoke about acid rain and concerns existing around that. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was all about global climate warming. In the year 2000, it was Y2K. Since global warming and global cooling did not seem to match what was happening in reality, we now simply talk about climate change. When we think about the environment, we think about the things that have to be done.

• (1630)

In the seventies, when I was going to university in Edmonton, I remember that there was this choice: One could take the electric trolley or stand out there and smell the diesel exhaust. Being a farm kid, I kind of knew what that was like, but nevertheless, it was important for us to make choices and recognize the difference. It was decided that the electric system would not work under those circumstances, so it went directly to diesel buses. Now, of course, we are going back. We are trying to take a look at electricity, providing we could get a grid that could handle it.

I mention that because it has been 60 years of catastrophic snake oil salesmen predicting different things that could happen. They have predicted how, in 10 years' time, we are going to have cities flooded, how we are going to have all these issues and how animals are going to get extinct. We hear that all the time.

Every once in a while, I go to Drumheller. I take a look at a sign above the canyon there saying that, 10,000 years ago, we were under a kilometre of ice. If one wanted to talk to the Laurentian elites, Montreal actually had two kilometres of ice over top of it at that time.

Things change; the climate changes. That is how we got our rivers. I know I deal with the effects of climate change right now when I have to go out into my field and pick rocks, because that is how they got there. These are the sorts of things we have to realize. Things do change.

I think back to Greenpeace leader, Patrick Moore, the founder, and his push was in nuclear power—

• (1635)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The bill before us, Bill S-5, has no relation to climate change or any of the topics yet referenced. This is not a generalized debate on environmental policy.

This is about a specific bill that is inadequate and that proposes to regulate toxic chemicals and improve their regulation. As much as it pains me to ask, when might the hon. member speak to Bill S-5?

The Deputy Speaker: I will remind members to stick to the topic at hand and to make sure we stay on relevance.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, since it is up to a minister who has a very shaky track record, it is important that I discuss that. However, I will attempt to put all those statements in context, because, of course, we think about the minister and what he has done. It is a new generation of Greenpeace that he was part of. Patrick Moore has completely looked at that group and said the only thing green about it is the money it has brought in, and that comes because of the antics of the group. Therefore, it is important that previous Greenpeace people and previous people who were involved in the environment look and advocate for a common-sense management of our environment, where we would be 180 degrees opposite to the eco-activists who are now influencing all left-wing parties here in Canada. That is the point I had wanted to make on that particular issue.

When I was on the environment committee and, now, as a member of the natural resources committee, I have talked about the need to recognize the contribution that Canada can make to the world. Europe is begging Canada to help stabilize its energy needs. For Europe, the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia has solidified the need to have stable energy partners. Further to that, people in many countries in Europe are seeing the light, evaluating their previous policies and pivoting to return to traditional energy resources. Germany is bringing coal plants back online to meet its energy demands. The Netherlands has temporarily shut down wind farms because of their impact on migratory birds. They are doing a few other things that are hurting their farmers; this, I am sure, is something that we could speak about in another debate.

Last summer, I attended the OSCE meetings in Birmingham, England. We were there to discuss food security, energy security and security in Europe. Certainly, the energy security topic was hotly debated. The Canadian government delegation was led by ideology. I had the privilege of working with other European parliamentarians to push back on this ideological rush to unreliable energy sources at a time when our allies need to be assured that we have stable energy.

Ideology corrupts science. One does not start with an ideological position, look for markers that can be manipulated to support one's position and then proclaim that the science is settled. That is not what science is all about. However, the minister and his people seem to do that just about every time they develop a plan, regulation or new environmental bill.

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Domestically, the government seems to believe that its greenhouse gas targets will be met primarily through the three items of a rapid expansion of EVs, a reduction in fertilizer use and the eventual phasing out of Canada's oil sands. These beliefs are so far out of touch. Sadly, there will be major repercussions for Canada and the world because of these short-sighted policies.

As we move forward as a nation, we should ensure that every action we take is measured. I have spoken many times about this at environment and natural resources committees. Perhaps because of my 34 years as a math and physics teacher, I believe that whatever technology we consider, we should measure the impact from the first shovel we need to dig it up to the last shovel we need to cover it up.

EVs require much more energy to produce than ICE vehicles. There are environmental impacts from rare-earth mineral excavation and chemical processing for any electrical components. Even revamped electrical grids will never be fail-safe. Windmills require hydrocarbons for both manufacturing and maintenance. Used solar panels will need to be disposed of properly. Fortunately, as Canadians, we have the know-how to meet the challenges that we face.

• (1640)

We should be looking for solutions that are tailored to the uniqueness of the communities in which we live. This means we need to celebrate our strengths rather than exaggerate our differences. It means recognizing indigenous leaders who want a future for their young people in a resource rich country and do not want to be dictated to once again by a government that claims to know best. This eco-colonialism is something we have to be cautious of, because we are looking at a government that says as long as we do things its way, it can help us out. That is one of the issues that I believe are so critical.

When I speak to leaders in our indigenous communities, I hear that they are looking for opportunities for their young people and their communities. When they hear governments say they do not want things done that way or that they are shutting things down because they have better jobs for people, that is where the frustration comes in.

It also means caring for each other, giving workers the best opportunities to grow and succeed and fulfilling our role as responsible energy suppliers on the global stage. That is one of the concerns I have. As I said in an article:

When I was first campaigning in 2008, a local energy worker who had worked all around the world told me how proud we should be of Canada's energy sector and its environmental record. He stated that the only ones close were the Australians, and that was only because they were aggressively implementing Canadian state-of-the-art technology.

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The quest for excellence is still part of the Canadian oil and gas industry's DNA, but there have been hurdles, perhaps well intended, that have lessened the industry's ability to remain on the leading edge. Limiting the access of oil and gas to world markets through federal legislation, denigrating the industry at international fora, and advocating against investment in Canada's oil and gas sector have had consequences.

What the industry needs is certainty. A strong, supportive government is not what international players see. What they see are investors seeking opportunities elsewhere. With the energy disaster that is taking place in Europe, our potential energy customers see confusion from this government; we have a world-class product to sell, but leave the heavy lifting to others.

The Canadian industry needs an updated and modern CEPA. The inclusion of the NDP amendment that encroached on provincial jurisdiction was opposed at committee by the Liberals, but at the last minute, they flipped-flopped to support it, leaving this bill open to more jurisdictional court battles and uncertainty.

The history of the environment minister is a case in point of activism and the damage that is done because the Liberals just do not care who they hurt. Most Canadians are aware of the minister scaling structures to get arrested to make his point, but they probably do not know that he also trespassed on the modest home of then premier Ralph Klein, and in doing so dramatically upset Ralph's wife Colleen, whom I knew personally. He has no remorse and still to this day is proud of his actions, and the Prime Minister rewards his reckless criminal behaviour while Liberal members, along with their NDP coalition partner and the opportunistic Bloc members, just sit back and smile. I would have thought that a regional party like the Bloc would have voted against further provincial encroachment, but they voted in lockstep with the Liberal-NDP coalition.

Alberta has always had pristine water, fresh air and fertile soil. We produce the cleanest oil and natural gas in the world. That is why the Lougheed government embarked on a program to get natural gas to every rural resident possible. That could happen for all of this country if we would think our way through this problem.

• (1645)

Alberta, through the oil sands, has financed and carried this country through some tough times. In fact, the oil and gas sector is the feedstock for the products that will be covered under CEPA, as well as the feedstock for every other type of energy source that this world needs. However, as I mentioned before, the minister and the government do not care who they hurt or how they damage industries or interprovincial relationships.

The last-minute support of the NDP amendment, among the other reasons I have outlined, is why I will not be supporting this bill.

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development for the purpose of modifying clause 9 with the view to safeguard provincial jurisdiction with respect to regulating mining tailings ponds and hydraulic fracturing.

The Deputy Speaker: This amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am inclined to ask the member if he wants to say anything else that can be clipped to use against the Conservatives in the next election, but I will just point out one of the fallacies in his comments. It is something I talk about a lot in the House. He spoke about how harmful electric vehicles are to the environment compared to standard fossil fuel-burning vehicles. The thing is, though, that the batteries for electric vehicles can be completely recycled. As a matter of fact, there is a firm in my riding that can recycle 97% of an electric vehicle battery so it can be reused in another EV. This is not going to happen in the future; this is happening right now.

How can the member possibly make such an argument when a battery for an electric vehicle can continue to be recycled endlessly into the future, whereas when we burn fossil fuel, it is gone, it is burned and we have to burn more again the next time and more the time after that and the time after that?

• (1650)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, it takes 500,000 pounds of earth to make that 1,000-pound battery, and it is not without toxicity.

It is very interesting when I hear the government say how it is going to handle this. It says we have all these rare-earth minerals here in Canada, so is it not a great idea for us to use them rather than buying this technology from China? Of course, I will leave that there.

Here is the issue. How can we ever expect to produce the batteries required with the rare earth minerals we have when we have a government that restricts all development? We can look at the bills that have been presented to stop oil and gas. We will have exactly the same bills to stop people from having mines in their communities, and it will go from there. We have heard this sort of thing from the members of the NDP. They are standing up for jobs, but they say not to bring any of this into their regions. That is the problem we have.

As far as being able to recycle batteries goes, it is great, but to put another battery into a vehicle takes \$10,000 just to get the car to a spot where the new battery can be put in it. Yes, it would be great if we could recycle it, maybe using storage banks and that type of thing, but I believe all of those things have to be thought about. That is why I said we must measure this entirely, from the first shovel to dig it up to the last shovel to cover it up. In no way am I suggesting that this is not something we should measure.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify one small point. The percentage of rare earth minerals in the lithium ion batteries used in electric vehicles is 0%. That is the first thing I wanted to clarify.

Next, what must be taken into account is the lifespan of a vehicle. It may take more energy to assemble an electric vehicle, but with its lifespan, it becomes far more environmentally responsible than a gas-powered vehicle. The member did not get that far in his reasoning.

When I was listening to his speech, I let out a big sigh. Everything he said could be challenged, but one thing in particular made me shudder. His entire speech made me shudder, but one part in particular startled me and that was when he said that warnings against climate change are propaganda or ideology.

That stood out in his entire pro-oil mantra and his comments about using the war in Ukraine for opportunistic reasons. He recited the mantra of the Conservatives, who are on the brink of proposing that the prayer in the house be a prayer to oil and that a good glass of oil for babies be added to the Canada food guide.

What stood out in the middle of all that was when he said at one point that warning people about climate change was ideological. He said people are fearmongering by talking about flooding and so on. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but we are in the middle of a climate crisis. We are living it. It is happening. It is our reality and it is science.

I have a simple question for the member. Does climate change exist, yes or no?

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, of course the climate has been changing. That is the point I made when I said that we went from about two miles of ice on top of Montreal 10,000 years ago to cutting the St. Lawrence River and all of that. We know that it is changing. The point being said is that this means the man-made part is accelerating it. That is the discussion we are having, and I want to make sure we understand that because I am talking about both. I think that is really the critical point here.

The other thing I am saying is about the stories we listen to that say water is going to be 10 metres higher. Rich guys are still buying mansions on the oceans, insurance companies have not gotten to the stage where they are putting an extra premium on that and mortgages are still for 40 years, so not everybody is taking the things being said as 100% accurate.

● (1655)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my friend from Red Deer—Mountain View's somewhat perplexing and troubling remarks, and one part in particular stood out to me. I think I heard him say that the people warning about the environmental harms of acid rain in the seventies and eighties were "snake oil salesmen". I wonder whether that is his personal view or it represents the position of the Conservative Party.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, that is my personal view, and of course I was not speaking specifically of ozone depletion and that sort of thing. Things have been done to deal with different aspects of this, and looking after our water, looking after our air and looking after our soil are the three things that are environmental. Taking the CO₂ in our glasses and saying we should tax it because it is a pollutant does not make sense. We can look at the rate of carbon dioxide now and look at how much is put into greenhouses to get plants to grow properly. That is the aspect we need to look at. Anybody who believes we are just going to take something from 1850 and analyze how things are going to take place is not getting to the point.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for representing the views of his constituents in this place. He is an elected member of Parliament. He gets to reflect those views. Despite what other parties may think is indignation and may say to impose indignation on his comments, I want to ask the hon. member what his constituents' views are with respect to the carbon tax itself.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, in my riding there is a lot of agriculture and we looked at the added costs that are involved with an average farm. We did the calculations when it was about \$30 a tonne, and at that stage I believe it was around a \$10,000 cost. Of course, by the time it gets to \$170, we can multiply it through, which is where that cost is.

We are able to kind of tinker around the edges insofar as to say that maybe we could take a look at charges to the fuel they use, but that does not change the other costs that are associated with it, such as the fertilizers they need and the trucking that is associated with products coming in and going out. This is the part where we realize the quantity of agriculture products that are sold around the world, and here we are putting ourselves in a straitjacket in order to satisfy the concept of the Liberal Party that we should have a carbon tax.

They do not have a carbon tax in the U.S., which is our major partner that we are dealing with, and so there is competition against our farmers. Of course the folks in my riding look at it and ask, "Where is the fairness?" These stories we get that say, "Oh well, you're going to get some money back" do not quite cut it with them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent to just keep letting this member speak—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I am hearing a lot of "no".

There is another point of order.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, for a member of the House to suggest that another member of the House does not have the right to represent his constituents in this place goes beyond the pale—

The Deputy Speaker: I did cut the point of order off.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: On that point of order, I do not want to eliminate anything. I want to hear more of that.

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The Deputy Speaker: We have now fallen into complete debate.

Continuing debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could have seconded the motion from the member for Kingston and the Islands just a moment ago. It was a good point.

As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Health and the member of Parliament for Milton, I am proud to rise to speak on Bill S-5. It is important to take some time to speak to the work that our government has done on modernizing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which is our cornerstone environmental legislation.

In a nutshell, CEPA recognizes a right to a healthy environment, as provided under CEPA. It imposes a duty on the government to protect the right and uphold related principles such as environmental justice. It also requires ministers to develop an implementation framework within two years, and to conduct research to support the protection of the right.

It also is expected to support strong environmental and health standards now and into the future, robust engagement, new research and action to protect populations that are particularly vulnerable to environmental health risks.

On that topic, I think we would be remiss not to recognize that recently in Alberta, there have been tailings ponds leakages into the Athabasca River and various other tributaries that went unreported to communities that were affected downstream. This is exactly the type of activity that we need to prevent and legislate into law as unacceptable, to ensure that we are protecting people from these toxic substances.

In the previous speech, there were some numbers thrown around and I would just like to put into modern context a few of those numbers, if I could. I heard the member opposite refer to 500,000 pounds of material that would need to be extracted to build one car battery.

I completely accept that it requires mining to build a modern car battery. They are up to 1,000 pounds and they are certainly intensive when it comes to mining. That does not go without saying. To put that into context, though, 500,000 pounds is about 226,000 kilograms. That would equate to about 10 years of fuel, if one were to convert that to gasoline. An average car would use about 2,000 to 3,000 kilograms of gasoline every year. Do the math and, unless I have done it completely improperly, I think that equates.

What does it take to get gasoline? That is something that we did not necessarily have the opportunity to measure or consider.

In the context of the oil sands, that requires, every single time some fuel is removed through the process, four tonnes of sand and four barrels of fresh water just to make one barrel of synthetic oil. I will say that again: four tonnes of sand need to be excavated and then four barrels of fresh water need to be used and most of that is then stored in a tailings pond. It is important to recognize that those tailings ponds were never meant to be long-term solutions for that

toxic substrate of the process, but they continue to be used in that form and fashion.

What do we get out of one barrel of synthetic oil? One would get 42 gallons of gasoline. That is 160 litres of fuel.

What did that require? It required four tonnes of sand to be removed. Four tonnes of sand is 4,000 kilograms of sand. We are now on a similar metric to what the member opposite was saying needed to be excavated to build one car battery, which would obviously be good for many trips.

I am fortunate enough to drive an electric car and I can say that I have driven 30,000 kilometres in the last year in that electric car without having to use any gasoline.

There is no question that the carbon footprint of one of these electric vehicles is higher on the first day that one drives it compared to an internal combustion engine, but the point is that it does not require any gasoline. If one compares the amount of sand that needs to be removed from the ground in order to produce one litre of gasoline to how much is required to produce a car battery, one realizes that, yes, cars require a lot of mining. We all know that. That is something we should know.

However, we also have to take into consideration how many acres and acres of boreal forest are necessary to clear for oil sands activity and how much water it requires in order to refine that bitumen down to a usable product.

Moving on from the topic of electric car batteries and gasoline, I would like to talk about how this bill, Bill S-5, strengthens the foundation for the management of chemicals and other substances that are found in our environment through industry.

The bill would require an integrated plan of chemicals management priorities, with timelines and annual reporting. It would implement a new regime for toxic substances of highest risk.

• (1700)

It would create a watch-list for substances of potential concern, and consultation on new living organisms that would allow the public to request assessments, and ministers would have to address risks using the best balanced and best placed act.

It is really important to recognize that this is creating a framework for the future that would evolve as technology evolves and as new technologies are implemented and new forms of mining are implemented in our mining sector to go after all of the critical minerals that new technologies would require. Bill S-5 would evolve with it.

This bill would also confirm a focus on assessment of real-life exposures, supporting the shift to safer chemicals, replacing and reducing reliance on animal testing, increased openness, transparency and accountability in decision-making. It would also include amendments that affect all of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, including information gathering, research authorities, reporting on indigenous reconciliation and other confidential business information.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on something a little more personal. When my father's family first came to Canada from Holland, they moved to southwestern Ontario and engaged in agriculture. One of my father's first jobs was picking tobacco around the Tillsonburg area, which was a very common practice. Thankfully, the tobacco industry has fewer customers these days and there are fewer people farming tobacco.

It was not actually the tobacco plant that led to harm to my family so much as the product that was sprayed on those tobacco plants, Roundup is a very common insecticide that is still, unfortunately, used in many agricultural applications these days. It is a herbicide. I thank the member opposite. I do not know everything about this, so I am glad that we are working in a place that allows for us to collaborate a little.

Whatever the pest, Roundup was attempting to prevent the infestation of those tobacco plants. It also causes neurological degenerative diseases, like Parkinson's, which my dad suffers from, I should say lives with these days. He does not like to say that we suffer from diseases. It is very well documented that Roundup causes neurological, degenerative disorders like Parkinson's. My dad has been tested for the type of Parkinson's that he has, and indeed it is associated with a high exposure to herbicides, as my colleague point out. Roundup is in that category.

These chemicals that we have used throughout—

An hon. member: Glyphosate. Roundup is a trade name.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Roundup is a trade name, okay. Mr. Speaker, members can tell I did not grow up on a farm. I picked apples every once in a while. My apple farmer uncle, Gerry, who is now deceased, used to call me “the city boy” when I would come to the farm and pick apples. I guess he was right. Thanks for confirming my wise old Uncle Gerry's assertion that I was a city boy.

Glyphosate caused harm to my family. I will say that my dad has taken on his fight with Parkinson's with quite a lot of consternation. He is a really remarkable guy for managing his disease the way that he has. I do not think it is necessary for people to be exposed to things like that. I would hate to know what types of disorders and diseases tailings ponds and other toxic industrial applications might prove to impact folks with. I hope that we do not see more spillage, because that certainly was devastating for those communities that surrounded that.

Moving on, Bill S-5, known as CEPA, was introduced on February 9, 2022, more than a year ago. Since then, Senate committees and the House of Commons environmental committee have received 105 written briefs. If I compare that to how many briefs we receive at the health committee for similar pieces of legislation, I would say that is a lot. It is probably triple what we received for the

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most recent bill studying children's health. They have spent, collectively, over 50 hours studying that bill, with a lot of great input from experts, industry leaders and a tremendous number of witnesses at those committee hearings.

They have received over 80 witnesses' oral testimonies, and they have debated over 300 amendments tabled. This is one of the most debated pieces of legislation that we have seen in this House and through the Senate over the last couple of years. This excludes any of those subamendments because, of course, there have been considerable subamendments as well.

• (1705)

I think all members of this House can agree that there has been extensive debate around this bill during second reading in the House of Commons. This bill actually received more debate time than the budget implementation act would usually receive. I do believe we can all agree that it has had its time here to see the light of day.

Prior to those recent amendments, as many of my colleagues have pointed out, CEPA had not been updated in over two decades. Much has happened over the last two decades. A lot of new technologies have come to the fore and there are plenty of new chemicals to account for. We need to ensure they are not having a negative impact on people's health.

During this time, over the last two decades, we have certainly developed new technologies and we have deepened our understanding of toxic substances. Across the board, we are getting better at science, especially climate science. Our environmental legislation needs to reflect this important progress.

It has been said a number of times throughout debate today that this bill is not one that is focused on climate change; it is focused on toxic substances in our environment. I think that is very true. However, at the same time, we need to consider the impact of many of the industries that directly increase climate change and have a negative impact on climate change and warming, as well as the dryness of our climate currently and the incidents of wildfires and other horrendous natural disasters. They are all related, and we need a 360-degree view and a science-guided, evidence-first approach to preventing harm when it comes to the technologies that we are adapting to and all of the new methods by which we are going to get enough energy for transportation and for all the other things, like heating our homes, that we rely on. It is so important that our legislation advances forward with the technology and with all those new developments.

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For the first time ever, CEPA recognizes the right to a healthy environment for Canadians. To ensure this right is meaningful and taken into account when decisions are made under CEPA, this bill includes a number of requirements.

For instance, it requires that the government must develop, within two years, an implementation framework describing how this right to a healthy environment would be considered in the administration of the act. This framework would explain, among other things, how principles of environmental justice, non-regression and intergenerational equity would be considered under CEPA. The framework would elaborate on principles such as environmental justice, meaning avoiding adverse effects that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, and issues of non-regression for continuous improvement of environmental protection.

CEPA, as it is, is a very technical and lengthy bill. We have heard a lot of testimony from expert witnesses from all backgrounds. I think it is extremely thorough and I am glad it is one that most members in this House seem to support. In debate, we have heard from all parties and it seems like the majority of members do support this bill.

That said, we have also heard from constituents via email. I know I have. I have received some from fantastic, environmentally focused organizations in my riding.

One I want to point out is Sustainable Milton. Sustainable Milton is a group of concerned citizens who regularly take action to advocate for and directly clean up our environment. They are a wonderful group of people, and I want to give them a shout-out. They have led town cleanups in our community. I want to acknowledge that litter is a visual concern, for the most part. In our environment, it is annoying to see litter, but it is nothing compared to toxic substances that are going to have a deleterious impact on our health. However, Sustainable Milton has done a really great job leading these litter cleanups. I am grateful to have taken part in a couple, and I want to thank all of the councillors who led their own cleanups as well with the stewardship of Sustainable Milton.

I would also like to reference the Halton Environmental Network, which was actually cataloguing a lot of that litter and looking into whether some of it had any deleterious impacts on waterways and tributaries. Milton is a bit landlocked, but it has quite a lot of watershed down to the Lake Ontario area and the basin around there.

What we put into our environment matters. It has an impact on habitat, and it has an impact on the water we drink. I want to thank the Halton Environmental Network and Sustainable Milton for their stewardship and action on environmentally focused activities in Milton. I also want to thank them for their emails.

I have received dozens of emails from constituents asking our government to position Canada as a global leader in developing more non-invasive methods, non-animal methods and methods that are less harmful to our health and to the health of animals.

- (1710)

We know that we are connected to our environment, not just through the air that we breathe and the water that we drink, but also

through the food chain. A lot of our food is produced locally. Last week, I had the chance to visit Monaghan Mushrooms, a farm in my riding that produces fully three-quarters of the local mushrooms that our community consumes. If someone had a mushroom omelette in the last couple of weeks, I would encourage them to have a look at the label. I would bet the mushrooms were produced in Milton, Ontario. Those are all the button and portobello mushrooms. Then there is also another farm in Milton that produces all the specialty mushrooms. I learned a lot about fungus last week.

What I know is that those mushrooms, as they are being produced, drink the same tap water we do. They require soil, which is produced locally, actually through manure from Woodbine Racetrack. They actually provide a service to Woodbine Racetrack, one of the largest horse-racing facilities in Canada. They take all of the horse manure and put it directly into a compost mix, and that compost is then used to produce mushrooms.

Why am I going on about horse manure and mushrooms? It is because the horses that race at Mohawk racetrack in Milton drink the water from the surrounding area, and if they are like the animals in my life, they sometimes just drink from puddles. They eat grasses and locally produced vegetation, and then their excrement leads to something that is used to produce the food that we consume on a daily basis.

We are all connected through the water that we drink, the air that we breathe and the food that we consume. It is so important to make sure that the toxic chemicals that might exist in only a very small percentage in things like grasses, table water or any of a variety of things do not biomagnify all the way up into something that we consume on a regular basis and then have a deleterious impact on our health.

At committee, members heard from Dr. Chandrasekera, the executive director of the Canadian Centre for Alternatives to Animal Methods, an international expert in this field, who presented technological innovations that have been made in producing viable alternatives to animals for testing. Health Canada is working to address the issue of animal testing outside of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Our government has also passed a motion that would see the requirement to report on the operation of the act with respect to indigenous peoples to be done annually, rather than just once every five years. That revised requirement ensures consistent annual reporting on all issues raised by indigenous groups in relation to this act. These motions will improve transparency and ensure that the government remains accountable.

Government Orders

We know that climate change is a real threat that affects all Canadians, and now more than ever we must have strong environmental protections to protect our health from toxic substances that enter our natural environment. Our country has an opportunity to be a leader in climate policy, and passing an updated, strengthened CEPA is absolutely vital to this.

In closing, I would like to say that in previous speeches today I have heard quite a lot of talk about tailings ponds and whether this is a bill related to climate change. I think I have touched on how it is related to climate change but possibly in more of a tangential way. Climate change is real. I know this is not something that is universally held as a conviction in this House. Unfortunately, some people like to talk about historical accounts as to how much ice was above certain towns or cities in Canada. That probably would not be true if one were to consult a historian or a paleoclimatologist.

However, the fact remains that we have an obligation as a country, as a government, to stand up for the health and wellness of Canadians, and that includes animals and vegetation, because those products do biomagnify into our biology as well.

• (1715)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's last comment talked about the health and wellness of Canadians. I wonder if he would consider the impact of the carbon tax, which is adding thousands of dollars to Canadians' cost of living and fuel costs. It has an impact.

I just want to make a quick comment also that in British Columbia we had something called "AirCare", which tested vehicles for about two decades. Then it was scrapped because the pollutants from vehicles were reduced so dramatically. I just wonder why the focus is not on technology, as opposed to taxes, which have failed. The Liberals have not yet met any of their climate objectives.

• (1720)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, the question was about carbon pricing, which is not directly related to CEPA, but I am happy to talk about it.

I would point out that in the great province of my colleague opposite who asked the question, there is no federal backstop program because there is a provincial government that prices carbon, and always has. If I am not mistaken, that was an action by the previous Liberal government in British Columbia. I know there are some members on the Conservative side who sat in that government at the time. Perhaps he knows one of the members opposite who sat in that Liberal government. I know the Liberals in B.C. might have more in common sometimes with some of the members of the Conservative Party here.

Carbon pricing works. That is a truth. That is something the Conservatives universally felt, just a little over a year ago, when they all ran on a promise to implement a carbon price in Canada, but they have had an about-face. The new leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Carleton, does not believe in carbon pricing. At a recent Conservative convention, there was a question as to whether or not climate change exists and it was a pretty tight vote. I do not recall exactly what the breakdown was, but it seems that

most Conservative members are still on the fence as to whether or not climate change exists.

However, what is irrefutable is that carbon pricing works. I am grateful for the leadership of British Columbia and the aforementioned Liberal government there that instituted that and proved, decades ago, that carbon pricing is effective at reducing our emissions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we learned a lot from the speech given by my colleague from Milton. There were some very interesting things in there, including the fact that he ate some portobello mushrooms. I want him to know that I too like mushrooms, oyster mushrooms.

I would like to be a little more serious, unlike this government. Speaking of serious, the environment does not seem to be a priority for the federal government. Why do I say that? When did we begin working on Bill S-5, which is currently before the House? It was in February 2016 in committee. Of course, committee work and reports have been done. Which party was in government at the time? It was the Liberal Party. Which government introduced the previous version, Bill C-28? This is the same government that introduced that bill and then called an election. It could have resolved the whole situation several years ago.

Today, Bill S-5 has very little depth. A quarter of the implementation will be done through regulations issued by the minister over the next two years. However, we are in a climate emergency.

Do the Liberals not understand this or are they just used to not moving quickly? Why this lack of will and courage? I would like my colleague to explain to me whether he is prepared to include in the charter the right to a healthy environment, as Quebec is so courageously doing right now?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if my colleague did not like my speech on mushrooms, which are a very important source of copper. That is something I did not know a week ago.

I want to come back to the topic of leadership and courage in Bill S-5. The question is, why did the government have the courage to create and consider a bill similar to the Government of Quebec? The answer is in the question. It is right there. It is the same thing in British Columbia. The provincial governments, in every case, take a position of leadership and courage.

[*English*]

It is important that provinces take a leadership position, and governments like those in Quebec and B.C. have done that in environmental causes and many others.

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Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member for Milton and his work on the health file.

Health Canada has found that air pollution is a factor in 15,300 premature deaths and millions of respiratory issues every year in Canada, yet this bill has nothing in it about air quality standards. We need to have enforceable air quality standards in Canada, but this bill does not mention it at all. The air flows between provinces. We see that with the smoke coming out of Alberta.

Why did the government leave air quality completely out of this bill and vote down proposed amendments to fix this?

• (1725)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, it is a really good question. I would also like to say that I have a tremendous respect for my colleague on and off the soccer pitch.

I will be completely honest and forthcoming. I was not on the environment committee, and I do not know why decisions were made with respect to this bill, but I also know that a bill, if it tries to do everything, might achieve nothing. In this case, this bill focuses on some areas of environmental protection and the right to a clean environment, and it will achieve those things. If there is further legislation required to ensure we all have clean air to breathe, then I would be the first to suggest that our government has an obligation to ensure just that.

I was at an event last week with some of the foremost environmentalists in the country and heard a lot of criticisms, but there was also some support for the work we are doing as a government. We get more done when we work together and come together and focus on solutions as a group, so I would like to thank the members of the NDP for their support, their good amendments and saying that they are going to vote for this bill, because Bill S-5 is an important bill for the health and wellness of Canadians and the right to a clean environment, and I hope it will receive unanimous support from all members.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the member had the opportunity to listen to the speech before his, where a Conservative started to suggest that acid rain was a hoax or something put out there to sell people things. I am not sure if now is a good time to inform that member that it was actually the Conservative Government of Canada that literally saved the world. It brought the world together to talk about the ozone layer and to save the world. It was a Conservative Government of Canada, led by Brian Mulroney, that brought 42 countries together to talk about the ozone layer and that fought with George Bush senior to do something about acid rain. Those were true Progressive Conservatives who believed in doing everything we could do. They believed in Canada taking a leadership role when it came to saving the environment.

I wonder if the member can reflect on the Conservative Party of the past versus the Conservative Party of today.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, I would be absolutely thrilled to.

Gone are the times when Canadians could rely on Conservative-elected politicians to be real with them about climate change. Back in the day, in the eighties and nineties, Brian Mulroney indeed was a leader. He fought against acid rain. He also believed in fair taxation. He brought forward a really effective wealth tax called the GST at the time, now called the HST, that has thankfully endured. It is an important tax that Canadians rely on. These were good ideas that previous Conservative governments put forth.

Unfortunately, I have not heard any of those types of solutions from any Conservatives of late. I am sure they are there somewhere. They proposed a carbon pricing mechanism in their last campaign. They have abandoned that now. I do not know where those ideas went, if they have just evaporated into the ether around Durham region, but the fact remains that there have to be some good ideas over on the other side. Good legislation gets built when multipartisan groups come together to focus on solutions, so we would love to hear some solutions, such as how we can combat things like acid rain or tax Canadians fairly.

The Deputy Speaker: Continuing debate, the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock has the floor.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Although I want to hear the member for Peace River—Westlock speak to this issue, I move, seconded by the member for Foothills, that:

The member for Battle River—Crowfoot be now heard.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

If a member of a recognized party present in the Chamber wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I think we need to let the members decide. I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

• (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies has a point of order.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, it is in regard to my vote. I was torn, as I wanted to vote for both members, and in my ignorance I voted for both members. I felt loyal to both of them, but when push comes to shove, I will vote for the member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is rising.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I was equally torn, but in the situation, I was voting for the member for Peace River—Westlock.

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

(Division No. 336)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Baldinelli	Barrett
Bergeron	Berthold
Bezan	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Brassard
Brock	Calkins
Caputo	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Davidson
Deltell	Desbiens
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Généreux	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hallan	Hoback
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Martel	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	Melillo
Michaud	Morantz
Motz	Muys
Nater	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Seeback
Shields	Sinclair-Desgagné
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Thomas
Tochor	Uppal
Vecchio	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Williamson	Zimmer— 90

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Atwin	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan

Bennett	Bérubé
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blois
Boissonnault	Bradford
Brière	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
DeBellefeuille	d'Entremont
Desilets	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Gaheer
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Gray
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hutchings	Iacono
Jen	Jaczek
Joly	Jowhari
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khera	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lemire
Lightbound	Lobb
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McLeod	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Moore
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Reid	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sorbara
Sousa	Ste-Marie
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull

Government Orders

Government Orders

Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Villemure	Virani
Waugh	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Yip	Zahid— 178

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion defeated.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for allowing me to speak in this place once again. The competition was fierce, but I know that cooler heads have prevailed, and I want to thank everybody who voted to allow me to continue to speak and be recognized by the Speaker. It is not often that it happens that I am asked to continue to speak.

I want to jump into the debate around Bill S-5. It is a bill that has been before the House before and is now coming back after being at committee. This is a bill around toxic substances and how Canada deals with things that enter into our environment, such as commercial products and these kinds of things. I want to start by talking about Alberta's record on a clean environment and the Conservatives' record on tackling some of these issues that have appeared in our history. We heard, and I have spoken about this before, how Conservatives tend to tackle problems as kind of a one-off issue, particularly around acid rain. Conservatives tackled it as a global phenomenon and a global problem, and it is something that I am proud to say that Conservatives did.

Another thing that Alberta tackled and kind of led the country and the world on is the disposal of PCBs. I do not know if members know this, but Alberta leads the world in the disposal of PCBs. There is a waste treatment plant in my riding, near Swan Hills, Alberta and it has mastered the disposal of PCBs. In fact, today, in Alberta, we are PCB-free. They have all been disposed of and dealt with. This is something I am proud of, but I know that many other parts of the country have not dealt with PCBs. In fact, there are warehouses full of PCBs, because it has been cheaper to just house them for the last 50 years, or 30 years, rather than dispose of them.

Alberta has kind of led the way in the disposal of PCBs, and I am excited to say that it was a Conservative initiative. Alberta stands ready. The disposal plant still exists, although, because there are no more PCBs in Alberta, it is lacking business. However, other provinces are welcome to ship their PCBs to Alberta for us to dispose of them, because we know how to do it. We have done it for well over the last 30 years and stand ready to do it for other provinces. However, it is sometimes cheaper to just continue to store them than to ship them across the country, so provinces can just defer the cost of disposal by continuing to store them. The issue of PCBs and PCB disposal is something that I am proud of as an Albertan. Albertans, and particularly the town of Swan Hills, have done an amazing job of figuring that out.

Another area where Alberta has led the way is in used tire recycling. Used tires have been a challenge for the western world since the introduction of the automobile. In Legal, Alberta there is a tire recycling facility. All the tires in Alberta are taxed with a levy on the day they are sold, and that goes into tire recycling. Those tires that are recycled are built into products that we use in our everyday lives. I do not know if members have ever been to a playground that has rubber matting underneath the playground—

Mr. Frank Caputo: It is called your backyard.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Thanks, Caputo.

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo that, if he wishes to make comments, he should wait until questions and comments. If he wants to have conversations, he should take them out into the lobby so as not to disturb the House.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock should not be calling members by their first or last names. We do have to have order in the House. If people do not think that this is a serious enough matter to discuss, then I would ask them to step out.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I was talking about how Alberta has tackled the used tire problem. Just outside of my riding, in Legal, Alberta, there is a tire recycling facility. It uses used tires to build things such as playground matting, access matting for the oil fields and curb stops. Members may have seen rubber curb stops in parking lots, where, instead of there being a concrete curb stop, it is rubber. That is being manufactured there. Fence panels are being manufactured out of used tires. The facility is finding all of these innovative ways to make used tires into other products that we can use in our everyday lives. That was championed and organized in Alberta about 30 years ago, and I am fairly excited about that as well.

The other initiative that I am surprised to discover does not exist in other parts of the country is the Alberta ditch cleanup program, involving charitable organizations. My daughter has participated in it as part of a fundraiser for her school. The 4-H programs across Alberta work on this as well. The Alberta government donates to charity the cost of the labour that is put into cleaning up the ditches. Teams go out, gather all of the garbage from ditches, put it in orange plastic bags and set the bags at the side of the road to be picked up. This is a program that happens every spring after the snow melts. It has made Alberta a clean and tidy place. All the garbage in ditches gets cleaned up, and I am excited about that. What I was surprised to find is that other provinces do not have these kinds of programs. I was surprised that ditches are not necessarily cleaned up in other parts of the country.

Government Orders

The other thing that I was surprised to find out Ottawa does not have, for example, is the drink container recycling program that Alberta has. For my entire life, there has been a drink container recycling program. When I was a teenager, something that supplemented my income was collecting bottles and cans. I know that many a time in high school, there were fundraisers through bottle drives. We would collect used drink containers and bring them back to get the deposit money. Recycling drink containers to keep them out of the landfill and the environment has been in place in Alberta for a very long time. I was surprised that other parts of the country do not have the same program. I know the drink container program in Alberta has been very successful. It has broad support. It is kind of a circular economy idea and seems to work fairly well.

I also want to note that Edmonton has kind of led the way in terms of waste disposal. It creates power from all of the garbage that comes out of Edmonton. It grinds up the waste, separates out the metals, recycles the metals and makes power out of the rest of the garbage. It has a composting division as well. Edmonton has been recognized around the world as one of the leaders in waste disposal. These are some of the programs and projects that have happened in Alberta that I am really excited about.

Another, more local, initiative that I am pretty excited about as well is the take-it-or-leave-it programs at a lot of Alberta's transfer stations. For those who live in the country, like I do, nobody comes by to pick up garbage, so we have to bring it to the transfer stations ourselves. At many of these places, there are what are called "take it or leave it" sections. If people have things that are not garbage per se, and they do not know what to do with them but want to dispose of them, they can place them in the take-it-or-leave-it section. It is kind of like a garage sale, except that people do not have to pay for the things. If people have items that still have value, but they do not want them anymore, they place them there, and people come and go through that.

Around Grande Prairie, there is a company that is leading the country in styrofoam recycling. I am really excited about that program as well. Styrofoam recycling is something that needs to happen, and a company in Alberta is leading the way on that.

• (1825)

These are all initiatives that come out of Alberta that I am really excited about. They keep our communities cleaner and ensure that our waterways stay clean. Speaking of our waterways, I do not know if members know this, but Alberta waterways are all monitored extensively. If there is a hydrocarbon spill anywhere in the province, if a hydrocarbon gets into a creek somewhere, it will set off a sensor within minutes.

I know that when an ATV tipped over, it set off sensors in the waterways. It was just a bit of fuel that spilled out of an ATV and set off the sensors. There are sensors in all of the waterways around Alberta, and they notify the Alberta government that there may have been a spill in a certain area and to investigate it. That happens within minutes.

I have experienced it. I have watched this kind of thing happen in my own neighbourhood when there has been a spill, and immediately people showed up to jump on the source of that spill and clean up the mess quickly. In one case, a fuel truck tipped over on the

highway, and months were spent cleaning that up. That was caught because all the waterways in Alberta are monitored very closely for hydrocarbons. It is something that is unique to the province. I do not think that this happens in other parts of the country.

These are some of the initiatives I wanted to highlight. Albertans are taking care of the place we live, taking care of our environment and ensuring that we live in one of the most pristine parts of the country. The natural beauty of Alberta is unparalleled in the whole country.

As well, there are a variety of natural landscapes in Alberta, from far in the south where we have nearly desert conditions, to the Foothills, the Rocky Mountains, the Prairies, the boreal forest and the wetlands dotted across Alberta. These are places where we play, work and raise our families.

The other thing I wanted to note is the Alberta air monitoring that happens in my riding around the town of Peace River. There is a lot of air monitoring that happens there. I do not think the air monitoring that happens in northern Alberta is something that happens in many places across the country. These are some of the things that Alberta has put in place to ensure that we continue to live in a clean environment.

That brings us to Bill S-5. This has been a challenging bill. There was a particular amendment placed into the bill. We were generally in favour of the bill until there was an amendment placed in the bill by the NDP. It undermines provincial jurisdiction. This is around tailings ponds. It is targeting a particular disposal method, and it really feels like Alberta is being targeted with this particular amendment. It also completely undermines the idea of provincial jurisdiction.

The provinces, in many cases, are responsible for the monitoring and administration of these tailings ponds. These are not things the federal government generally gets involved in. The federal government is now placing itself in the middle and sticking its fingers where they do not belong, in provincial jurisdiction. That has been a thorn in the side of Albertans for a very long time.

Canada is happy to take the resource revenues and it is happy to take income tax revenue from the entire country, but when it comes to allowing us to do the things that we do to build wealth, create value or manage our own resources, the federal government is often sticking its fingers in and saying we cannot do something or we are not doing a good enough job or generally just disrespecting Alberta.

• (1830)

I imagine most Canadians are unaware that Alberta leads the way on all of those things that I talked about before, including the disposal of PCBs, our used tire program, our ditch cleanup program, our drink container recycling programs, the Edmonton waste disposal and styrofoam recycling. I can tell members what Alberta does not do for sure: It does not dump millions of litres of unprocessed sewage into the rivers and streams. That is something that definitely does not happen in Alberta. That is something we have to ensure.

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Now we see this repeated trend of the Liberal government: It inserts itself into places of provincial jurisdiction. While I note that this is an NDP amendment and that the Liberals had signalled that they were opposed to that amendment initially, they voted for it at the last minute, which is why we can no longer support Bill S-5.

This is a bill that now places the federal government in competition for regulating tailings ponds. This is entirely a provincial jurisdiction. It is something that Alberta has done very well for a very long time. This is something that Alberta, in terms of keeping our waterways clean, our air clean and our soil clean, is capable of, and it is something that is not the jurisdiction of the federal government. For this amendment to be placed in there at the eleventh hour is extremely frustrating.

There are some other parts of Bill S-5 that we are excited and happy about. There is the repeal of a whole section that is no longer needed. We think that this is an important piece to pull out.

We want to ensure that assessments for new substances that may be toxic are developed within 24 months. We think it is important that there be a decision within 24 months. This allows people to get an understanding that if they propose something, they would get an answer within 24 months. That allows for some stability in this whole system.

It also removes duplicated monitoring that had been happening. There were two separate licensing bodies or monitoring bodies, and because of jurisdictional squabbles, sometimes things would either fall through the cracks or substances would be brought to the wrong authority. This bill would remove the duplicated monitoring that has happened in the past, and hopefully will streamline the process and ensure that substances that are brought forward to be assessed will be assessed properly, in a timely fashion and by the right regulator. We want to make sure of that.

There is the issue of the right to a clean environment. That comes up regularly in this bill as well. There are a whole host of things to be said about it. Conservatives believe that in the environment where we live, the air should be clean and the soil should be clean, and we should not be at risk of being in contact with toxic chemicals that might cause cancer. We should not be in contact with toxic substances. We believe we should have an environment that encourages human health, that ensures that we do not get sick from the places that we live or the air that we breathe or the water that we drink. These are basic principles.

The idea of the right to a clean environment is kind of mentioned in this bill, but it is not fleshed out in a way that is clear. This may lead to some frustrations in terms of the court action happening over these kinds of things. We hope that this right to a clean environment would, over time, be clarified to ensure that people could not take the government to court over it, saying that they feel their environment is not clean enough. That is not what we want to see happening with this right to a clean environment; we want it to ensure that the government works to ensure that wherever one lives in Canada, the air is clean, the soil is clean and the water is clean.

• (1835)

With that, I will wrap up my comments. I look forward to questions and comments.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the commentary from my colleague opposite.

I wish to amplify the voice of a northern Alberta indigenous leader who has accused Imperial Oil of a nine-month cover-up over a massive release of toxic oil sands tailings on land near where his band members harvest foods. That is Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. He said, “During that nine-month period, ACFN had many meetings with [the oil company], including a sit-down, face-to-face between myself and the vice-president.... We have land users in the area that hunt and fish animals that could have been exposed to these deadly toxins....”

The article states that 5.3 million litres of water escaped from a dam that was meant to capture tailings. No public notification was made about that. This bill would change those types of obligations. Almost 19% of the population in the member's constituency is indigenous. Does the member not believe that indigenous people in Peace River—Westlock deserve a healthy environment?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I have 14 first nations and four Métis settlements in my constituency and I am well aware of the living conditions in northern Alberta. What I would say is that this bill would do nothing to rectify the situation that is happening in northern Alberta. This is a situation that continues to be under investigation, and I know that the Alberta government has shown concern about the lack of disclosure. This bill would do nothing to rectify the lack of disclosure. While the tailings pond piece was added into it, this bill would do nothing to address that issue.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, congratulations to my colleague from Peace River—Westlock on the results of the previous vote.

One of the most disappointing elements of this debate that is taking place is that at the environment committee, which I am sure this member follows closely, there was a lot of work across the aisle. Whether on the tailings pond issue at a different study or specifically on Bill S-5, there was a ton of work across the aisle to try to take the politics out of an issue that every party found was important. That did not mean that every party got what it wanted, but there was a true and, I believe, genuine effort to see a bill that would result in something that Conservatives could have been happy with and that Liberals leaving the committee process were happy with, and yet when it comes to the process that we are in here today, at report stage the Liberals flip-flopped and voted for an amendment that they voted against at committee.

On this and so many other issues, we see that the Liberals are intentionally politicizing things, with the result of poor public policy outcomes that end up hurting Canadians. These are the very people whom they purport to try to help, yet the actual result is that they are politicizing a whole host of issues, including in this case specifically the environment and toxic chemicals, and they end up taking away from the good work that we should be doing here in Parliament.

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● (1840)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, again, I want to just point out that it was not a Conservative government that gave the City of Montreal a licence to dump raw sewage into the St. Lawrence Seaway. While the situation in northern Alberta regarding tailings ponds is fraught, there is no doubt that no government gave a licence to do that. That is unlike the current Liberal government, which gave the City of Montreal a licence to dump raw sewage into the St. Lawrence Seaway. That is unconscionable.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if former prime minister Stephen Harper had provided dollars for the infrastructure necessary, municipalities like Montreal would not necessarily have had to dump raw sewage into the water. It takes time to build the infrastructure.

Quite frankly, it is disappointing to see that the Conservative Party has changed its position on this legislation. Does the member feel any sense of remorse in voting against a bill that the Conservatives were going to vote in favour of just two weeks ago, given the principles of toxic chemicals and the right to have a healthy environment, which is something that would be established in this legislation in a substantial way?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sure that the hon. member wishes that it was his turn to answer the question, but it is not. Therefore, I will ask the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock if he wants to answer the question.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have been forthright in that our opposition to this bill is because of the amendment that was brought in, which the Liberals voted against at committee and then voted for at report stage. As Conservatives, we have not changed our position; it is the Liberals that changed their position. We were assured that they were going to vote against the amendment, but they voted for it. That amendment makes all the difference, and that is why we will not be supporting this bill.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, my friend and colleague from Peace River—Westlock talked a lot about some of the innovations taking place in the province of Alberta. I know there is currently a provincial election going on there. Certainly, I am sure that he will be following the results closely, as will I.

I would ask him this: Is there anything further he would like to add in terms of how it is technology, not imposing punishment on Canadians, that is truly a way we can move forward as a country? In this way, we can better the environment but not punish the chequebooks and pocketbooks of Canadians.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I want to go back to how I started my speech. The history and legacy of Conservative governments across the country is this: When we see a definitive problem, we tackle it head on. The acid rain problem and the smelting pots in Newfoundland and Labrador were places where there were significant issues right in front of us, and we dealt with them, which is great.

● (1845)

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I would request that there be a standing vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 30, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you might find the will to call it 6:59 p.m. at this time, so that we can continue with discussion and debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising to follow up on a question that I raised on May 12, before the break. On a number of occasions over the course of the past year and a half, I have raised the issue of the prison farm at Joyceville. There is a proposal to expand it to allow for the development of a goat farm.

Although the government insists on denying that this is what the expansion will entail, it also insists on following through on plans to build, among other things, a goat barn and a very large septic waste facility. These would be the right size to accommodate the herd of 1,200 goats the government has been talking about having there. The purpose of the goat farm is to create infant formula, which will be exported to China under a public-private partnership in which CORCAN would be involved.

There are a number of problems with this; I raised one of them on May 12. I pointed out that there are obvious human rights issues associated with having inmates being paid substantially less than the market wage to produce and export product. This goes against our International Labour Organization obligations.

There are issues associated with the entire for-profit model of the prison system. This is not merely in conflict with the other goals that our corrections system has but is also almost a joke, and in fact is a joke, given the colossal amount of money that the for-profit operation at CORCAN manages to lose every year. The opacity of this system makes it hard to see how much money they are losing.

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The claim is that the prison farm will produce jobs; in fact, the prior prison farm is producing no jobs. The argument is that people who are trained in this way will be less likely to reoffend; in fact, recidivism rates have not improved. The focus in this farm is on animal husbandry, whereas the evidence suggests that, to the extent that there is any benefit in agricultural programs, it comes from horticulture programs focusing on raising plants.

Obviously, we can see how this works. A person who is released from prison, a former inmate, can go out and start working and raising their own goods and selling them at farmers' markets. That is very different from trying to obtain the capital necessary to take care of, say, cattle or goats on a large scale.

On May 12, I raised a question. I am seeking an opportunity to get a fuller answer to the additional problem that I raised.

At that time, I said the following:

...meeting notes obtained via access to information reveal that the union representing prison staff is alarmed that, at Correctional Service of Canada's existing prison farm, staff are required to work with inmates after hours in unsafe conditions. This includes being alone and unaccompanied, and being denied the personal paging devices necessary to call for immediate backup. The union's fears include the potential for assault and hostage taking.

If the government cannot provide safe working conditions at its existing, relatively small, prison farm, how will it do so at its planned vast, new goat- and cow-milking operation?

That was my question, and I hope that I will get a more fulsome answer today than I got on May 12.

• (1850)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to stand in the House today to speak about the penitentiary agricultural program with the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

I would like to begin my remarks today by reiterating what the Government of Canada shared with this House back in May 2022 pertaining to the operations of this program. At the time, it was noted that the Correctional Service of Canada did not possess any goats as part of its agricultural program. One year later, this remains the same. As of this debate, CSC currently has no confirmed plan to expand its current agricultural operations to include goats.

Between the Collins Bay and Joyceville institutions, the program currently includes a number of different activities. These include management of livestock, such as both dairy and beef cattle; land management; beekeeping; fenceline repair; maple syrup production; forestry management; horticulture; and crop production. Current operations continue to prioritize dairy cattle operations, which will be fully implemented once the barn construction is completed at Joyceville Institution. However, as noted, plans for this barn's operations will be for dairy cattle purposes.

I would also like to address the documents from 2021 that were released through an ATIP request. We know that there are unique risks that CSC employees are exposed to as part of their employment. I would like to take this time to recognize all those who work tirelessly and dutifully, despite these risks, to keep our communities safe. That is why CSC has implemented practices and procedures that work to keep their employees safe.

As part of this, CSC management regularly meets with union members to identify concerns and take any additional actions necessary to keep its workers safe. It is worth noting that, as indicated within the same documents from 2021 and mentioned by the member opposite, the concerns were discussed with a union representative and responded to by CSC. This included actions taken to do the following: ensure that overtime scheduled in advance would involve, where necessary, staff members working together to the extent possible; clarify directions to security staff regarding routine patrols; and clarify additional ways to enhance communication among staff and provide updates as required.

In addition, it was revealed through this documentation that, whereas other areas were identified as a concern, such as access to first aid and CPR training, CSC's response proved satisfactory to concerned parties. Since the time of this documentation, from almost two years ago, I can confirm that there have been neither violent incidents nor hostage takings involving participants in the penitentiary agriculture program. However, as they have done, it is our expectation that CSC and their union partners will continue to work together to prioritize the safety of their staff.

To conclude, I would like to speak about the successes associated with the offender employment and employability program, which includes the penitentiary agricultural program. CORCAN programs provide offenders with on-the-job, vocational and essential skills training, which is transferable to a variety of different types of employment. There have been several research documents dating back almost a decade that have noted a connection between employment and positive reintegration results. To date, there have been 427 vocational certifications directly related to agriculture that have been issued to offenders, with additional certifications issued for work associated with the implementation of penitentiary agriculture operations, such as construction for required renovations.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment just to observe, seeing that the member started with the subject of the goat operation, that she has stated once again that there are presently no goats. We already knew that. There are, however, plans for the construction of a goat barn. She mentioned that the barn under construction is for cattle. That is true. The construction plans had called for the laying of foundations of both barns as part of one tender and then a second tender in which they would be completed. For its own reasons, CORCAN decided to go with the complete construction first of the cattle barn and then of the goat barn.

Will she stand here, therefore, and finally say the thing that the government members have absolutely refused to say, which is that there will not be, under any circumstances, a goat farm producing formula for export in the Canadian prison system?

• (1855)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the opportunity for us to recognize the outstanding efforts performed by CSC employees on a daily basis, as well as the inherent risks performed by many correctional officers. It also permits us to recognize the meetings that occur between CSC and its union partners that prioritize the safety of staff.

CSC has implemented many policies and practices to accomplish this goal. However, as the documents acknowledge, there are very clear forums, both formal and informal, to discuss any safety concern or question that arises in any situation.

I would like to conclude by recognizing the penitentiary agriculture program. Since its reopening, the program has worked to provide transferrable employment skills to offenders, the majority of whom will one day be released back into the community.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to expand on a question that I asked on May 16 regarding this government's proposed high-frequency rail project between Toronto and Quebec City. Specifically, the question I raised in question period was based on a response that I received to my Order Paper question regarding the procurement options the government had assessed as part of deciding on the route it was taking.

I will say at the outset that the NDP very much supports investing in passenger rail in our country, particularly along the most populous rail corridor between Toronto and Quebec City, but we are deeply concerned about the approach the government has taken. The Liberals seem fixated on pursuing the public-private partnership model despite the many concerns that have been raised along the way.

In the response I received, only two privatization procurement models were really assessed in detail. In addition, the government looked at a list of 20 projects, all of which used the P3 model. The government does not seem to have looked in any detail at passenger rail projects in Switzerland, France, Korea and Japan, all of which have wonderful examples of passenger rail that is publicly delivered.

The auditor generals in both British Columbia and Ontario have raised serious concerns about the value to the public when it comes to these public-private partnerships. In B.C., for example, the auditor general found that the government was paying almost twice as much to borrow money via the P3 route than for publicly funded projects.

I think the public in Canada, Canadian taxpayers, deserves to see a detailed comparison between the P3 model, which is the privatization model the government has proposed for the high-frequency rail project, and a public model, a design-build model that uses public money to build public assets and operate them publicly.

I will reference Unifor, the union representing many of the people who work on our passenger trains in Canada. This is from Scott Doherty on March 9, 2022:

Privatization in transportation means higher costs, broken promises, worse service and route closures. P3s reward companies where workers are paid less and

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have job insecurity, and often leads to risks to health and safety.... This proposed P3, [the HFR project], like many other projects, is bound to go off the rails."

We need to put public interests first and foremost. It is extremely concerning to hear the CEO of the Canada Infrastructure Bank saying in 2020 that he wishes to "start with the market", which is the private capital markets, "and work backwards" to design projects. We need to start with the public first and ensure that when we are investing in important infrastructure like passenger rail, the public's interest is first and foremost when it comes to how we make decisions in this country.

The last thing I will say, in closing, is that there are serious concerns about what privatizing the passenger rail service between Toronto and Quebec City will mean for Via Rail, this country's Crown corporation that has a long history of delivering passenger rail service. That corridor represents over 80% of Via Rail's revenue, and if we take that important revenue and that service and move it to a private corporation, it is going to leave Via Rail as a shadow of its former self when it comes to service in this country. That is something that very much concerns us.

I look forward to the parliamentary secretary expanding on why the public received no—

• (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the provision of intercity passenger rail in Canada's most densely populated areas is a priority for our government. High-frequency rail between Quebec City and Toronto is central to the transformation of rail service for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

High-frequency trains will significantly expand and improve passenger rail service in Canada. Via Rail and its employees will play a vital role in this passenger rail service expansion, in collaboration and in partnership with a private developer.

[*English*]

Indeed, our government has conducted a robust assessment of many options. In addition to examining a variety of public-private partnership models, our government compared these models against a traditional public procurement approach. This analysis concluded that a collaborative public-private partnership is the optimal model to ensure the best possible outcomes for Canadians.

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Under this collaborative model, Via High Frequency Rail, a subsidiary of Via Rail, has been established to act as a strong public sector counterparty to a private developer partner. Via High Frequency Rail will enter into a contract with a private developer partner to jointly develop and plan the operations of a new passenger rail service in the corridor from Quebec City to Toronto. That plan will include the role of Via Rail and its employees. When services are transferred, the role of Via Rail employees as well as Via Rail's experience and knowledge will be crucial.

Unlike privatization, our government will ensure Via Rail continues as a public entity while bringing in the private sector to help deliver the best projects for Canadians by leveraging their innovation and by transferring revenue risks. This will benefit Canadian taxpayers by mitigating the ongoing financial costs of delivering this expanded rail service.

Our government puts workers first. Ensuring Via Rail employees are protected will always be a priority of the Government of Canada. This is demonstrated in our government's approach to high-frequency rail.

[*Translation*]

For example, Via Rail and its assets, including high frequency rail, will be owned by the Government of Canada. As part of this process, the Government of Canada will require that any private developer partners respect Via Rail employees. In concrete terms, this means that they must respect employees' collective agreements and benefits and demonstrate how they will work with Via Rail employees and unions. These criteria will be mandatory, and any proposal that fails to meet them will be deemed unacceptable by the Government of Canada.

[*English*]

Throughout the high-frequency rail project, federal legislation, notably the Canada Labour Code, compels the private developer partner to continue to employ unionized employees on the terms and conditions of applicable collective agreements at the term of the transfer.

[*Translation*]

Protecting the public interest in the high frequency rail project will remain a fundamental principle for the Government of Canada, for example, through a pricing policy and service requirements for communities along Via Rail's current routes in the corridor.

[*English*]

In conclusion, high-frequency rail is expected to be the largest transportation infrastructure project in Canada in generations, bringing faster, greener, more frequent and more reliable service to travellers.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that if they want to have conversations, they should take them outside, because the House is still in session to a certain degree at this point, and there is quite a bit of a hum going through it.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary noted that the government did compare P3s to a public procurement approach for the high-frequency rail project. In the response to my Order Paper question, there is a very brief passing mention of this. It says, "including an assessment against a traditional design-build procurement model". However, there are no details provided as to the pros and cons of public versus private models of procurement.

Does the parliamentary secretary not agree that the public deserves a detailed comparison between the public-private partnership model her government is so fixated on and the traditional public procurement approach? When it comes to value for money, when it comes to risk and when it comes to the long-term future of passenger rail in Canada, Canadians deserve to know how the government made the decision to go with the big corporations instead of with a public procurement model that puts—

• (1905)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada is not privatizing Via Rail.

[*Translation*]

The Government of Canada will retain ownership of Via Rail, its subsidiary, and all high-frequency train infrastructure and assets.

[*English*]

A significant amount of analysis and due diligence was completed to determine the best delivery model for this transformational project. This included studying a whole spectrum of procurement options, ranging from fully public models to public-private partnerships.

[*Translation*]

The high-frequency train is the largest and most complex infrastructure project launched in Canada for decades. The Government of Canada therefore wants to enlist the knowledge and expertise of public entities and private sector companies with experience in developing and implementing major infrastructure projects.

[*English*]

That is why a private partner will be brought in to work with Via—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. The time is up.

I want to remind members that if they have something to say, they should say it very lightly to members and not yell it out while the House is in session.

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 the Department of Finance in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2023-24

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Department of Finance in the main estimates, Mrs. Carol Hughes in the chair)

The Deputy Chair: The House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to study all votes under Department of Finance in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

[English]

Today's debate is a general one on all votes under the Department of Finance. 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 rotation.

[Translation]

Periods of 15 minutes at a time will be allocated to each MP. Speaking time may be used for both debate and questions. If MPs wish to use this time to make a speech, it must not exceed 10 minutes, in order to leave at least five minutes for questions to the minister. When a member is given the floor, he or she must indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used. In other words, the member will need to indicate which portion will be used for a speech and which portion will be devoted to questions and answers.

In addition, pursuant to the order adopted on Thursday, May 18, members who wish to share their time with another member or members will need to indicate this to the Chair, and the Chair will not receive any quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent. When the time is used for questions and comments, the minister's response should roughly correspond to the time taken to ask the question, since this time will be counted in the time allotted to the MP.

[English]

Pursuant to order made Thursday, May 8, the time provided for the 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.

We will now begin tonight's debate.

The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Chair, the government is introducing a carbon tax on heat, gas and groceries. Will the government also apply the HST and GST on the tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am glad to hear the Leader

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of the Opposition talk about a price on carbon, because that is a key element of our government's efforts to fight climate change—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the official opposition.

• (1910)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, will the government charge HST on the carbon tax, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the ordinary taxes will be levied in the ordinary fashion, but I do want to—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, does that include charging HST on the carbon tax, a tax on a tax, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the point is this: Does the member have a plan to fight climate change or does he not?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the point is, does the government plan to tax the tax? Will the HST apply to the carbon tax, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the point is that the Conservatives want to behave as if Canada can be an ostrich putting its head in the sand.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the point is that Canadians cannot afford to pay any more.

Will she charge the HST on the carbon tax, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what Canadians cannot afford is an official opposition that denies the fact that climate change is real and denies the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, that is false.

We will assume that she intends to tax the tax. That means that Canadians will pay once with the carbon tax and then twice for the tax on the tax. What will be the full cost of the carbon tax per litre be once the tax, and the tax on the tax, are fully implemented? How much will it be?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the leader of the official opposition just said that it was false that he does not have a climate plan. Does that mean he is sticking with the previous Conservative leader's climate plan? That was what he was elected on.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the question was this: How much will it be per litre once the carbon tax is fully implemented? How much?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the point is that, in the 21st century, the world is building a clean economy. The Conservatives are in denial about that. That is a disservice to all—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the official opposition.

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, what was Canada's ranking in the climate performance index, out of 63 countries?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I will tell members some important rankings. TD judged our green economy plan—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, what was Canada's ranking in the climate performance index? What was our ranking?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, TD judged that our climate plan in the 2023 budget would put us at par with the United States and ahead of the rest of the world as a green economy investment destination.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, it is funny that the United States does not have a carbon tax. It is even funnier that she thinks the bankers are happy. I am sure they are happy. They do not mind paying what turns out to be 41¢ a litre when this carbon tax is fully implemented.

How much will that cap cost, net, for the average family?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like the Conservatives to really look themselves in the mirror and ask if it is credible, in the 21st century, to not have a climate plan, because that is the reality of this opposition. It is a disservice to all Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, she has a tax plan and she cannot even tell us how much it will cost. We know it will be 41¢ a litre for the first carbon tax.

How much will it cost the average family in higher heat, gas and grocery bills? How much?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as the leader of the official opposition should know, our price on pollution goes right back into the pockets of every family in Canada. It goes back into the pockets of families here in Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and across the country.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the answer, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, is that in P.E.I., it will be \$1,500. In Ontario, it will be \$1,800, and in Alberta, it will be \$2,700. That is just the first carbon tax. We just learned that the government plans to implement a second carbon tax, a so-called clean fuel standard.

How much will that tax add to the cost of a litre of gasoline when fully implemented? How much?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like to remind the Conservative leader of what he and everyone sitting beside him said when they asked Canadians for their vote in the last election: “We will assess progress [so] carbon prices [can be] on a path to \$170/tonne”.

Are they disavowing that?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, I never supported such a thing so, of course, I do not need to disavow it.

The question was this: The minister plans a second carbon tax. How much will that tax add to the price of a litre of gas? How much?

• (1915)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I was just reading from the 2021 Conservative platform. The Leader of the Opposition ran as an MP on that platform. He now says he did not support it.

Was he misleading Canadians when he asked for their vote?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, no.

The answer is that the second carbon tax will cost another \$1,000 in Alberta, another \$611 in Manitoba and another \$850 in Newfoundland and Labrador. Where does the minister expect the people of those provinces to get that money?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let us talk about something else that every single Conservative, including the Conservative leader, promised to Canadians when they asked for their vote. This is a sacred trust we enter into in election campaigns. The Conservative platform said, “We'll finalize and improve”—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Chair, on a point of order, when the member opposite is speaking, it is very quiet, and I would expect the same courtesy when the Minister of Finance is speaking.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Chair: I understand some people who are laughing, but I do not think it is a laughing matter when we demand respect in the House. No matter who is speaking, everyone deserves respect in the House, so I would ask members, if they wish to have conversations or are not in agreement with what is happening, that they take it out of the chamber.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I think the Conservatives do not want Canadians to be reminded of what they promised in the last election, but I am going to keep reminding Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the minister has carbon tax 1 and carbon tax 2. She cannot tell anybody what they cost. Either she does not know or she does not want Canadians to know.

Can you tell us what will be the total cost to an average family, net of rebates, of carbon tax 1 plus carbon tax 2? How much?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the official opposition has to address all questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the minister.

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The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like to refresh the Conservative leader's memory because, in the last campaign, his party promised to "improve the Clean Fuel Regulations to reduce carbon emissions from every litre of gasoline (and other liquid fuels) we burn". Was that something the Conservative leader supported when he was knocking on doors and saying that that was his plan?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the question was this: How much is the total cost per family of the two combined carbon taxes plus the tax on the tax and the tax. How much? That is the easy question.

She has an official there. Perhaps he could hand her a briefing note. How much is it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the point is that a plan beats no plan, and these Conservatives were either misleading Canadians in the last election, which it seems they were, or they simply do not have a climate plan today.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, if the minister does not believe me, maybe she will believe the Liberal premier of Newfoundland and Labrador who said:

As the July 1 implementation date of the federal...Regulations approaches, Atlantic Premiers remain concerned about the detrimental and disproportionate impact they will have on Atlantic Canadians. Together with the carbon tax increase also scheduled for July 1, an increase in the cost of gasoline and diesel is anticipated. These increases will further add to inflationary pressures that will increase the costs of other goods imported to the region.

That is not me. That is the Liberal premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. Is he wrong?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will be getting back nearly \$1,000 through our price on pollution, which puts the money back into the pockets of Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, that is interesting. Now the minister is finally talking numbers. It turns out that Newfoundland and Labradorians will be paying \$2,166 more in carbon taxes and taxes on the tax than they get back in any of these phony rebates. If these numbers are not right, what are the correct numbers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what turns out to be phony is the platform every single Conservative MP ran on in 2021. I just read it out. They promised a path to \$170 a tonne. They promised clean fuel regulations. Therefore, if the Conservatives can turn around and disavow that, what—

• (1920)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. leader of the official opposition.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, how much will the second carbon tax cost Quebecers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Quebecers understand the importance of climate action.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, how much will Quebecers pay per litre of diesel and gasoline with the second carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the important question is this: How much will Canadians, including Quebecers, lose without a plan to create a green economy?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, how much will Quebecers pay for each litre of diesel and gasoline with this second carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Quebec is a leader in Canada and abroad in terms of climate action. I know that Quebecers are well aware of how important—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, why then is the government forcing Quebecers to pay another carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Quebec has a climate system that is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, why will the government impose a new carbon tax on Quebecers? Why?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the question that every Conservative member from Quebec should answer is, why did they promise Quebecers a plan—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the minister cannot even answer. The cost of the new tax that the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc want to impose on Quebecers, is 17¢ a litre. Again, is she going to charge sales tax on the carbon tax in Quebec?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Canadians understand the importance of climate action. That is why the Conservatives promised a climate plan during the 2021 election campaign. Today, they are saying they disagree. What are Canadians to believe when it comes to the Conservatives?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, therefore we must assume that the government will apply the sales tax to Quebec's carbon tax. It will add 20¢ to the cost of a litre of gas. That is an additional 20¢ a litre as a result of this new tax. How much will that cost Quebec families?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the Conservatives should be frank and clear with Canadians. They must admit that not having a climate plan will cost every Canadian and every Quebecer much more. That is why they promised during the election campaign that they would have a plan. Today, they are saying that that was not their plan.

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the answer is that every Quebec family will have to pay more than \$400 for this second carbon tax that the government and the Bloc want to charge Quebecers. How much will it cost every farm in Quebec and every farmer in Quebec?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Quebec companies are well positioned to take the lead in the green economy. That is why Quebec businesses strongly support our climate plan.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, we agree, which is why we do not think that Quebecers should be saddled with a new environmental tax.

Let us talk about the environment. Can the minister tell me what was Canada's ranking in the climate performance index out of 63 countries?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what I can say, and what we should all be very proud of, is that after the budget was tabled in March, TD Economics and Rystad Energy said that Canada leads the world in attracting investment.

• (1925)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Chair, the bankers are happy, so we should all be happy. Farmers are going to have to pay, single mothers are going to have to pay, families and small businesses are going to have to pay, but the banks are happy.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the people who are happy are Canada's workers, who will have good jobs thanks to investments in our green economy.

The Deputy Chair: Resuming debate. The Minister of Finance.
[English]

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is nice to have applause from the opposite benches. I am glad they enjoyed that. I certainly did. I enjoyed reminding them about their promises from the last election.

[Translation]

The Canadian economy has had a remarkable recovery since the recession caused by COVID-19. Today, 907,000 more Canadians are working than when COVID-19 struck. In the first four months of 2023 alone, the Canadian economy created nearly a quarter of a million jobs. We have now recovered 129% of the jobs lost in the first months of the pandemic, compared with only 115% in the United States.

[English]

Supported by our Canada-wide system of affordable early learning and child care, the labour force participation rate for Canadian women in their prime working years hit a record high of 85.7% in February, compared to just 77.2% in the United States.

Today, more Canadians have good jobs than ever before and at just 5%, our unemployment rate is near its record low. Inflation has fallen from 8.1% last June to 4.4% last month. The Bank of Canada predicts it will fall to 3% this summer.

Since February, the average wage for Canadians has been growing by 5% or more. That means paycheques have been outpacing

inflation, which means more money in Canadians' pockets after a hard day's work. At 3.4%, we had the strongest economic growth in the G7 over the course of last year.

Our deficit is down from a projected 1.5% of GDP last year to 1.4% this year. In April, S&P reiterated our Triple A credit rating and we have both the lowest deficit-to-GDP and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, lower also than other major Triple A-rated economies such as the Netherlands.

[Translation]

Thanks to these remarkably strong economic fundamentals, our 2023 budget comes at an important time for the country. In the short term, we have to deal with the global economic slowdown and high interest rates around the world. We also need to strengthen our universal public health care system so that it delivers the quality public health care that Canadians deserve in a timely manner.

In the months and years to come, Canada must seize the remarkable opportunities arising from two fundamental shifts in the global economy: the race to build the clean economies of the 21st century and our allies' accelerating efforts to friendshore their economies by building their critical supply chains through democracies such as Canada's.

[English]

Our budget is a direct response to the challenges and opportunities we face. First, our budget includes a one-time grocery rebate that will deliver targeted inflation relief to those who need it most. On July 5, 11 million Canadians and Canadian families can expect to see the grocery rebate arrive in their bank accounts or their mailboxes. A couple with two children will receive an extra \$467 and single Canadians without children will receive up to an extra \$234.

Second, we are delivering a \$198-billion investment in public health care that we announced earlier this year. Our plan will help ensure Canadians have access to a family doctor. It will tackle the backlog of surgeries and combat the opioid crisis that has devastated so many families. Also, even as we reinforce the public health care system we have today, we are also expanding its reach. By 2025, the new Canadian dental care plan will provide dental coverage for up to nine million uninsured Canadians. That will mean no Canadian ever again will need to choose between taking care of their teeth and paying the bills at the end of the month. It means one will no longer be able to tell how much money a Canadian makes, or how much money their parents make, by their smile.

• (1930)

[Translation]

These are significant and necessary investments, because a strong and effective public health care system is essential for a strong and healthy Canadian workforce. We need a strong and healthy Canadian workforce now more than ever because, these days, the whole world is making massive investments in their clean economy of the 21st century. At the same time, our democratic partners are trying to move away from their economic dependency on dictatorships and form closer ties with democracies like ours. Our allies need the expertise of our workers, the ingenuity of Canadian businesses and the resources that Canada is fortunate enough to have in abundance. Our country must live up to this historic moment or it will be left behind while democracies around the world build the clean economy of the 21st century.

[English]

That is why our budget makes transformative investments to build Canada's clean economy, fight climate change and create new opportunities for Canadian workers and Canadian businesses. This includes major investment tax credits for clean electricity and clean technology manufacturing, adding to major investment tax credits for carbon capture, utilization and storage, clean hydrogen and clean technology adoption that we announced last year. We are going to make Canada a clean electricity superpower by building a national electrical grid that connects Canadians from coast to coast and delivers cleaner, more affordable electricity to Canadians and Canadian businesses.

From energy to critical minerals to electric vehicles, we are going to ensure that Canadian workers mine, process, build and sell the goods and resources that our allies need. We are going to deliver investments to put Canadian workers and Canadian businesses at the heart of essential global supply chains and we are going to build big things here in Canada, from a Volkswagen battery plant in St. Thomas to the Galaxy Lithium mine in Quebec, to the Trans Mountain expansion in Alberta, to the Atlantic Loop, to the LNG terminal in Kitimat, B.C.

[Translation]

Our plan seeks to create well-paying jobs, good careers for everyone across the country. It seeks to invest in such a way that all Canadians can benefit from incredible opportunities across the country and take part in the new era of prosperity that we will all build together.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Chair, there are many aspects we could talk about regarding how progressive the budget is in terms of supporting Canadians in a very real and tangible way.

The minister referred to the dental program and how it will be expanded to incorporate seniors and people with disabilities. It has already had an impact on children under the age of 12. I am wondering if the minister could provide some sense of the number of children who have benefited to date under the program and the pos-

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itive impact this program will have, much like the \$10-a-day child care program, on our communities throughout Canada.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his hard work and collaboration over many years.

As I have travelled the country talking to Canadians about the budget, one of the most touching things for me has been hearing directly from people about how much our dental care plan means to them. People at entirely unrelated events have come up to me, sometimes hiding their faces a bit with one of their hands, saying they are so glad we are doing this, that when they were children their parents could not afford to take them to the dentist and they are ashamed of their smiles today. I am really glad that is not going to happen to Canadian kids anymore.

One of the most important things we have done collectively in this House, at least some of us have, is support a plan that is really going to mean, for the first time in Canadian history, that we will not be able to tell how much someone makes by their smile. I am glad we are able to do that.

• (1935)

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, in response to some of the Conservative leader's questions, the Minister of Finance spoke about the importance of tackling the climate crisis, particularly for Quebecers.

I would like the minister to tell us more about this priority in Quebec and for her to tell us how the acceleration of the green transition, as set out in our 2023 budget, will meet the needs of Quebecers.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would also like to thank my colleague from Montreal who works with me and the deputy finance minister on our larger finance team.

Of course, she is right. Quebec is a leader when it comes to child care centres, and it is also a leader in terms of climate action. That is why the people of Quebec, the leaders of the province of Quebec, including the Premier of Quebec and Quebec businesses, were pleased with the green plan in our budget.

They understand that this plan will help attract investment from Canada and abroad to create the good jobs of today and tomorrow.

[English]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for her budget and also for her hard work.

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I want to talk about an announcement that was made today by the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations with respect to the National Family and Survivors Circle, which was given almost \$97 million for support for survivors of trauma, stemming from the MMIWG report.

Can the minister tell us how important this is in terms of healing, as well as our path toward reconciliation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge Park for his hard work. He and I have spoken many times about the work he does on reconciliation. One of the things he has talked to me about, which I have found very moving, is that in his riding, which is a very diverse riding with many new Canadians, he has found when talking to his constituents that reconciliation is incredibly important to them. They see reconciliation as a fundamental part of their responsibilities and their duties as proud, new Canadians.

I know that my colleague understands that very well. Our government understands that very well. We still have a lot of work to do as we walk the path of reconciliation. We need to keep investing in it every single year.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, can the minister provide her thoughts regarding how important it was for Canada to work with Volkswagen?

We were able to land something that is going to make such a profound, positive impact, not only for the community of St. Thomas, but for all of Canada, as a direct result of the government taking the initiative and securing such a wonderful plant going forward.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government understands that there is a window of opportunity right now to be the country where the clean economy of the 21st century is built. That window is open today, but it will not be open forever. That is why, in our budget, we announced really significant investments in the clean economy. Our total clean economy investment is about \$120 billion.

As I said earlier, TD Economics now ranks Canada head to head with the U.S. as the world's most attractive clean economy investment destination. That is really important today and it is really important for tomorrow.

• (1940)

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Chair, can the minister talk about some of the things we are doing to mitigate the climate crisis we have? We are seeing fires and hurricanes. We are seeing, all across Canada, the impact of climate change.

Can the minister talk about what our government is doing to address that?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is really appropriate for us to have a question from one of our Nova Scotia MPs about that issue, because wildfires are now burning there. They were burning in the home province of my colleague, the Associate Minister of Finance. This is more proof that we do need to act on climate, and we are.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Chair, this is the first government budget that we could describe as a postpandemic budget. Obviously no one here in Parliament is to blame for the virus. However, the programs that might have helped us to get through the pandemic at the time are the responsibility of this Parliament. We need to learn important lessons and make corrections. We also need to prepare for the next crisis that could arise.

The government boasts about having signed agreements with the provinces on health. These agreements were imposed. Out of the demands that were made by the provinces and Quebec, only \$1 out of \$6 was granted. Before the Liberals came along, the transfers covered 24% of provincial health costs. Now they cover just 22%. With these new agreements, which are not real agreements, we are back to 24%. They are perpetuating the chronic underfunding of health.

Does the minister recognize that the federal government's chronic underfunding has left us short on hospital beds and that the measures to counter the pandemic, which hurt our economy, had to be excessively extended?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I agree that health care is a priority for Quebecers and for all Canadians. That is why we made a historic investment of almost \$200 billion for health care in the budget. That is really a lot of money. However, we know that it was the right thing to do because for Quebec and for all the provinces, health care is essential. That is why we made this investment.

We also made huge investments during the pandemic. We supported the provinces and territories, including Quebec, obviously. Nine out of 10 dollars spent during the pandemic were spent by the federal government. It was the right thing to do, but the result today is that some provinces, including Quebec, are in a position—

The Chair: The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, the minister confirmed that she supports the ongoing underfunding and that she also borrowed on behalf of the provinces. This is not a gift from the federal government. The money that the federal government sent during the pandemic was borrowed money.

Now there is no money for health care, but there is money for a dental plan. This is being done with the help of the federal spending power, which is the instrument of the fiscal imbalance.

The federal government is going to expand this program. The Government of Quebec and the Quebec National Assembly are unanimously calling for Quebec to be given the right to opt out with full financial compensation.

Will the Liberal government give Quebec the right to opt out with full financial compensation?

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we came up with a good solution with Quebec regarding day care and our national system. We understood that Quebec's approach was different and we came up with a good solution.

I am absolutely sure that my colleague, the Minister of Health, will also find a good solution for Quebec regarding dental care. We understand that the situation in Quebec is different.

• (1945)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, I like clear answers.

Do the minister and her government plan to offer the Government of Quebec the right to opt out with full compensation? Yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, relations between the federal government and the provinces are complex. Health care and dental care are complex. I will clearly repeat that we are sure that we can find—

The Chair: The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, I notice that the longer the answers are, the more they seem like a “no” in disguise.

We know that during the pandemic, health care was underfunded, that there was a shortage of hospital beds that led to people being turned away, and that the pandemic measures needed to be extended.

If, during the pandemic, we had had a dental plan like the one the minister is planning, how many more hospital beds would Quebec have had as a result of that dental plan?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the pandemic was truly a crisis for the entire country. That being said, I think that we as Canadians and Quebecers can be proud, in general, of our national response. If we compare Canada to the United States—

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, during the pandemic, we saw significant gaps in the social safety net, especially Canada's social safety net, which led to the use of a set of temporary measures. Naturally, all parties quickly agreed to them. One temporary measure after another was implemented. Ultimately, these measures were poorly targeted and very costly.

Although it does not want to do so for China, does the government plan to launch a public inquiry into the reasons for these gaps in our social safety net so that, in the event of another crisis, we need not reintroduce the temporary measures one by one, since we know how costly they will be for taxpayers and future generations?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I do not agree with my Bloc colleague. I believe that, faced with a historic global crisis, Canada demonstrated tremendous social solidarity. Let us compare Canada and the United States. If Canada had had the same mortality rate as the United States, 70,000 more Canadians would have died. That is a big difference.

No, our response was not perfect, but our results were good, not just compared with the United States, but with all G7 countries except Japan.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, there is the EI spring gap for temporary workers. There is the problem of inadequate coverage

through the EI system. There is the actuarial financing of the EI fund, which is poorly suited to economic cycles and major disasters like the one we just went through. We have been calling for EI reform for years. Since 2015, the Liberals have been promising EI reform, but we have seen nothing of the sort.

Most recently, we were promised EI reform by August 2023, which is right around the corner. There was absolutely nothing in the budget. The actuarial calculation shows that an extra \$25 billion will be taken from the pockets of unemployed workers between now and 2030.

Is the minister committed to keeping her government's promise to reform EI, or to at least announce a reform, by August 2023?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I want to remind the House, but especially my Bloc colleague, that during the pandemic, the government put an additional \$27 billion into the EI system to offset all the expenses the system had to incur. The federal government supported our EI system.

I can also say that what Canadians want is a strong economy and jobs. That is the most important thing. Our government and our country are in a really good position today when it comes to—

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, indeed, just over \$25 billion in additional funding was put into EI during the crisis. That was a small portion of the \$250 billion to \$300 billion that the Government of Canada spent to help Canadians and Quebecers during the pandemic.

For the other programs, unlike EI, Quebecers and Canadians have decided to stand in solidarity and band together to cover all of these pandemic-related expenses through the government's consolidated fund. In this case, the government is going to take another \$25 billion out of the pockets of businesses and unemployed workers over the next seven years.

Does the government not think that it should show solidarity and treat this spending as pandemic spending instead of dipping into people's pockets for the next seven years?

• (1950)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the \$27 billion we have invested in our EI system is not a small amount. That is a lot of money. It was important and necessary; it was the right thing to do. We were there for Canadians during the pandemic. Today, we continue to be there for Canadians, and that includes through the EI system.

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The good news is that the labour market is very strong today in Canada. Yes, we understand that we need an EI system. However, Canadians do not want employment insurance; they want a good job. That is what we have today in Canada.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, this budget allocates approximately \$80 billion for so-called green subsidies. We do not know whether they are green or not because the government has always refused to define what constitutes an effective fossil fuel subsidy.

Approximately 30% of these subsidies go directly to fossil fuels. That is approximately \$24 billion to \$25 billion. Is the Minister of Finance not embarrassed to tell unemployed workers in Quebec and the rest of Canada that she is going to take \$25 billion to \$27 billion out of their pockets when that money is going directly to fossil fuels?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government absolutely understands the importance of climate action and investing in a green economy. That is what we have done.

With the budget, we now have a \$120-billion plan to create a clean economy. Today, we are seeing that we have really started to attract investments. We are also seeing that emissions are coming down. Our plan is working.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the wage subsidy program, the government got helping workers confused with Halloween because the Liberal Party was caught with both hands in the candy bowl. Liberal Party of Canada employees received wage subsidies.

Does the minister think that the political parties that benefited from wage subsidies should have to pay taxpayers back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we understood during the pandemic that it was an historic crisis. We understood that it was important to have a response that measured up to the historic nature of this crisis.

That is what we did. We supported Canadians across the country and that was the right thing to do.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, this democratic chamber, the House of Commons, voted in favour of a bill introduced by my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière, from the Conservative Party. This bill would enable people with very serious illnesses to receive 52 weeks of employment insurance sickness benefits.

The minister is offering six months, but in many cases, including when chemotherapy is needed, treatments can last from six months to two years.

Is the minister telling these sick people that they have to go back to work?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as my colleague said in his question, our government has already added weeks to employment insurance for people with serious illnesses. That is the right thing to do, and we are proud of taking this very important step.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, approximately 60% of workers who lose their jobs will not be covered by EI.

Does the minister believe that to be a sufficient rate of coverage?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government understands the importance of the EI system. That is why we invested in EI during the pandemic.

We continue to—

The Chair: The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, before the Axworthy reform of the 1990s, 64% of Canadians were covered by EI; today, 40% are covered.

Does the minister believe that going from 60% to 40% is the right way to help the unemployed who have bad luck in the labour market?

• (1955)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the right thing to do is to have an economic plan that creates jobs. What I want is to not have any unemployed workers in Canada. The good news is that we created almost 900,000 jobs.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, the government continues to heavily subsidize fossil fuels with taxpayer money.

For years, we have been waiting for a definition of an effective subsidy for fossil fuels. On two occasions in her reports, the Auditor General told us that she was not even able to evaluate whether subsidies were effective because the government had not even provided a definition.

Can the minister today provide a definition of an effective subsidy for fossil fuels?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to finish my answer about the job market in Canada, because it is very important to understand that our focus during the pandemic was jobs, jobs and more jobs. We understood that, for Quebecers and Canadians, having a job was the most important thing.

I am very pleased—

The Chair: The hon. Bloc Québécois member's time has expired. We will now go the NDP member.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, there has been a lot of debate in this place about the extent to which public spending contributes to inflation. I am wondering if the minister believes that all public spending contributes to inflation, or just certain kinds.

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Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, one of the things we have paid a lot of attention to in the budget, and in all of our budgets, is making investments that increase Canada's economic capacity, and we believe that investments that do that can actually be anti-inflationary.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, for instance, does the minister believe that the GST rebate, which is targeted at low-income Canadians, was an inflationary spending item?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to start by talking about early learning and child care, if I may, because for me that is the poster child of an investment that actually adds to Canada's economic capacity—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, I will take the minister to be saying that she does not believe that investing in child care is inflationary. Does she believe that doubling the GST rebate two times was an inflationary spend by government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we need to be very careful in our budgets about a couple of things. We had an eye on a few things.

One was being sure we found a balance between fiscal responsibility, between our deficit and debt—

The Chair: I am doing the time thing. I just want to make sure I am okay with this.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, does the finance minister believe that the GST rebate was an inflationary spend or not?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I believe that the GST rebate and the grocery rebate were spending that was necessary to give help to the people who needed it the most.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, does the minister believe that pharmacare, which is a program that would lower the amount Canadians spend on prescription drugs against the current amount they spend, would be inflationary?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, whether spending is inflationary depends obviously on the macroeconomic conditions of the moment and on how the programs are designed and delivered.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, how can lowering prices be inflationary?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, again, as I know the member for Elmwood—Transcona knows, everything depends on how programs are designed, and everything depends also on the macroeconomic conditions of the moment. If I talk to someone from Japan, they are keen to have inflationary spending, because they have been in a deflationary spiral for a long time.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, does over \$30 billion in infrastructure spending risk being inflationary?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, again, the macroeconomic impact of any policy measure depends very much on the macroeconomic circumstance of the time. For us, compassion is important. Fiscal responsibility—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, infrastructure investments are important, but they can also be inflationary. Does the minister recognize that infrastructure spending can be inflationary?

• (2000)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, sure, I absolutely recognize that very many different types of spending can be inflationary or not, depending on the overall macroenvironment in a country and in the world and depending on how that spending is structured.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, the government has been spending over \$30 billion on the TMX pipeline. It has a \$15-billion growth fund. Does the minister share concern that the \$30 billion being spent on a pipeline is going to bid up the cost of projects that the growth fund would invest in?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, here the member for Elmwood—Transcona and I probably disagree.

I am very glad that our government made the decision to get the TMX pipeline built. I think it is very important for Canada's national sovereignty that we have a pipeline that goes to the west coast and that the U.S. is not the only destination for our natural resources.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, is the nature of the disagreement on the fact that \$30 billion on the TMX pipeline might bid up the cost of jobs for the growth fund?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I think that when it comes to the TMX pipeline, we probably have many points of disagreement, although I suspect Rachel Notley and I have fewer points of disagreement on the TMX pipeline.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, I am concerned to know if the minister thinks that the spending on TMX may well bid up the cost of other large infrastructure projects, like those foreseen for the growth fund.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I think the important point on TMX is that the pipeline is very close to completion. We expect that it will be finished by the end of this year. This is an important contribution to Canada's economic sovereignty, and I think all members are aware of this.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, how much does the government anticipate selling the TMX pipeline for?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government, once the pipeline is built, does not intend to be the long-term owner of the asset, and we are going to get good value for Canadians. The other aspect that is important—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, does the government canvass prospective buyers?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the government is very aware of market interest in the pipeline.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, how much does that market interest likely dictate it will get for the pipeline?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I want to point to one very important aspect, at least for me when it comes to TMX, and that is indigenous participation, which is something we are working on very energetically with indigenous groups.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, the government is spending more than double on the TMX pipeline than it is putting into the growth fund. How much does it expect to get for the pipeline?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, the government will get good value for Canadians from the pipeline. In the world, it is a very valuable, very rare asset and, as I said, contributes essentially to Canada's economic sovereignty.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, we understand that the terms and conditions of the Stellantis deal are changing. Is that because the government did that initial deal on a handshake, or did it have a written agreement?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the initial conversations with Stellantis happened before the IRA was passed into law. I think it is very clear that the situation in the world has changed, and so naturally there—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, did the government have a written agreement with Stellantis before the IRA was passed into law?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, obviously the federal and provincial governments had agreements with Stellantis. It is also the case that the IRA has changed the playing field for the whole world. However, the member opposite is right in that the fact that this investment predates the IRA is an important factor.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, was the agreement with Stellantis in writing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, the member is quite right to point out, as I point out as well, that the fact that this agreement predates the IRA—

The Chair: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, was the agreement in writing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the IRA has also changed the playing field in the world for investments of this kind—

The Chair: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, was the agreement in writing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, the—

The Chair: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, is the Volkswagen deal in writing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I expect these rather childish games of gotcha to be played by the Conservatives—

• (2005)

The Chair: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, when the government brags about securing investment for jobs for Canadians, I do not think

there is anything childish at all to ask whether it is written down or not. What I find childish is somebody refusing to say whether they have a written agreement or not.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I think what is important for Canadians is to know that the Volkswagen deal is a done deal. It has been disclosed. It is fully accounted for in our budget, and the details have been disclosed.

I think Canadians do have a reasonable interest in what is happening with Stellantis—

The Chair: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, does “done deal” mean in writing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, certainly.

Now when it comes to Stellantis, I think it is important for us to all be serious about this. This is an important investment—

The Chair: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, is Stellantis a done deal?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I think the member opposite knows and as I think Canadians know, we are negotiating right now with Stellantis and we are negotiating—

The Chair: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, in this budget, the government allocated another \$50 million on top of the over \$300 million it has already allocated to chasing money from the poor who were in the CERB program. How much is the government prepared to spend on chasing people who cannot afford to pay their CERB debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government believes in compassion, and I think we have demonstrated that in budget after budget. Our government also knows that Canadians want to know that there is fairness and program integrity.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, organizations that are currently working with vulnerable Canadians have said that the CRA is no longer offering the \$5-a-month or \$10-a-month repayment plans. Is the minister aware of that fact?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to talk about the importance of fairness.

Business of Supply

Fairness is important to vulnerable Canadians as well as to affluent Canadians. Vulnerable Canadians who play by the rules want to know that everyone else is playing by the rules too. That is why we are finding a balance between integrity and compassion.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, how much money is the government spending to reclaim emergency wage subsidy dollars that were taken by companies that did not need it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the point about the importance of integrity and fairness applies to all Canadians and to all of our programs.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, well, it applies to Canadians but apparently not corporations. I will ask again, how much money is the government spending on reclaiming emergency wage subsidy dollars from companies that posted profits and paid dividends?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, we absolutely understand the importance of program integrity. It really matters to Canadians.

I also want to point out, and let us remember, that COVID was an unprecedented economic emergency. We took unprecedented—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, I do not know that Canadians think pretending to get money back from the poor and spending hundreds of millions of dollars to maintain the fiction has actually anything to do with fairness or that it is a prudent financial decision.

Again, how much is the government willing to spend to chase money it already knows it cannot get back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, it is important for us to be compassionate, and that is one of the priorities of our government, but we also understand that fairness matters to Canadians. For example, those Canadians who received a payment in error and who have paid it back want to know that those same rules apply to other Canadians.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, they might also like to know that it applies to multi-billion-dollar corporations that received that money, have not paid it back and have not been asked to pay it back.

How much is the government prepared to spend in going after companies that got wage subsidy money and paid dividends to their shareholders?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we believe that integrity of all of our programs is important, and that is what we are pursuing. We are pursuing it in a compassionate, reasonable way.

I want to remind people: eyes on the prize. The important thing is we needed to take emergency action during COVID.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, earlier in her exchange with the Conservative leader, the minister said that platform documents represent a sacred trust. Seven and a half years ago, the government promised to reform the employment insurance system, and it has not done it. Is that breaking a sacred trust with Canadians?

● (2010)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government absolutely understands the importance of the EI system. That is why, during

COVID, we contributed an additional \$27 billion to the EI account to support EI, so EI could support Canadians in this—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, it was not a real contribution. The government is already trying to take it back. It has assigned \$25 billion of the CERB debt to the EI account, which means that premium dollars are already going to go up just to pay back that debt and are not available for program improvements.

How is it that the government is planning to enhance employment insurance when it is already eating up the money that would be available to do that through a \$25-billion debt assignment?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am afraid that that is simply an inaccurate explanation of what has happened with the EI account.

EI supported Canadians in a significant way during COVID and in the aftermath, and that is why the government transferred \$27 billion to the EI account to support EI.

Whenever the country goes through an economic downturn, whether it was 2008 or the COVID recession, the EI account needs to move back into balance—

The Chair: The hon. member, if you have a quickie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, sure, yes. Pardon me; now I need a minute.

As my final question in respect of that debt, we have been told by the Governor of the Bank of Canada that he is going to keep raising interest rates until the unemployment rate goes up. Canadians are in need of a well-functioning employment insurance system. When can they expect to get it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I cannot resist saying that I am not sure quickies are permitted in the House of Commons.

The EI system is very important. That is why we resisted pressure to lower contributions. That is why we are going to continue supporting the system that is so important for so many Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure to participate in today's debate in committee of the whole.

Our government is well aware that we are living in difficult times, in a difficult world.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

The world is going through a difficult time, and the impacts of outside forces are affecting the lives of Canadians. A global inflation cycle is making it harder to make ends meet, with snarled supply chains and geopolitical uncertainty driving up food prices and fuel costs. Climate change continues to affect our lives and endanger our communities with heat domes, atmospheric rivers, flooding and wildfires.

On that note, I would like to thank all the first responders and everyone responsible for responding to the wildfires in my home province of Alberta. I would say to the tens of thousands of Albertans who have been displaced that the federal government continues to be part of the plan and the action to get people back to their homes.

Our industries and our communities continue to adjust to the realities of a postpandemic world. Employers are attracting new workers, and businesses are welcoming back customers.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I know we are trying to give information back and forth, and it is really difficult when the microphone is right there.

The hon. Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance.

[Translation]

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, we have been honest with Canadians. The short-term outlook for the global economy is not great. Financing conditions have tightened, and the negative economic impact of Vladimir Putin's illegal and unjust invasion of Ukraine continues to be felt.

[English]

Such moments present political leaders with a choice, and in this House, the choice and the contrast are clear: Conservatives believe it is in their political interest to tell Canadians that everything is broken and that they should give up hope. Their ideology tells them that government does not have any role to play in supporting Canadians through these tough times. Their political instincts tell them that they do not need concrete plans or solutions; they need only slogans and scary rhetoric. I have no doubt that today's debate will continue to be full of much of the same, yet on this side of the House, we take a different approach.

Our government believes in finding solutions to global problems. We believe that it is the government's role to help get Canadians through these tough economic times, and we believe in investing in our future and building the foundations for economic growth. Under the leadership of our government, Canadians will do together what they have always done when times are tough. They will pull together, look after each other and come out stronger. That is exactly what has been taking place.

● (2015)

[Translation]

Finally, as statistics show, there are now 907,000 more Canadian workers in the labour market than there were before the COVID-19 pandemic. More Canadians are working than ever before. Canada's unemployment rate is at 5%, near its lowest level in decades.

[English]

In just the first four months of 2023, our economy added nearly a quarter-million jobs. While inflation is still too high, and its impacts are still being felt by Canadians, we are seeing it slowly decline. It has gone from 8.1% last June down to 4.4% last month, and the Bank of Canada predicts that it will further decline to 3% this summer and just 2.5% by the end of the year. Canada's deficit is projected to be lower than it was last year, down to just 1.4% of the GDP. It will also continue to go down every year for the next five years.

We point out these basic facts, but the Conservatives, once again, revert to politics. Without an answer to these facts, they throw their hands up in the air and claim that we are saying that Canadians never had it so good. I am sure that messaging gets a lot of retweets, but they know that this is not what we are saying. What we are saying is this: With our plan, and thanks to the hard work of Canadians, we are going to emerge from these tough times better than ever.

[Translation]

With budget 2023, "A Made-in-Canada Plan: Strong Middle Class, Affordable Economy, Healthy Future", our government is proposing a number of measures to improve quality of life for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. For example, by providing a one-time grocery rebate for Canadians, we are helping about 11 million people and families who need it most. We are also proposing historic investments in our health care system to ensure that Canadians across the country have access to the care they deserve. We are putting forward many measures to develop a clean economy in Canada. In addition, budget 2023 will allow Canada to maintain the lowest deficit and net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

[English]

We are reducing public spending by more than \$15 billion, without cutting the direct services and supports on which Canadians rely. We are investing where we need to and maintaining the balance of fiscal prudence.

[Translation]

That is not all. To succeed in today's world, it is essential that Canada be able to cope with fundamental changes in the global economy, such as the most significant economic transformation since the industrial revolution: the transition to a green economy.

Business of Supply

Our allies around the world are moving their productions and revising their supply chains to work with democracies, not dictatorships. These changes represent a unique opportunity for Canada and for Canadian workers, and our proposals in budget 2023 allow us to capitalize on those opportunities.

[English]

Countries around the world need the expertise of Canadian workers, the ingenuity of Canadian businesses and the resources that our country has in abundance. As always, Conservatives would rather keep their heads in the sand, but we understand that, as a country, we must meet this historic moment.

We must also keep in mind that the recent passage of the United States' Inflation Reduction Act poses a major challenge to many countries, including Canada. Without swift action, the sheer scale of U.S. incentives will undermine our ability to attract the investments needed to establish Canada as a leader in the growing and highly competitive global clean economy. If Canada does not keep pace, we will be left behind as the world's democracies build the clean economy of the 21st century. If Canada is left behind, an entire generation of Canadian workers will be left behind.

We are taking action. We are making transformative investments to build Canada's net-zero economy, fight climate change and create new opportunities for Canadian businesses and Canadian workers. We will build a national electrical grid that connects Canadians from coast to coast to coast and delivers cleaner, more affordable electricity to Canadians and Canadian businesses.

We will deliver investments to put Canadian workers and Canadian businesses at the heart of essential global supply chains. We will become the reliable supplier of the goods and resources that a net-zero world will need. In our plan, our focus is on predictable investment tax credits, strategic low-cost financing and targeted investments.

Let us talk about the clean hydrogen investment tax credit. The levels of support vary between 15% and 40% of eligible project costs, with the cleanest hydrogen projects receiving the highest support. Budget 2023 also proposes new refundable tax credits for investments in clean electricity technologies, as well as machinery and equipment used to manufacture or process key technologies and extract, process or recycle key critical minerals.

We all know that CCUS, or carbon capture, utilization and storage, is an important tool for reducing emissions. In my home province of Alberta, this critical technology will create opportunities to keep our energy sector sustainable. It will protect our industry, reduce our emissions and create great careers.

That is why budget 2023 proposes to enhance the CCUS investment tax credit to support additional equipment used in this process. This entire package of tax credits, coupled with the investments our government is making in supply chains and industry, is a game changer for the Canadian economy.

We have already seen this. Thanks to our government's investments in air products, we will now build the largest net-zero hydrogen plant in the world right in my home city of Edmonton. We have also seen it with Heidelberg Materials, which is building a full-

scale carbon capture, utilization and storage system at its facility in Edmonton to allow it to create carbon-neutral cement. It is the first such facility in the world. Canadian leadership is taking place in Edmonton thanks to our budget measures.

• (2020)

[Translation]

We are at a pivotal moment in our country's history, when we are choosing to scale up efforts to develop a clean economy, a green economy. I am pleased to see that budget 2023 puts forward numerous measures to make Canada a global leader in the clean economy. With our investments, everyone will win. We will help protect the environment for all Canadians. We will create great jobs for workers and unprecedented business opportunities for our businesses.

[English]

We are presenting a plan for a better future for all Canadians and an economy that works for everyone. At this challenging time in a challenging world, there is no better place to be than in Canada.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Chair, there has been a great deal of discussion about the budget.

As the ministers indicated in both of their speeches, they are talking about the things that are in there to relieve inflation. We know the reality is that as we are coming off the high inflation we have seen over the last year, and indeed it is starting to come down, there are a number of measures in this budget that specifically aim at supporting Canadians in getting through this difficult time, particularly the Canadians who are struggling the most. They are often the ones being affected the most by inflation and the rising costs of goods.

Could the minister highlight some of the important measures in the budget that will aim at helping Canadians and those struggling the most?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, the answer is manifold. We understand that Canadians are struggling, and that is why we are providing the grocery rebate. It is going to help 11 million Canadians. Let me give some numbers. The average family will receive \$467, while single Canadians will receive \$264. Seniors can expect to receive, on average, \$225.

Business of Supply

This is in addition to supports that we put in the window: our previous doubling of the GST tax credit; our increase to the Canada workers benefit, which lowers the tax burden on working Canadians; the creation of and increases to the Canada child benefit; the indexing of the Canada child benefit, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to inflation; a \$500 payment to seniors over 75 and an increase in the OAS for that group; and the dental benefit, which is going to help millions of Canadians. Quite frankly, as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said, we are a compassionate country; nobody should be worried about the quality of their smile. That is why this important investment makes sense for Canadians. There are also our critical investments in early childhood learning, with \$10,000 per year per child in my home province alone.

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am always excited to hear my hon. colleague speak, and I would like to ask him about the visitor economy. How important is this sector to every riding in every part of our country from coast to coast to coast? I know our government has been there. Could my colleague touch on the investments that we have made to support this incredible tourism industry and the visitor economy?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, whether it is Gros Morne National Park, Banff National Park or Jasper, the fact is that budget 2023 includes \$158 million for the visitor economy, \$50 million for Destination Canada, \$108 million for regional development agencies and \$1.8 billion for the transportation sector. This is not only to modernize what we have in terms of our frequent visitor program but also to make sure that we get people to and through our airports faster. That is what it is going to take to get even more people coming to Canada and enjoying all that we have to offer.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, when I was on city council, Sault Ste. Marie declared itself the North American alternative energy capital. We have now started talking about green and clean, but the federal government has made investments in solar and wind; in fact, it made one of the largest investments into a private company called Algoma Steel, with \$420 million to get it from a coal-based process to an electric arc process. That is generational in funding. It is like taking a million cars off the road.

I am particularly interested in this budget. The minister talked about the tax credits for businesses, but could he expand on the benefits for workers, in particular, prevailing wages for workers who are working in the clean, green economy?

• (2025)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, just on the tax credits for clean electricity alone, businesses would get the maximum credit allowed by making sure that they have union workers on the job site and that they are paying prevailing wages. This was work done by the Alberta Federation of Labour and other building trades across the country. This is in the budget, and it makes good sense, because we know that good union jobs are good middle-class jobs. They contribute to the community, and they help grow Canada.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Chair, in this budget, there are some investments in legal aid. Could

the minister talk about how important it is to have a legal system that is accessible and our role in supporting a legal system through additional funding to the legal aid program?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Chair, everybody deserves to be represented and to be treated fairly in our legal system. The fact that our government is making investments in legal aid demonstrates that we believe in that principle and that we are here to work with individuals who need that help when they are facing legal proceedings.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will split my time three ways.

The finance minister said that, by exercising fiscal restraint, she would not pour fuel on the fire of inflation. She did a massive flip-flop from November and added an extra \$60 billion of spending in her failed budget. Can she tell Canadian families how much that is going to cost each and every household in Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the finance critic is an Alberta MP, so I want to ask him something very serious. There is an election going on in Alberta today, and in the campaign, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress asked about pro-Russia, pro-Putin positions taken by some UCP candidates. I would like to know what the Conservative Party thinks, and I will tell members my connection to my appearance tonight at the—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, can the minister please tell every Canadian household how much her extra \$60 billion of spending is going to cost?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is a really important point because, as I was walking up here, I was shouted at, which was nothing unusual. It was some Trumpian language, saying that the PM and I should go to jail. However, one of the things that was shouted at me was “You’re spending my money”—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, since the minister flip-flopped on that, she also flip-flopped when the Liberals said, in 2015, they would run modest, short-term deficits of less than \$10 billion in each of the next two years and return to balance in 2019. What happened?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is a really important point. I was shouted at, and this person said, “You are spending my money on Ukraine.” Is it the position of the Conservative Party of Canada that our spending on Ukraine is wrong?

Business of Supply

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, the minister does not admit her own words, and she will not recognize that she broke her own promises to Canadians when she poured fuel on the inflationary fire.

The minister loves to quote the Governor of the Bank of Canada, so will she agree with him that inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what is happening in Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I note that the Alberta MP and finance critic has refused to answer my question about Ukraine. This is an important point.

When it comes to fiscal responsibility, our AAA rating was reaffirmed by S&P after the budget was tabled.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, the minister is here to answer questions of Canadians. Does she agree with Tiff Macklem that the inflation in Canada increasingly reflects what is happening in Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is very important for all Canadians to know whether Trumpian positions on Ukraine and Russia are infiltrating the Conservative movement more broadly in Canada.

• (2030)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, if the minister does not agree with the current governor, maybe she will listen to the former governor, and maybe her future boss or maybe her future seatmate, when they are on this side of the House. When he said, “Really, inflation is principally a domestic story”, did she believe him?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me point out that inflation has come down in Canada, from a high of 8.1% to 4.4%. When it comes to the budget, let me quote the former parliamentary budget officer, Kevin Page. He said we have a “credible fiscal policy” and that our “fiscal anchor of the”—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, if the minister is not going to listen to the future Liberal leader, maybe she will listen to the random Liberal Bill Morneau, who said that the government overspent, or to a former Liberal premier who said that, on the inflation side, if governments continue to spend beyond their means, they are going to continue to have inflation that continues to increase. Are they right or wrong?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is incontrovertible that Canada has a strong and responsible fiscal policy. That has been reiterated by S&P. We have the lowest deficit and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 and an AAA credit rating. Those are objective markers and not, frankly, partisan talking points from the Conservative—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, we agree that the people we listed are random Liberals, and they are partisan, like Tiff Macklem, the minister herself, Mark Carney and Bill Morneau. We fully agree with that. Does the minister think they are all wrong? Yes or no.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would normally be surprised to hear the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, described as partisan, but given that the member's party has done

the astonishing thing of undermining the credibility of the Bank of Canada, I am beyond being surprised by it.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Chair, can the minister please tell Albertan families how much it is going to cost when carbon tax 1 and carbon tax 2 are fully implemented on each Alberta household?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we have been talking about fiscal responsibility. Let me quote the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who said, at the finance committee, “When looking at G7 countries, Canada compares very favourably on net debt-to-GDP.”

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to start out with some serious discussion. I believe we had a serious discussion at the finance committee. We are in perilous economic times. We are facing high inflation, high interest rates, increasing unemployment, record-high housing prices, low growth and record food bank usage. I would just like to start to get some basic answers, some straightforward answers to some straightforward questions.

What will be the deficit in 2023?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, is that in 2022 or 2023?

We published a “Fiscal Monitor” last week, and it showed that our deficit for 2022-23 is likely to be lower than forecast. We forecast around \$43 billion. We are now seeing it coming in at \$40 billion or lower.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, what will be the national debt at the end of 2023?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our debt-to-GDP ratio is coming down. It is at 43.5% and it is going to continue to come—

The Chair: The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, what was the debt-to-GDP ratio in 2021-22?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the debt-to-GDP ratio went up strongly during COVID, and that was because we had to spend significantly to support Canadians. It was the right thing to do, and we are seeing the results with a very strong job market.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, during COVID, from 2021 to 2022, and then the next year, from 2022 to 2023, the debt-to-GDP ratio went up. Is that not correct?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the debt-to-GDP ratio went up as a result of our extraordinary COVID spending. In budget 2023, we showed a debt-to-GDP ratio in 2022-23 of 42.4%—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Business of Supply

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, it went up from 42% to 43%, which is odd because, in this very House, the Minister of Finance said, “On this point, let me be very clear. We are absolutely determined that our debt-to-GDP ratio must continue to decline and our deficits must continue to be reduced. The pandemic debt we incurred to keep Canadians safe must be paid down. This is our fiscal anchor. This is a line we will not cross.”

Why did they cross the line?

• (2035)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to quote someone who is not partisan and who has been respected by all members of the House as a fiscal expert, Kevin Page, who is the former parliamentary budget officer. This is what he had to say about our budget. He said that the 2023 budget has a “credible fiscal strategy”, and that “the government’s fiscal anchor of a declining ratio is maintained”. This is a declining ratio over the framework, and, I want to point out, tripling—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, speaking of parliamentary budget officers, our current Parliamentary Budget Officer said he was troubled by the lack of transparency, specifically with respect to \$12 billion in unallocated funds.

Will the Minister of Finance agree to provide an allocation of that \$12 billion?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our current Parliamentary Budget Officer also, in testimony before the finance committee, described the conversation he had with Moody’s, a credit rating agency. The current PBO said that Canada’s deficit should make us, and I am quoting him, “quite happy because by European standards that’s very low.”

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, will she provide an allocation of the \$12 billion unallocated in the budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our government has been assiduous in answering all questions that are presented to us by the PBO. We have—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, what has been the growth rate per capita, the GDP growth rate?

What was been the per capita GDP debt growth rate in the last 10 years?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am glad to finally have a question about people, jobs and growth. Canada’s GDP grew by 3.4% last year, the strongest level in the G7. In the first quarter of this year, our GDP grew by 2.5%, also the strongest in the G7.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Chair, the key number there is per capita. The growth rate is 0.8% over the last 10 years. That is the worst since the Great Depression.

We have record-high deficits. We have record-high debt. We have a slowing economy and record-low economic growth. This is very disappointing.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is simply not true. Canada’s deficit is forecast, this year, to be 1.4%. That is low not only by world standards; it is low also by Canadian historical stan-

dards. Our debt service charges, even in this time of high interest rates, are lower than they were for most of the Harper era.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Chair, this budget has disappointed us and has disappointed a lot of people. Everyone knows that the debt has exploded under the Liberals. The budget has not been balanced in the last eight years.

This is despite the fact that the minister made a nice promise in November that filled us with hope, announcing a return to balanced budgets in 2027-28. What we have seen in the budget documents is that, instead, there will be a deficit of around \$14 billion in 2027-28, so there is no return to balanced budgets in sight.

My question is this. Who asked the minister to go back on her promise to return to a balanced budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I know my hon. colleague is a very experienced politician, so I know she understands that budget forecasts are not made by me or by politicians, nor are they made by Finance Canada economists like Nick Leswick.

They are made by economists in the private sector. There is a big difference between the private sector economic forecasts made in the fall and those made at the beginning of this year. That is why there was a change in the basic budget figures.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Chair, we are responsible before the House of Commons for the documents we table, the budgets we table. It is important, it is fundamental in our democracy.

Is the Prime Minister the one who asked the Minister of Finance to go back on her promise to return to a balanced budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am not going to explain again how the estimates are prepared, but I will quote Kevin Page, a former parliamentary budget officer. He said that we have a credible fiscal strategy.

• (2040)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Chair, in November, she told us that there would be a return to a balanced budget in 2027-28. Four months later, she is flip-flopping and tabling a budget that says something completely different.

She is not planning a return to a balanced budget. Who asked her to go back on her decision?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is important to tell Canadians the truth. After the budget was tabled, the S&P reaffirmed Canada's AAA rating. That is the reality and it is an important reality.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Chair, when does the Minister of Finance plan to table a balanced budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, our target is economic growth and good jobs for Canadians. We have proven that with job growth—

The Chair: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Chair, people have jobs, but they are struggling to make ends meet.

Who asked her to go back on her position and her decision?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, once again, it is important to tell Canadians the truth. The truth is that Canada has the smallest deficit of all G7 countries.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us the cost to service Canada's debt, meaning how much it is costing Canadians to pay for the deficits she presented?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, David Dodge, a former governor of the Bank of Canada, proposed an important way to think about the debt—

The Chair: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Chair, I will repeat my question: How much does it cost to service the debt?

The Minister of Finance should be able to answer the question. That is basic.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, he said that the cost of servicing the debt should be no more than 10% of revenues. We are at that point.

When he was prime minister, Mr. Harper was paying more than that to service the debt.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to participate in this committee of the whole very late this evening.

I would like to start by saying that, over the past year, Canada has had the strongest economic growth in the G7 and that the growth of our economy in the first two months of this year exceeded experts' expectations. Today, some 900,000 more Canadians are working than at the beginning of the pandemic. That includes approximately 150,000 more Quebecers with jobs and good paycheques.

Right now, the unemployment rate in Canada is 5%, which is very close to the country's all-time low. With a rate of close to 4.1%, Quebec is leading the way with the lowest unemployment rate in the entire country.

Against the backdrop of these economic factors, budget 2023, which our government tabled in March, came at a very important

time. The budget sets out new targeted inflation relief measures for the most vulnerable Canadians.

We also implemented a new dental care plan that will benefit up to nine million Canadians. The federal government also made a major investment of nearly \$200 billion to help save our health care system, which is under severe pressure. Thanks to the leadership of our Prime Minister and our government, we managed to sign that health agreement with all of the provinces, including Quebec.

The budget also contains transformative investments to build tomorrow's clean economy, fight climate change and create new opportunities for Canadian workers and businesses. It is a responsible fiscal plan that will help Canada maintain the lowest deficit and the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio of any G7 country.

• (2045)

[English]

I would like to state the obvious. This spending is necessary. It is necessary not only to ensure the long-term growth and prosperity of our economy but also the quality of life that Canadians want and deserve. Our health care system is on the brink. We cannot put a price on access to health care in this country. It seems that all parties in this House, even the Conservatives, have agreed that the federal government should invest these sums that were provided in our budget in our health care system.

We cannot be blind to the changes in the global economy, or to the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act and the measures put in place by the Biden administration to attract green investments to the United States. Canada needed to and did respond. Like the experts have pointed out, these are investments in inflation relief for the most vulnerable, saving our health care system and building the economy of the future, which are targeted and will not meaningfully add to inflation.

[Translation]

In previous debates, I have already talked about the importance of tackling the climate crisis and highlighted our government's investments to accelerate our green transition. Now I would like to talk a little more about housing. This is the other issue I hear about when I am out and about in Quebec. Everyone should have a safe place to live, but for too many Canadians, the dream of owning a home is becoming increasingly out of reach.

As rental prices continue to rise across the country, this situation is undermining the financial stability of an entire generation. My riding, Outremont, is certainly no exception to this trend. Over the past four years, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Montreal has risen by 26%, while the number of available units, especially affordable units, remains too low. The lack of affordable housing is having an impact on the Canadian economy.

Business of Supply

Without more homes in our communities, it is hard for businesses to attract the people they need for the labour market. When people spend too much of their income on housing, they obviously have less money to spend in the small businesses in our neighbourhoods and in our local economies. That is why our government is tackling the housing crisis head-on.

That is also why I have been pulling out all the stops to have more new affordable housing built in Outremont. Of the many programs that make up our national housing strategy, I would like to specifically mention the rapid housing initiative. This is an innovative program based on a partnership with the provinces and municipalities to rapidly build new housing or acquire existing buildings and convert them to housing. It is a flexible program that responds to needs on the ground.

In my riding of Outremont, we have just unveiled a great project led by the Old Brewery mission under this program. Over 30 new housing units have been created on Parc Avenue in a former hotel. It is incredible. I had the opportunity to visit last week.

We were also able to inaugurate a new co-op at the MIL Campus in Montreal, once again in Outremont. That is nearly one hundred very affordable units next to a new Université de Montréal campus. As UDM rector Daniel Jutras so aptly put it, “We’re building a university-focussed neighbourhood at the cutting edge of sustainable development, but also, and this is very important, a people-focussed neighbourhood. A place to meet, a place to live, a place of social diversity.” This is indeed a transformative project for the area.

I also realize that the Bank of Canada’s interest rate increase had a direct impact on the housing crisis we are all experiencing. The higher interest rates make it harder for some people to pay their mortgage, especially if they have a variable rate mortgage, which is the case for nearly half of Canadians who currently have a mortgage.

Our government is taking measures to protect Canadian homeowners from rising rates and a possible correction of the housing market. That is why, this spring, the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada launched public consultations into a proposed guideline on existing mortgages for individuals in exceptional circumstances. This guideline states the agency’s expectations of financial institutions to help consumers who are vulnerable to payment defaults on their mortgage because of exceptional circumstances, such as the combined effects of high household debt, the rapid increase of interest rates and the rising cost of living. This will help ensure that Canadians get fair and equitable access to relief measures without having to pay unnecessary penalties, excessive bank fees or interest charges, which will help more people deal with the high interest rates.

• (2050)

[*English*]

The government also committed to introducing a tax-free first home savings account, a new registered plan to give prospective first-time homebuyers the ability to save up to \$40,000 on a tax-free basis. Like an RRSP, contributions are tax deductible, and withdrawals to purchase a first home are non-taxable, like a TFSA, so it is the best of both: tax-free in, tax-free out.

Budget 2023, delivered on this commitment, and financial institutions across Canada have been able to offer this tax-free first home savings account to Canadians as of April 1 of this past year.

I would also like to note that the budget implementation act that is currently before Parliament proposes to tax assignment sales to crack down on house flipping to help ensure homes are used for Canadian families to live in and not as a speculative financial asset class.

These measures are just part of our ongoing efforts to support Canadians with their most pressing needs, while also investing in the future of our economy.

With the Chair’s permission, I also have a number of questions more specific to the two ministers who are here in committee of the whole with us.

I would like to, through you, ask if in the last few years Canadian consumers, and this is the case at least to my mind, have increasingly found themselves having to navigate the pains and, quite frankly, the financial burden of paying undisclosed junk fees? I use that term colloquially. They are hidden fees that obscure the true cost of products and services and potentially really undermine trust in various businesses.

For example, there are often instances of exorbitant roaming charges that the telecommunications industry uses. There are also the unexpected baggage fees in the aviation sector. These hidden charges not only increase the financial strain on Canadian consumers, but also create a climate of mistrust in the economy.

Given this growing concern that I have heard from my constituents, I wonder if the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance could explain what measures the government is considering to increase transparency, safeguard consumer rights and ensure that the advertised pricing actually reflects what Canadians have to pay.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, let me say that we know that junk fees are predatory and they are hidden fees that Canadians see on their phone bills, services and concert tickets. It is particularly galling in the tourism industry when we see these hidden fees come up for visitors. That is why our government is taking action to crack down on junk fees, including unexpected hidden and additional fees, to continue to ensure that businesses are transparent with prices and to make life more affordable for Canadians.

Business of Supply

In budget 2023, we announced our government's intention to work with regulatory agencies, provinces and territories to reduce junk fees for Canadians. This could include higher telecom roaming charges, event and concert fees, and other charges that we simply do not want to see Canadians be charged for anymore. That is budget 2023 working to make life more affordable for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I have another question.

Quebec is a leader in fighting climate change and producing clean energy. Quebec's per capita CO2 emissions are 50% lower than the Canadian average. In fact, Quebec is the province with the lowest emissions per capita in all of North America. We are very proud of that.

One of the main reasons for Quebec's success is our abundant hydroelectric power, which covers almost all of Quebec's electricity needs. In order to maintain that position, we need to continue to invest in the production of clean energy. After the budget was tabled and our clean investment tax credit was introduced, the Quebec finance minister said that this was an extremely worthwhile measure for us in Quebec.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us how this tax credit will support Quebec's efforts to build the economy of the future and combat climate change?

• (2055)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her very important question.

She is obviously right. The fact that Canada's electricity is green is a major advantage in terms of investments.

Today, we produce 83% of our electricity with renewable energy, but we need to produce more green electricity. We are talking about it with investors. It is a priority. That is why our budget really focused on this very important objective.

As I said, investors agree that with the investments in this budget, Canada is truly the most attractive place for investments in the clean economy.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, picking up on my last question with respect to Canada's electricity grid, I will say it is one of the cleanest in the world. We have been hard at work as a government. In the past year, we have seen many companies bringing historic investments to our shores like Honda, GM, Stellantis, Rio Tinto, Volkswagen and I could go on. These are huge opportunities for our country.

Can the Minister of Finance expand on how budget 2023 builds on these historic developments and investments in our country? How will it continue to ensure that Canada remains a global leader in the market for clean technology manufacturing? It is a market that the International Energy Agency estimates will be worth about \$650 billion U.S. by 2030.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, it is with our \$120-billion clean economy plan.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, on May 4, the Speaker asked me to withdraw a comment. I would like to withdraw it and apologize for any inconvenience that I caused the Speaker.

The Chair: I thank the member for that.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, although I think we are all excited to see this apology come, we are technically in committee of the whole. Would that not have to happen during a regular sitting of Parliament?

The Chair: It is acceptable during this session as well. Let us put it this way. It is really good to see the member.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am going to split my time three ways.

I thank the minister for coming.

The minister agrees that deficits fuel inflation. She said so. How much will the \$60 billion that she just spent increase inflation over five years?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, actually, that is not exactly what I said. I know that we need to invest in our economic capacity. However, I believe that fiscal responsibility is important. That is why I am so glad that S&P reaffirmed our AAA rating after I tabled the budget.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, this is a simple question. Of the \$60 billion that the minister just spent in her budget, how much will inflation increase over five years? I want just a number.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the fact is that inflation is coming down in Canada. Inflation was at 8.1% in June and was 4.4% in April, and the Bank of Canada forecasts that it will be 3% this summer.

• (2100)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, the minister knows that inflation went up last month after she tabled her budget. She has been briefed on this number. There are officials sitting in front of her. I will give her a moment to ask her officials what the number is. How much will inflation go up as a result of the \$60 billion that she spent in the last budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, many of the investments in our budget increased Canada's economic capacity and increased the supply side. That is helping to keep inflation and jobs on track.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, I will ask the minister about numbers that maybe she does know.

Business of Supply

Could she tell us what the debt-to-GDP ratio was in 2021-22?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio went up during COVID, and that was natural. We did an important job in supporting Canadians and the Canadian economy. It was the right thing—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it was 42.4% and this year it is 43.5%. Does the minister agree that 43.5% is bigger than 42.4%?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I believe that the member opposite was a staffer in the Harper government, so let us talk about the 2008 recession and the incredibly slow and painful recovery Canada made because of a government that refused to invest in Canada's recovery. I have some numbers there and I am happy to share them in future questions.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, she will have plenty of time to sit on this side of the House and ask questions, but during that recession, we were the last ones in and the first ones out. She will remember that.

Can the minister tell us how much it cost to service the debt in 2021-22? I want just a number. She is the finance minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am the finance minister, and I remember that it took GDP four months longer to recover following the 2008 recession than it took following the COVID recession. That was because of smart investments by our government to support Canadians.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, it was \$24.5 billion.

Can she tell us, in numbers, how much it is today to service the debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let me share some numbers that really matter. It took 27 months for jobs to recover from the 2008 recession. It only took 21 months for jobs to recover from the COVID recession. Again, it is proof of our government's economic—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, the minister does not believe that the amount she pays to service the debt is important, and every Canadian should hear that today. It is \$43.9 billion. That number has doubled.

I will ask her one last question, and I want just a number. How much is the payment for the Canada health transfer that this federal government makes? I want an approximation, not even a full number.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I am going to share a really precise number that matters to Canadians. It took 110 months following the 2008 recession for unemployment rates to recover. We recovered in one-fifth the time.

We are focused on Canadians, Canadian jobs and economic growth. We understand government action was necessary to support Canadians, and it has worked. That is something the Conservatives still do not understand.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Chair, the amount that I was looking for from the finance minister was about \$45 billion. It will cost \$43.9 billion to service our debt, which has doubled since last

year, and it cost \$45 billion in the Canada health transfer to keep Canadians safe, a number the minister does not think matters. It costs almost as much to service the debt as we pay for health care in this country, and that is shameful.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Chair, could the hon. minister tell us this? Is it not a fact that between February 2020 and January 2022, the government issued approximately \$471 billion of debt?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I believe the member opposite is another former Harper staffer, so I want to remind him of the incredibly poor recovery his government made from the 2008 recession. We learned from that experience—

The Chair: The hon. member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, it is true. It is a fact. The government issued \$471 billion of debt between February 2020 and January 2022.

Could the hon. minister tell us how much of that issued debt is maturing in under three years?

● (2105)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, what is a fact is that it took four months longer for real GDP to recover following the 2008 recession than it took following the COVID recession, even though COVID caused much deeper economic harm. We invested in Canadians, and we are proud of it because it worked.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, 52% of all of the debt issued in that time frame was for under three years. In fact, only 10% of that debt was issued with 10 years or more maturity.

How is it possible that the government says its debt management strategy is fiscally responsible when at the lowest interest rates, it financed most of that debt in the short term, which is all going to roll over in the next two years?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, the member opposite was a staffer during the failed Harper government that engineered a very slow recovery from the 2008 recession. It took 27 months for jobs to recover. It took only 21 months for jobs to recover following the COVID recession, which was much deeper because of the historic shock of COVID. That is because of a government that did not understand the need to invest and support Canadians. Yes, we took on—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Business of Supply

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, it is obviously clear that the minister is ashamed of the government's record in choosing to issue short-term debt when rates were so low.

Could the minister tell the House and Canadians what the average interest rate is that the government expects to pay on the debt that is maturing and rolling over in the next two years?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the shameful record is of these Conservatives, who still have not learned the lesson of the incredibly slow and painful recovery from 2008. We learned the lesson. We knew we had to invest to support Canadians. Yes, we had to spend money to do it, but the results show it was worth it. It took 110 months—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, it is very clear that the Minister of Finance does not want to stand behind her government's record and its choices in issuing debt.

Here is another question. How much more will the government have to pay if inflation does not come down and interest rates do not come down, as it is projecting them to come down in its own budget, when it rolls over its debt in the next two years?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, on the contrary, I am very proud to stand behind our government's record. Canada endured the deepest economic trauma since the Great Depression, and the recovery has been remarkably strong, the strongest in the G7, and incredibly strong compared to the tepid, painful, lacklustre climb out of 2008.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Chair, the minister is obviously not very proud of the government's record. She cannot even answer some very simple questions about how much the government expects to pay on the debt that it issued. Perhaps the government was also misled by the Bank of Canada, which promised Canadians that rates would stay low.

The minister says that the government leads the G7 in growth. We are behind a bunch of countries in GDP per capita. The Liberals ran an entire election campaign saying that Harper had low growth. This is what we have here. In GDP per capita, we are behind many countries.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the Harper government did have low growth. It had a remarkably lacklustre recovery from the 2008 recession. It took four months longer for GDP to recover from the 2008 recession than our recovery took from the COVID recession. It took 27 months for jobs to recover from the 2008 recession, but only 21 months after the much deeper COVID recession, and it was a shocking 110 months for the unemployment rate to—

The Chair: The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Chair, I thank the Minister of Finance for making an appearance here this evening.

The four Atlantic premiers, including Premier Furey, a close personal friend of the Prime Minister, wrote a letter to the environment minister in the last couple of days. I would ask the minister if she knows what that letter was addressing.

• (2110)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member opposite for the exchange we had in question period about climate action. He, perhaps inadvertently, revealed something very important about the Conservatives. He suggested that it is a guilt trip to believe that we need climate action. That says a lot about the Conservative Party's attitude toward climate—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Chair, does the hon. minister know how much carbon tax 2 will cost Newfoundland families by 2030?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, of course there is no such thing, and mislabelling something, even doing it 1,000 times, does not make it true. However, what is the case—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Chair, I am not sure if the minister knows, but the answer is \$850 a year, and that is according to the PBO.

I would ask the minister if she has faith in the PBO.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the member opposite if he has faith in the party platform he himself ran on. That document states, “We will...progress [so]...carbon prices [can be] on a path to \$170/tonne”. Was he telling the truth then or is he telling—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Chair, if the minister went door to door, she would know exactly how I ran my campaign. She would have heard about the misery and disrespect for the people of Atlantic Canada I encountered.

I would ask the minister if she agrees with her Liberal counterpart, Premier Furey, that a carbon tax is inflationary.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, what is disrespectful to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and all Canadians is to pretend that we can act without a plan to fight climate change. Inaction is also a choice, and it is a choice that not only will destroy our beautiful planet, but will mean no jobs for Canadians in the future.

Business of Supply

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Chair, I will ask the minister this again. Does she agree with Premier Furey that a carbon tax is inflationary?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, let us talk about the clean fuel regulations, which the member opposite campaigned on in 2021—

The Chair: The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Chair, I take offence to the minister telling me how I ran my campaign, but I will ask her this again. Does the minister agree with Premier Furey that a carbon tax is inflationary?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I do believe the member opposite campaigned as a Conservative, and I believe that means he campaigned on the Conservative climate platform. It seems that the Conservatives are totally disavowing that, but is that really fair to the people who elected them on a promise that they would actually have a climate—

The Chair: The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister if she agrees with the Governor of the Bank of Canada that the carbon tax is inflationary.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I agree with the lion's share of Canadians who understand that we cannot put our heads in the sand. We need a climate plan, and we have one.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is great to be back here on a Monday for the restart of Parliament after the week-long break.

I would like to comment briefly before I begin my formal remarks by saying that, ever since 2015, and going through the pandemic onto today, we continue to put in place measures that build a strong economy, not only for today but also for future generations, including my children, who are at home tonight. Many of the parents here this evening, whether they are inside the House or outside the House, know full well that our government has put in place many policy measures that lead to a better future for their children. That is what this is all about. That is why we got elected, and that is what we ran on. That is what we will continue to do for all Canadians. We will make sure they have a bright future in front of them and their families.

• (2115)

[*Translation*]

It is a pleasure to participate today in this debate in committee of the whole in the House of Commons.

Today, I would like to speak about the measures that our government is introducing to make life more affordable and to strengthen our health care system across the country.

Our last budget, which was presented in the spring, is a Canadian plan for a strong middle class, an affordable economy and a prosperous future. In this budget, our government has proposed many measures, in particular to make life more affordable across the country and to strengthen our health care system.

For example, our government is introducing a targeted support measure that will continue to help 11 million Canadians who truly need it.

[*English*]

For the folks at home tonight who need it the most, we will make sure to have their backs, always.

[*Translation*]

One good example of our government's targeted support is the grocery rebate. It is quite clear. We go to the grocery store and, like all Canadians, we see that food prices are constantly rising. As a result, too many Canadians are struggling to make ends meet.

In the context of global inflation and price increases, our government believes that it is important to now give a helping hand to those who need it most. We want them to be able to continue putting food on the table and paying their bills.

Like all Canadians, I believe that, more than ever, we must be compassionate with those struggling. Approximately 11 million low-income people and families in the country will receive the grocery rebate.

[*English*]

On July 5, residents in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge and across Canada, from coast to coast to coast, will receive the grocery rebate, and I know it will help millions of Canadians. That is what our government is about.

[*Translation*]

This one-time payment will help them cope with the increased cost of living. I have spoken with people in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, and I can confirm that this is a long-awaited measure for many people in great need.

The grocery rebate consists of up to \$467 more for eligible couples with two children, up to \$234 more for single individuals without children, and an average of \$225 more for seniors.

Also, we will soon begin the automatic advance payments of the Canada workers benefit. This benefit has already helped lift thousands of Canadians out of poverty.

[*English*]

The Canada workers benefit is one of the great things our government, three times now, has strengthened and improved for millions and millions of Canadians, and we know those working hard, pulling them out—

The Chair: Could the member please take the earpiece behind him and move it away from the microphone? It is being picked up when he is speaking French, so we are hearing the English translation along with it.

Business of Supply

The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge may continue. I am sorry for the interruption.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, we believe that these improvements will help low-income workers get timely access to the money they need to meet their needs and those of their families. As of June 2023, single workers will receive up to \$714 and families will receive up to \$1,231 in three advance payments.

[*English*]

The Canada workers benefit is something that is lifting millions of hard-working Canadians out of poverty, making that difference at the end of every month and the end of every year. These advance payments are just another way of ensuring that Canadians receive the help they need at the most opportune time.

● (2120)

[*Translation*]

To make life more affordable, our government is moving forward with increasing certain RESP withdrawal limits from \$5,000 to \$8,000 for full-time students and from \$2,500 to \$4,000 for part-time students. This measure, combined with the improvements announced in budget 2023 with respect to financial aid for students, will help students cover the cost of their education and pursue their dreams.

We will crack down on predatory lenders that take advantage of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, including low-income Canadians, newcomers and seniors. These lenders often offer very high-interest loans and we believe it is important to act to protect the most vulnerable Canadians. That is why we are changing the Criminal Code to lower the criminal interest rate of 47% APR, or annual percentage rate, to 35% APR, which would match the ceiling in Quebec. We are also launching consultations to determine whether the criminal interest rate should be further lowered to better protect Canadians.

As people know, our government has stepped up since 2015 whenever Canadians needed our support. Here are a few more examples.

We support approximately 3.5 million families each year through the Canada child benefit. This year, families will receive up to nearly \$7,000 per child under the age of six, and up to \$5,903 per child aged six to 17.

We increased old age security by 10% for people over the age of 75 starting in July 2022, which represents more than \$800 in additional assistance for fully retired seniors.

We have reduced fees for regulated child care by an average of 50%, so that regulated child care will cost an average of only \$10 per day by 2026.

[*English*]

I know the price of day care for my family has gone down by approximately 52.7%. I think that is more of an exact number. That is what I was told by the day care. More importantly, the parents who go to my child's day care, which has been in existence for over 30 years, have told me stories about how important this measure is and

how much money, after-tax dollars, that families are saving, not only in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge but also across this beautiful and blessed country.

We will look back 10 to 20 years, generations from now, and for sure in three to five years, and see that this has been a transformational measure for Canadian families and our economy. We will applaud everyone, all the provinces and the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for generations to come. I am very proud of the government that got this done.

[*Translation*]

We have also strengthened the Canada pension plan. Of course, our government will continue to help those who really need it, while continuing to manage public funds responsibly. Yes, the pandemic has had a significant impact on our wallets with inflation, but it has also reminded us all just how important our health is and how important our health care system is. The pandemic has severely stressed our health care systems and exacerbated the shortage of workers and lack of access to primary care.

We believe Canadians deserve better. That is why, earlier this year, the Prime Minister announced that the federal government will increase health funding to the provinces and territories. We are moving forward with federal funding.

[*English*]

This is \$190.6 billion over 10 years to the provinces for health care, including \$42.6 billion in new dollars to ensure that our health care system is there for today and for tomorrow.

With that, I will end my speech. I look forward to asking the Deputy Prime Minister a few questions.

We all know we want to raise the standard of living of all Canadians today and for generations to come. One way to do that is by increasing participation rates in our society, especially for families that do not want to choose, and should not have to choose, between staying home and putting their child in day care.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister comment on the measures we have put in place?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would really like to thank the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge for the really good speech he just made. I am really glad that he started by highlighting child care, including talking about his family's direct experience.

Business of Supply

The fact is that our early learning and child care program is a triple win. It is a win because we have increased, and have already seen remarkable improvement in, the women's labour force participation rate, which is 85% in Canada, while it is 77% in the U.S. It is a win because it makes life more affordable for working families. It is also a win because it provides great learning for the youngest Canadians.

• (2125)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, we know that the issues with COVID and the impact of the supply chain bottlenecks caused a great amount of inflation, not only here in Canada, but also globally. We know that inflation is on a moving average downward trajectory here in Canada. We understand that. We know it will take time.

With that, our government has put in place a number of affordability measures to help the constituents in my riding. I was at a seniors function on Sunday with over 500 seniors, and I was able to tell them that they were going to have dental care by the end of the year, and that they are also going to be receiving a payment on July 5.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister please inform the House as to how we are helping Canadians deal with inflation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as my colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge has pointed out, it sounds as if for him, and this has certainly been the case for me, and I bet for many MPs here, one of the most painful things has been hearing from vulnerable Canadians about how tough the COVID economy has been on them. I think all of us have talked to people who told us those stories, so I think that it is really important, and really good news, that we are able to get the grocery rebate out to Canadians on July 5.

I know my colleague from Vaughan—Woodbridge has been sharing that good news with his constituents, and we have just heard from him what a relief it is for them to hear that. We know that the grocery rebate is not going to cover the cost of everything for everyone. That is not possible and not what it is designed to do, but for the people who need it the most, 11 million Canadians and Canadian families, it is going to provide really needed relief at an important moment.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, our government, since 2015, has concentrated many efforts on fighting climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which are both important, while growing the economy. Yes, the environment and the economy go hand in hand, and we know Canada is blessed with the human capital and natural resources for the companies and workers to be champions in the economies of today and tomorrow as we transition to new technologies.

Our government has put in place a number of measures that not only respond to the Inflation Reduction Act, but also lead the act, because we know the IRA was in response to the environment, and we as Canadians and our government are already there putting in place measures to help this transition and lower greenhouse gases.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, that is another really important question from the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

The reality is we need climate action for two reasons. We need it because we have to act. We need to save our planet. Canada is literally burning, and we need to respond.

We also need it because the jobs of the future will be in the clean economy, and we simply cannot sit on our hands and allow other countries to eat Canada's lunch.

Our government is not going to do that. That is why I am so glad that our \$120-billion clean economy plan is receiving such positive reviews from investors around the world.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time three ways.

With whom has the deputy minister communicated at McKinsey and Company?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Chair, is the member opposite talking about in my career as a financial journalist?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Chair, yes.

How many times with different members of McKinsey and Company?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, in my career as a financial journalist, I interviewed people from McKinsey very often.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Chair, what about in her role as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, in my role as Deputy Prime Minister and finance minister, I often meet with business leaders from across—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Chair, does she have a relationship with Dominic Barton?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, we have spoken about quickies earlier this evening, so I am not sure to what the member opposite is—

• (2130)

The Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Chair, has she ever discussed policy with him?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I first met Mr. Barton when I was a financial journalist—

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Chair, in an article published by the CBC on January 24, 2023, two public servants from IRCC came forward about the role McKinsey had been playing in the policy decisions of the government. The sources were also critical of McKinsey's possible influence over Canada's immigration targets.

Business of Supply

Have the Deputy Prime Minister and Mr. Barton ever discussed immigration policy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, as I said, as a financial journalist, I often interviewed many people from McKinsey and other international businesses. As the finance minister, one of my jobs is to talk to business leaders from Canada and around the world. That is one of the things that I do.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, can the deputy minister inform us as to McKinsey's role in the creation of the Canada Infrastructure Bank?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the Canada Infrastructure Bank was set up when I was trade minister and foreign minister, so I was not directly involved in its creation.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, has the Deputy Prime Minister ever worked with Mr. Sabia?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, yes, I certainly have worked extensively with our deputy minister of finance.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, have the Deputy Prime Minister and Mr. Sabia ever discussed the Canada Infrastructure Bank?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I have certainly discussed the Canada Infrastructure Bank with our deputy minister of finance, and in fact the Canada Infrastructure Bank is referred to in all the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, as part of our study of McKinsey and Company, we have asked all federal departments, agencies and Crown corporations to provide documents relative to their work with McKinsey and Company.

As of today, six of 21 organizations that have been asked three times—first on January 18, second on March 5 by the Chair and a third time on March 8—have not completed their submissions, and 16 have submitted redacted documents. McKinsey itself has provided all unredacted pages.

As McKinsey has submitted all unredacted documentation, the onus is on the deputy prime minister, as head of government, to ask these organizations to comply with our request for complete and unredacted documents.

Will she do this?

The Deputy Chair: We have a point of order from the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, the discussion we are having today is supposed to be on the main estimates. This seems to be outside of that scope. They are asking questions for clarification on what a committee has been requesting and what the minister's role in that is. I am sure these are questions that can be asked during question period. This discussion is about the budget estimates specifically.

The Deputy Chair: I will allow the minister to answer. I do want to remind members that the questions to be asked are to be related to the main estimates.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, they are properly questions relating to the main estimates.

Let me just be clear: In my work as finance minister, part of my job is certainly talking to businesses, both Canadian and international. Part of my job is also talking to union members. It is talking to people like Jeff, an electrician in Mississauga, and learning from him about his—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, there were also submissions that were not properly translated. The French translation was not of the same quality as the English version. We also received more pages in English than in French.

Can the minister commit to ensuring that the committee receives documents in French of the same quality as those in English?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we are here to discuss Canada's budget and finances. I can assure my hon. colleague that the budget and the documents produced by the Department of Finance are produced also—

[*English*]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, we have seen repeatedly the ethical lapses of McKinsey, from a global meeting next to a Uyghur concentration camp to the unethical consultation with the now defunct Purdue Pharma in an effort to push opioid use, yet the government voted against our opposition motion today.

The government has announced that it will join the class action—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I am rising on the same point of order I did just a couple of minutes ago.

You indicated that the member should bring the questions back to the main estimates. She is now talking about a vote on an opposition motion. The last three questions have not been about the estimates, despite your ruling.

Perhaps you would encourage the member to bring it back to the topic at hand.

• (2135)

The Deputy Chair: I do want to remind members that the questions should be related to the main estimates. If it has to do with a question from question period and it is related to the main estimates, then the hon. member can certainly indicate that. I just want to remind members to make sure that the main estimates are part of it.

The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Chair, in terms of the ethical lapses, will the government commit to not working further with McKinsey and Company?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, since the member for Calgary Midnapore has taken the liberty of straying pretty far from fiscal matters, let me just say that I assume the official opposition is otherwise satisfied with Canada's fiscal position. That is a good thing.

I also want to ask her, as a really decent and honourable MP from Alberta, whether, having raised the Uyghur issue, she will condemn the pro-Putin statements by UCP members in Alberta.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Chair, to the Minister of Finance, how much was the Bank of Canada's surplus for the receiver general in 2020?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am glad to hear the Bank of Canada mentioned, because it gives me a chance to quote David Dodge, who made a very important point about the misguided Conservative policies in responding to—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, it was \$1,772,900,000.

How much was the Bank of Canada surplus for the receiver general in 2021?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, again, here is what David Dodge had to say, and I think it will be illuminating for people in the House: “because it was obsessively focused on reducing the federal deficit...the Harper government”—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, the answer was \$2,780,000,000.

How much was the Bank of Canada surplus for the receiver general in 2022?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, again, this is what David Dodge said: “The Harper government unnecessarily contributed to a slower, rather more muted recovery in Canada through to 2015”—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, the answer is zero.

How much did the Bank of Canada lose in 2022?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, “...to a slower, rather more muted recovery in Canada through to 2015 than a more appropriate”—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, the bank lost \$705 million.

When was the last time the Bank of Canada had a loss before 2022?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the Bank of Canada, together with the government, supported Canadians during COVID. We did what we had to do, and it worked.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, the answer is that the bank never had a loss before 2022.

On a prospective basis, how much does the Bank of Canada project these bank losses will be over the next few years?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the member opposite is seeking to undermine Canadian faith in the bank and in our central institutions. That is irresponsible. It hurts Canada and it hurts Canadians.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, the bank has announced that it expects up to \$6 billion in losses over the next few years.

Why are taxpayers bailing out the Bank of Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we learned the lesson that these Conservatives have still not learned, which was that Harper economics failed us in 2008. We were not going to repeat those mistakes—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, how much is the bank's policy interest rate?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what is astonishing to me is that these Conservatives refuse to learn the lesson of previous failures, and they have the gall to try—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, how much was Canada's inflation rate in April?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Canada's inflation rate is going down: 8.1% in June—

• (2140)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, it was 4.4%. How much was it in March?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, inflation is coming down. It is lower in Canada than in the U.S. and in the U.K., and it is lower than the G7 average and the euro average.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, it was lower. It was 4.3% in March.

What is the bank's main job?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, yet again, we are hearing from the Conservatives the old recipes, which hobbled Canada after 2008. We are not going to repeat those mistakes—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Chair, its main job is to keep inflation at 2%.

How much does the minister's budget project inflation will be this year?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the Bank of Canada officials say inflation is going to go down to 3% this summer. That is good news.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Chair, how much will the government's new spending cost the average household?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, how much did the Harper government's failure to support Canadians after 2008 cost—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, how much will the government's new spending cost the average household?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the government's investments are supporting those who are vulnerable, and they are driving a strong economic recovery.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, how high do living costs have to go before the Liberal government will take this affordability crisis seriously?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, this is what the Conservatives have not understood: Failure to support Canadians in 2008 led to a protracted recession.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, the government collects GST on carbon taxes. It taxes on a tax. How does the minister justify taxing the taxes that Canadians are paying?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the real question is, how can the Conservatives justify their flip-flop on climate action?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Again, Madam Chair, why is the current government condoning taxing taxes? We are in an affordability crisis. How does the government justify taxing taxes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the member opposite was elected on a platform that said, "We will assess progress...[so] carbon prices [can be] on a path to \$170/tonne." How does the member explain her flip-flop to Canadians?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, I was elected on fighting for provincial jurisdiction and respecting that, so I would ask that the minister not put words in my mouth for what I have done.

We are in a housing crisis, and that has been noted by officials, not by this minister or the housing minister, unfortunately. Why is the removal of gatekeepers and red tape not a priority for the current Liberal government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is really astonishing to me that Conservative after Conservative has disavowed the platform that they clearly ran on in 2021. Every Conservative member of the House was elected on that climate plan. How can they disavow it now?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, again, I asked a question about housing. We are in a housing crisis. Why is the removal of gatekeepers and red tape not a priority for the current Liberal government and this Liberal minister?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we absolutely believe that Canada needs to build more homes more quickly. That is why we are so glad that our housing accelerator is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, in the 2015 Liberal Party platform, there was a commitment to balance budgets. Why has the minister abandoned that party platform promise?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, our commitment in 2015 was to not repeat the mistakes of the Conservatives, and to make the necessary investments in Canada and Canadians. That is what we have done. That is why Canada has the strongest growth—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, why has the minister put forward a plan that, by her own account, is unsustainable?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is absolutely not the case. By my own account, we are investing in Canadians, driving jobs and growth and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, we know there is carbon tax 1.0, and carbon tax 2.0 will be coming into effect. Has the minister calculated how much the Liberals' second carbon tax will cost rural Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I believe the member opposite is misleading when referring to the clean fuel regulations, which, again, she ran on a platform saying that she would improve the—

● (2145)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, does the minister apply a rural lens to the development of their failed policies?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, she said she would improve the clean fuel regulations to reduce carbon emissions from every litre of gasoline and other liquid fuels—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, again, I am asking: Does the minister apply a rural lens to the development of her failed policies?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the question is: Is the member opposite disavowing the platform she and her colleagues ran on?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, again, one more time: Does the minister apply a rural lens to her failed policies that she is implementing on Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I know that Canadian farmers, like every single other Canadian, suffer the impact of climate change and they need a climate plan.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Chair, I will provide some remarks and then I will have some questions for the minister. I would start off by reflecting on some of the discourse that has occurred in the House just in the last 15 minutes or so.

We just had a Conservative member almost take great pleasure in the fact that the inflation rate from March to April rose by 0.1%. It actually makes me stop and wonder if Conservatives get excited when they see the inflation rate rise because they see it as a political opportunity. I would hate to think that is the case, but the way they react to such a marginal and tiny change in the inflation rate in terms of going from 4.3% to 4.4%, one would think that they just cracked one of the biggest mysteries in the country and were providing some great insight into how only Conservatives know anything about economic principles and how an economy works.

Then we just came off the heels of another discussion of a member taking great exception to the fact that, yes, Conservatives ran on pricing pollution. They ran on a carbon tax. The member for Battlefords—Lloydminster ran on that. It was in her platform when she ran in the last election—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: I did not.

The Deputy Chair: I want to remind members that they may not like what they hear, unfortunately it would be a point of debate, and so I would ask members to wait until it is time for questions and comments if they happen to have their turn.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Chair, it is a mischaracterization of what I did do. I did not do that. So I would ask—

The Deputy Chair: Again, this becomes a point of debate. This is something that we hear on a regular basis within the House of Commons. These are points of debate as to what he said, she said, what she did, he did. I would just indicate that those are points of debate. This is not a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Well she did, Madam Chair. All the Conservatives came out with a platform, before the last election, and it said they would impose a price on pollution, albeit it was slightly different from ours. It was more of an Air Miles-type plan where one got points and got to pick prizes afterwards, but the Conservatives ran on the basic fundamental principle of it. That member did.

Conservatives knocked on doors, 338 of them, trying to sell that to Canadians. I think they do owe an explanation to Canadians as to why they have now flip-flopped on that. That is what the minister was trying to highlight earlier in her responses.

What I really want to talk about is what this budget is doing, in terms of setting a course into the future, in terms of laying the groundwork for the future economies. Just about every political party in this House gets it, except the Conservatives, that the future success of our economy or any economy in this world for that matter, in the foreseeable future, is going to be around clean technology.

We know that clean technology is expected to triple by 2030. We have the opportunity now to be at the forefront of that, not just so that we could do the environmentally responsible thing, but we could benefit from the economics of it, being at the forefront of it and exporting that technology as we develop it here in Canada.

That is why I am very pleased to see that this budget had a number of measures in it to ensure that we have the strong foundation we need, that we have a safe, smart and competitive place to do business, that we have opportunities ahead, and that we do recognize that there are some challenges around it and we suggest ways to tackle those challenges. That is what I really want to talk about this evening, and what I would like to ask the minister about when I get to my questions.

We talk about a strong foundation for providing that economy of the future. What does that mean? It means ensuring that we encourage investment in clean technology, ensuring that we get access to those critical minerals and making zero-emissions vehicles more affordable, like this budget is doing. That means tackling public transit in a way that is meaningful and genuinely impacts the lives of Canadians, that means building housing and encouraging development around transit systems and transit routes, all in the interest of looking towards opportunities to genuinely create the foundation that we need in order to allow this new and future economy to flourish here in Canada. That is what we are seeing, by laying that groundwork and establishing that foundation.

However to do that, to attract that business, we need to ensure that, as I indicated, we have a safe, smart and competitive place to do business here in Canada. One of the underpinnings of that is a stable democracy, one that has the social supports, one that has supports for individuals who, for some reason, become unemployed or need health care or dental care. People want to establish businesses in areas that have those strong social supports.

Corporations are changing. They are not like what they were during the Industrial Revolution or even in the following 50, 75 or 100 years. They are looking for places to do business that have clean energy sources. I am immediately reminded of Umicore. The Prime Minister came to Queen's University last summer, with our provincial counterparts, with some of my Conservative colleagues from neighbouring ridings of Kingston and the Islands to announce Umicore coming to our region in Loyalist Township, just outside of my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

The one takeaway for me on that was when the president of Umicore was asked why he chose Ontario, when he had all these other places in North America that he could have decided on. Why Ontario? He said that they were building a sustainable product. They want to know that what goes into that product is sustainable. He said that there is clean energy here, and they use a lot of energy.

Business of Supply

• (2150)

Finally, we are seeing this shift in the corporate world where businesses are now taking on this responsibility to be more environmentally sustainable where perhaps for decades before we never really saw that. I give credit especially to the former Liberal government in Ontario that phased out the burning of coal in Ontario to make electricity. It established and built renewable energy projects like windmills on Wolfe Island, one of the two islands in Kingston and the Islands. It was hugely contested at the time. Both sides of the debate were locking heads repeatedly for years, but the provincial government at the time pushed through and said it was the right thing to do and that Ontario needed to do it. As a result, Ontario now has one of the cleanest grids in North America, and that is why Umicore said it wanted to establish in Ontario.

This is what we talk about when we talk about establishing the right places to do business. It is by making sure that we have put the infrastructure in place, by making sure we have those social supports and a strong democracy, and by ensuring we have competitive corporate tax rates. That is what we need to do.

When we look ahead, we talk about the fact that clean tech and clean energy are expected to triple globally by 2030. We have an opportunity here to be at the forefront of this, and I genuinely believe that some of the measures this government has put in place over the years, and in particular what we have been seeing in this budget and the last one, really highlight how we are putting ourselves in that competitive position to outperform some of our partners.

However, there are some challenges, and I know it is responsible that in the budget the government is discussing some of those challenges, so that is what I would like to ask the minister about: how we are going to overcome some of those challenges.

In particular, there are two things that come to mind. One is that we must build the framework, including the infrastructure, for the long-term investments. That is going to be a big challenge. That is something we need to work with our provincial counterparts on. One of the other challenges is the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act's posing, perhaps, problems in terms of our ability to be competitive.

My questions to the minister will really focus on how we properly position ourselves to be at the forefront of that, given the fact that we do have some of these challenges before us. I would start with that question.

• (2155)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to start with a heartfelt tribute to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. We have been talking a lot about COVID and the COVID recession, and that is appropriate, because we are still dealing with the consequences of that economic and physical trauma to Canada and Canadians. My colleague, the member for Kingston and the Islands, played such a huge role in the work of our government and the work of our parliamentary caucus in that incredibly difficult time, and hearing his eloquence this evening reminded me of that, so I am glad to have the opportunity to publicly thank him very much.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I appreciate the comment.

When we do look toward the future, in Canada, because of the educational institutions we have, because of the labour force we have, because of the incredibly talented people and because of that social infrastructure we have here, which companies are looking for when they look to relocate, we really put ourselves in a position of being able to succeed in terms of attracting that new technology of the future.

I am wondering if the minister could comment on where she sees some of the potential issues we might see along the way and what the government would be doing to ensure we can get through those and see that prosperity in the future.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is a really important question, and I think when historians look back on 2022 and 2023 they are going to note that these were the years we were coming out of the pandemic. Just as when we look back at the early years of the 20th century, we talk about the Spanish flu, but we talk even more about the great transformations at the beginning of the past century, I think historians are going to say 2022 and 2023 were the years that the world's great industrial economies got serious about climate change and about the industrial transformation it requires.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, one of the other things that we are talking about when we talk about a transformation is electrifying our country and changing it in a way that we are not used to. A lot of work would have to go into that. Of course, this is something that we would have to do in conjunction with our provincial and territorial partners to make sure that we not only have the resources in place and the supports that they need but that we also do this in a relatively quick manner. In this way, we can ensure that we can see the prosperity that comes with a transformation of our economy.

Could the minister comment on how she sees that happening? Given the fact that our provincial and territorial partners are going to be as heavily impacted as we would be at the federal level, how important is the role of working with these partners in developing and executing such plans?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is essential. As we have been saying, this is an economic transformation that is comparable only to the Industrial Revolution itself.

As with the Industrial Revolution, some countries did it better than others. Those countries that seized the advantage reaped generational benefits and, for generations, raced ahead in terms of the prosperity and health of their people relative to the countries that did not seize that opportunity.

A comparable moment is upon us, and that is why this budget was so important. We knew we had to seize the moment for Canada, which is what we are doing, and we are already seeing the reaction from investors. This is a great opportunity for us; we are going to take advantage of it.

Business of Supply

● (2200)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Chair, I very much appreciate that answer, because it makes a great parallel between the Industrial Revolution and the countries that seized on an opportunity versus those that just waited and saw what their role would be in it. I think that it is very clear that Canada is doing the same thing right now by seizing on the opportunity.

Could the minister comment on some of those initiatives and how they have translated into businesses like Umicore choosing Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, yes, our price on pollution is foundational. We then have our system of tax credits and our system of concessional finance through the Canada growth fund. On top of that, for specific projects, we have funding through SIF and the Department of Natural Resources.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Chair, I am sure the minister has figured out that I am here to ask questions about the environment.

In budget 2023, she announced clean technology investment tax credits that could be worth up to \$80 billion over 10 years. One such credit is a tax credit for clean electricity.

To your knowledge, would a project that uses energy other than renewable energy be eligible for this credit?

The Deputy Chair: I must remind the hon. member to address her remarks to the Chair and not directly to the minister.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her question, which is truly important.

These credits for investing in electricity are truly key to the creation of a green economy. As my colleague opposite understands very well, we will need much more electricity than we need at present. Canada has a great advantage: it has a green electricity.

I will continue—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Repentigny.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, I have another question along the same lines.

Could a company that operates one or more coal plants benefit from this tax credit?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we have to produce more electricity and ensure that it is green electricity because that is what investors want.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, could nuclear projects benefit from these tax credits?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the answer is yes.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, we are also going to talk about hydrogen.

You are establishing a tax credit for investing in hydrogen. To your knowledge, will hydrogen produced from natural gas be eligible for this tax credit?

The Deputy Chair: The member must direct her question to the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, when it comes to hydrogen, our approach is to have a system that will make it possible to determine the carbon content of the hydrogen that is produced.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, I would like to ask the minister another question.

Is that tax credit reserved only for green hydrogen, the type of hydrogen that Canada's allies who are committed to the fight against climate change really want to buy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we understand the importance of having a system that investors can compare with those of other administrations. That is what we did with hydrogen.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, Germany wants green hydrogen. That is what it is asking for. Why then is the government offering a tax credit for the production of grey hydrogen? There are all sorts of colours of hydrogen and the colour depends on the source from which the hydrogen is produced. Right now, it is grey hydrogen. Why invest in that?

● (2205)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I very much appreciate the questions about the green transition and hydrogen. I agree that our allies, the investors, are very interested in Canada's hydrogen production. We think the ideal approach is to talk about the carbon content—

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, the minister is giving an investment tax credit for clean technology. Since we do not agree on what is clean and what is not when it comes to hydrogen, I would like to know what range of technologies the government considers to be clean.

Can you confirm that this credit will not be used to fund projects related to the oil and gas sector?

The Deputy Chair: I cannot do that, but I will ask the hon. minister to answer that question.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, if you would like to help me answer questions, I would be very happy, because this is the third hour of this debate.

When it comes to questions about industrial policies, more often than not, we agree with the Bloc.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, I am glad to hear that the minister somewhat agrees with us. We would like to define the terms “subsidies” and “clean technologies”.

Business of Supply

Of the \$80 billion planned over 10 years, can the minister tell us how much will be invested in Quebec's green economy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, all of these credits will be invested in Canada's green economy. As for Quebec, as I said in our discussion about Stellantis, regional equality is very important to me—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Repentigny.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, there is one thing that is not entirely clear in terms of the questions I asked, specifically relating to when the minister talked about coal. I would like to clarify that. Can tax credits be given to those industries?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the credits will be used to make investments to create a clean economy and reduce existing greenhouse gas emissions—

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, the government chose to spend billions of dollars in public funds on extremely expensive technology to the sole benefit of the industry. The government therefore accepts the solution that the industry chose. I am talking about carbon capture and storage. Some 400 Canadian academics contacted the government to say no to carbon capture and storage. The analyses and studies are clear: it is the most costly and least useful method and its effectiveness has not been proven. Anything that is captured is often thrown back into the atmosphere.

I would like the minister to explain what it means when the government says that we need to listen to science. Why fall head first into this sham?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said a few minutes ago, generally, we agree with the Bloc when it comes to the need to take action to fight climate change. We may not agree on the use of nuclear technology and obviously we do not agree on carbon capture. We think it is a very important technology that offers a lot of possibilities in Canada thanks to our geological formations. There is a lot of interest from investors. It is a good thing for Canada.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, indeed, we do not agree on carbon capture and storage. This technology has a poor record. For example, the Shell Quest facility produced more greenhouse gas emissions than it captured with its technology.

Around the world, of the 149 projects to be storing carbon by 2020, 100 were cancelled or placed on indefinite hold. Even in the United States, most government incentives were withdrawn.

I would like to know if the minister can tell us what the secret is. Why would this technology magically work in Canada when it does not work anywhere else?

• (2210)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is unfortunate but I do not agree with what my hon. colleague said. I believe that it really is a technology that has a lot of possibilities, not just for Canada, but also for the United States and other countries.

The reality is that Canada has created an investment credit. It will be up to the private sector to make the additional investments. The sector—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Repentigny.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, in 2022, oil companies made \$38 billion in combined profits. I think they have the money they need. If they believe in this technology, then they should be using their profits to pay for it.

I am going to ask some questions about Trans Mountain. This morning, the Prime Minister received a letter signed by over 95 organizations calling on the Government of Canada to finalize its assessment framework for fossil fuel subsidies using the WTO's definition. They specified that loan guarantees are subsidies.

In February 2022, the minister said that no additional public money would be invested in Trans Mountain. However, three months later, she gave Trans Mountain a \$10-billion loan guarantee. What happened in those three months to make her change her mind?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I did not change my mind. Canada offered Trans Mountain a loan guarantee, but we did not put any additional public funds into the project, as we promised. Unfortunately, Trans Mountain may be just another issue on which we do not agree with our Bloc Québécois colleagues.

I am a Canadian sovereignist. Our country's economic independence is very important to me. The economic dependence we have on the United States because we do not have a pipeline to the Pacific is dangerous for our country.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, I will set the issue of security aside and instead talk about the fact that the Prime Minister said that Trans Mountain's profits would be invested in the fight against climate change. That is like asking a firefighter to light a fire to justify his job. That being said, when the Prime Minister made those comments, the cost was \$7.4 billion, but it is now \$30.9 billion. This will not be profitable, and the taxpayers are footing the bill.

In terms of the government's climate commitments, how can she explain this Trans Mountain venture now that it is clear to everyone that it will not be making any profits?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said before, economic sovereignty is very important to us. It is important that Canada have control over its own resources. That will not happen without Trans Mountain.

I think that the members from Quebec and the Bloc can and must understand the importance of a sovereign and strong position for our country, for Canada. With regard to the project, we are hopeful that there will be a lot of interest on the investor side, and we must not—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Repentigny.

Business of Supply

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, earlier the minister spoke at length about the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act.

That legislation sets out that the American government confirms the existential threat posed by the climate crisis. Does the minister seriously believe that, by investing in grey hydrogen and in carbon capture and storage techniques that have never proven effective, she is helping to counter this existential threat?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, yes, I think so. Our government has done more to fight climate change than any previous Canadian government.

The member opposite cited American legislation. I think that, relative to American policy, all Canadians can be very proud of our Canadian policy. We have a price on pollution, as the Conservatives have talked a lot about, and we now have a clean industrial strategy.

• (2215)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, there are a number of things we do not agree on entirely.

There have been a lot of meetings. Some 1,300 meetings were held for the entire oil lobby in Canada in 2022. The department hosted 104 meetings, most of them with senior officials, and the minister has held 30 meetings in the last five months.

Was the budget designed and concocted in collaboration with the oil and gas industry? Were these meetings held to discuss net-zero emissions, for example, or to ask for more public funding?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as the Minister of Finance, I meet with representatives of all Canadian industries, including the oil industry. I also meet with Canadians from other sectors of society.

It was the unions that mainly influenced the creation of the budget. We spoke at length with workers and they gave us some good ideas about new tax credits and the need—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Repentigny.

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Chair, concerning everything we spoke about, the minister told us that things are going in the right direction.

I would like to remind her that about 10 days ago, the UN released a report on the melting of glaciers, which is breaking records and is irreversible. It would seem like a business opportunity for the government because in the last budget there were millions of dollars.

Why are you courting disaster with these policies?

The Deputy Chair: I would remind the hon. member to address the chair.

The minister has the floor. There is not a lot of time left.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we understand the importance of fighting climate change. Our budget proves it. The reality is that Canada's emissions are going down. That is good news. It is very important and it is thanks to the work we are doing together.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam

Chair, it is nice to be here this evening to talk about these important issues related to the budget and the business of supply.

I thank very much the Minister of Finance for being with us here tonight to answer all of our important questions. I would like to take a moment to thank her personally for her extraordinary work and for being such an incredible Deputy Prime Minister and also the first-ever woman finance minister in Canada.

I want to highlight the difference that has made, and I would like to do that through the lens of my constituents this evening. I have an opportunity to do that, because for the last 10 days or so we have been in our ridings, and I have had opportunities to knock on doors, to host youth summits and to get out there and talk to my constituents. It is not just my constituents either. I have had the occasion to knock on doors in both Woodstock and Montreal, as there are by-elections in both of those areas, and I wanted to relay some of the messages that I heard from those Canadians as well, because I think they are very pertinent.

I think budget 2023, as with the previous budget in 2022, addresses a lot of the concerns that I heard at the doors. When Canadians ask a very specific question, like what we are doing to help their kids buy a home one day, what we are doing to fight inflation or what we are doing to combat climate change, having a direct answer with an investment that our government made proves not only that our government is listening to Canadians, but also that we are meeting Canadians where they are in the moment and ensuring that we are building an economy that works for everyone.

In terms of the generational impacts that Canada's first-ever female finance minister has had, I point to a couple of things. Obviously number one is child care. Right now in Canada, women are punching farther above their weight in the economy than ever before, and that is because they have the opportunity to work without the burden and overly expensive cost of child care. I do not think it is a coincidence that we have a gender-balanced cabinet, a female finance minister and a feminist economic policy. They go hand in hand. I want to thank the minister for bringing these forward.

There are other things our government has done that have had a really profound impact on a lot of the single parents I have spoken with. I just mentioned that many single parents, although not all, are women, so creating policies that support single parents is feminist economic policy as well.

Business of Supply

One of those policies is dental care. I can point to a couple of people in my riding whom I have met with recently. They did not previously have access to dental care, and now their kids do have access to dental care. They did not have to make tough financial decisions about whether or not their kids' teeth should get a cleaning this year. It was not a matter of whether food goes on the table, the rent gets paid or they get their cavity fixed. It was an easier decision this year. Thankfully, our government was there to support that with the dental benefit. In future years, there will be a more comprehensive plan for kids under 18 and for seniors as well. I think that is really profound and important to point out.

More than that, there is also the Canada child benefit, which has had a tremendous impact on ridings like mine. There are a huge number of children in Milton. Milton is one of the youngest communities from a demographics perspective. I think the average age is among the lowest in all ridings across Canada. I looked at the numbers recently, and last year, \$106 million in Canada child benefit payments came to Milton, to the parents of Milton.

I would also like to point out that Milton is a fairly well-to-do community. In the last 10 years, our national ranking for median income has gone from about 21st in Canada all the way to sixth, so Milton is doing very well financially. Despite that, given the Canada child benefit is a means-tested program so more money goes to families who need it, the tremendous number of kids means we are still on the higher end as a recipient community for the Canada child benefit.

I would also like to point to two other things that I think are really true to form in a feminist economic policy. One of those is the restart to our co-op housing strategy in budget 2022. I grew up in co-op housing. The Chautauqua Co-op was my home. It still is my home in many respects, as my mom still lives there. My mom also runs co-ops. Co-ops are a theme that I have spoken to many times in this House, and I know that the Minister of Finance and I share a profound respect for them and an interest in ensuring that Canada builds more co-ops in the future.

I also want to reference the Minister of Finance's support for a children's health strategy. We have talked about children's health before, and we know that despite the fact that we have seen massive reductions in children's poverty in Canada, children's health has yet to catch up. We have some work to do, and I know that investments in this budget and past budgets are in respect of that.

• (2220)

On the conversations that I had with some of my constituents, I had an opportunity to take part in a UN model summit at St. Francis Xavier Secondary School. It was organized by those in grades 10 and 11, and there were even some seventh and eighth graders present. I spoke for about 15 minutes and then took about 25 minutes of questions. It was fantastic.

I always tell young people that they might not have a vote in an election but they do have a voice, and they deserve to have it amplified in places like this, in the House of Commons. Young people in Canada have the most to lose in Canada if we make bad decisions as a Parliament, which reflects most profoundly on young people and their lives. The most at stake is what kids have in their future, and I think their voices really matter.

Young people are smart, they know what they want and they know what they need. It might take a little bit of extra time, patience and effort, given that they do not necessarily email or call our office constantly and fill our inboxes with insight. Sometimes we have to wait a little bit of time, and sometimes we have to wait for them to ask the first questions, but it is always worth it.

I will go through some of the themes and come back to them in the form of a question afterwards. If the Minister of Finance would like a preview on what some of the themes will be in my questions, then here they are.

The first few are a bit of a combination of the youth summit, which was organized by my two awesome co-op students, one from St. FX and one from Milton District High School, Arianna and Abigail. I thank them both for their extraordinary efforts over the last couple of months. They are great co-op students, and one of the two is probably going to be a member of Parliament one day, or maybe the prime minister. I will not give away who, but they are both really excellent students. One is going off to university next year and one will be in grade 12. They are incredible young people, and they have added so much to my office. I want to thank them for their hard work.

Organizing this youth summit took quite a lot of effort, but it was really great. Nine students arrived at the office last Thursday. We called it "Pizza and Politics", and we had two hours together. Everybody was asked to either bring a private member's bill; an S.O. 31-style, 60-second speech; or an issue that they wanted me to raise here on the floor of the House of Commons. I have the opportunity now to raise some of those issues.

Issue number one was affordable housing. Young people want to know how they are ever going to be able to afford a home in this country. There is a lot of doom and gloom about home ownership in Canada, despite the fact that Canada has one of the highest home ownership rates in the world. However, Canadians continue to be concerned about rising home costs.

In that context, I was able to share a story from a local business in Milton. The company is not only active in Milton but also throughout southwestern Ontario. It is a mid-sized engineering company that mostly builds residential real estate, but it has done something extremely innovative. I am looking to amplify this, because I think it is something that can be packaged up, remodelled and sent right across this country.

Business of Supply

Crozier engineering has taken the first-time home buyers' plan and offered to put \$20,000 into one of those accounts for new employees who are eligible for a first-time home purchase, which is sort of an advance on their three-year contract. If they sign a contract for three years, \$20,000 goes into an account. After 90 days on the job, they are allowed to withdraw it, and it can go towards their down payment. The company is looking to do the same thing with the first home savings account, which was recently announced.

These are two examples of one company in my riding really taking the initiative to look at what is available out there in the home-buyer ecosystem and finding a way to repurpose it into something really appealing. It works for retention. It works for recruitment for employees, and it attracts a lot of young talent to Crozier Engineering.

I want to congratulate Crozier engineering. When I mentioned that to the students at my youth summit, a few of them said that they might be looking to get into engineering as a result because they wanted to take advantage of such an extraordinary program.

Second on the agenda at the youth summit was foreign affairs. I would like to talk to the Minister of Finance a little bit about something that she is, unfortunately, all too familiar with, and that is specifically the war in Ukraine, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and our investments to ensure that Ukraine wins that war.

Third, I would like to touch on the cost of living. I would like to talk to the Minister of Finance about the grocery rebate and how that is going to impact 11 million Canadian families across our country. I would also like to touch on green infrastructure and protecting the green belt in my riding.

If we have time, I would also like to talk about emergency preparedness, because Caden brought that up at my town hall. I thought it was an extremely important issue to bring up considering the recent fires across the country, which seem to be more persistent as a result of climate change.

Madam Chair, am I getting to the point where I have to start asking questions?

• (2225)

The Deputy Chair: We are at the five-minute mark, so the hon. member has to pose a question for the minister.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Chair, I would first like to ask the Minister of Finance if she could reflect on Crozier Consulting Engineers' very innovative approach of using the first-time homebuyers' plan to provide its employees with a \$20,000 bonus up front for a down payment toward their first home and how we can encourage more businesses to do something similar.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Milton for being such a great connected constituency MP. There are a lot of great constituency MPs on this side of the House, but it is hard to name one who is better than the member for Milton. I also want to thank him for the work he has done on housing. He spoke about his personal knowledge of the value that co-ops bring to family lives. I have that life experience too. He played a big role in designing our support for co-ops in the 2022 budget.

The measure that the member for Milton has described is excellent. It would be great to see more employers doing it. Our first-time homebuyers savings account, tax-free in and tax-free out, is a way that young people can take that money from an employer, really make it work for them and buy a home sooner.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Chair, I am trying to be as quick as possible, but I also want to give the Minister of Finance some time to answer this question because I know it is a very important one.

Our government is proud of our investments to support Ukraine through the most challenging time of its life. I want to highlight that this past weekend in Poland, at a World Cup that I used to go to every year, the Ukrainian men's K4, which is a four-person kayak, won in a race. It was a really nice moment at the regatta. I only got to watch on Instagram, but everybody was really excited for them. Watching a team do so well in the face of such adversity was profoundly heartwarming and exciting. It was a moment when sport brought people together in a really conscientious way. Nobody was bummed that day to lose to Ukraine.

I would ask the minister to elaborate a bit on our investments to support Ukraine during these challenging times.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for Milton for his very strong and personal support for Ukraine.

We have all seen that the extreme right in the United States and Europe has been seeking to undermine public support for Ukraine and has been openly supporting Putin. I really do believe that my colleagues in the official opposition support Ukraine and I hope they will join me in being very clear that statements like the one we have seen from some UCP candidates supporting Putin and echoing his talking points are unacceptable in the Canadian political discourse. I am being very sincere. It is really important for us all to be clear about that.

• (2230)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Chair, I hope there is an opportunity for all members of this House to come together and collectively renounce those comments.

I had opportunities to talk to constituents in Woodstock, Montreal and Milton, and the issue that arose in Woodstock is our support for seniors. In Montreal, it was about electric buses. As I was knocking on doors, kids were returning home from schools, and federal investments in green infrastructure for schools allowed them to purchase an all-electric school bus fleet. I thought that was amazing. Environmental protection is top of mind in Montreal.

Business of Supply

In Milton, it was child care. I spoke with Teddy on the street. Teddy was pushing his little guy in a little car, who thought he was driving the car. It was very cute. Our support for women in the economy goes without saying, but because of our support for families like Teddy's, they now have double incomes and are able to get back to work sooner.

I would ask the Minister of Finance if she would not mind elaborating on any of those three topics.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, investment in electric buses is very important. I was recently at an announcement of our federal government's support for electrification of the buses of the TTC in my community of Toronto and, of course, for early learning and child care. It is a triple win. It is great for the economy because it increases the labour force, it is great for affordability for families and it is great above all for the youngest Canadians, who are getting great early learning and a great start in life.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with two colleagues.

On November 3, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said that Canada would return to a balanced budget in 2027.

Today, could the Minister of Finance say when and in what year Canada will return to a balanced budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, what I can say is that our government understands that the economic policies of the Harper government failed.

We had a response to the 2008 recession that was not—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, when will there be a return to a balanced budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we learned from that example that it was necessary to invest—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, last November, the government said that it would balance the budget by 2027.

Now, when will Canada's budget be balanced?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, for us, the most important things are jobs and economic growth. We are getting excellent results.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, for Canadian taxpayers, the most important thing is having some money left in their pockets.

The Liberal government just invented a second Liberal carbon tax.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us, on average, how much that will cost a family in Quebec?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, is the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent talking about the fuel regulations on which, during the 2021 election campaign, the Conservative Party, including members from Quebec—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, on average, how much will the second Liberal carbon tax cost Quebec families?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Quebec is a province that believes climate action is important, so I think that—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicated that the second Liberal carbon tax will cost Canadian families an average of \$436 more. Is that true or false?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we will assess progress so that the price of carbon is on the path to \$170 a tonne. That was the plan—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, we are not talking about the tax per tonne. We are talking about the money that this is going to cost taxpayers—

The Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism on a point of order.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Chair, I am sorry to have interrupted my colleague.

My colleague has already directly asked the minister a number of questions, even though we know very well that, in committee of the whole, we have to ask the question through the Chair.

• (2235)

The Deputy Chair: If I did not catch it, I apologize.

The hon. member must address his questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, does the Deputy Prime Minister agree with the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who stated in a report that the Liberal carbon tax will cost Quebec families an average of \$436 more, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, does the member opposite agree with his platform in the 2021 election campaign and with the promises he made to his Quebec constituents, who believe in the importance of action?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, does the Deputy Prime Minister agree with the Parliamentary Budget Officer's assertion that the second version of the Liberal carbon tax will cost the average Quebec family an additional \$436? Is that true, yes or no?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I agree with the Parliamentary Budget Officer who appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance and said that our plan is fiscally responsible and that our deficit is responsible, especially in comparison with other G7 countries.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Chair, does it mean an extra \$436 for families, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, is it \$170 per tonne as the Conservatives promised, yes or no?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Chair, what is Canada's household debt as a percentage of the GDP?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, what is the Conservative plan on climate, because we have heard a lot of—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, why did the Liberal government cancel the clean tidal energy program to produce power in Nova Scotia?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, why did the Conservatives campaign on 170 bucks a tonne in 2021 and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, the tidal energy project, which could have powered Atlantic Canada, has been cancelled by the Liberal government. Why has the clean energy-touting government cancelled it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, our government has invested more in climate action than any previous Canadian government, and the investment is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, once again, the tidal energy project was cancelled, cancelled, cancelled. Shame, shame, shame.

Why did the Liberal government cancel the tidal energy project?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, repeating words three times does not make them more true.

The reality is these Conservatives campaigned on a climate plan, they flip-flopped and now they have nothing to offer.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, not answering questions does not make them true either.

All four Atlantic premiers have requested the federal government delay the implementation of the carbon tax, and the finance minister has refused. Why?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we are being asked questions by a member of Parliament from Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia is on fire right now.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, out of 63 countries, which place is Canada in, with respect to meeting climate change targets?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, emissions are down 9% compared to 2005. We are bending the curve. That is good news for Canada and Canadians, and it is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, the answer is actually 58th out of 63 countries.

What is the percent of Nova Scotians paying more as a result of the carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is a bit rich of the Conservatives to talk about Canada's effectiveness in meeting emissions targets when they have blown through their own rather—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Once again, the answer is 60%.

Madam Chair, what is the cost to each household for carbon tax number 2 in Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, there is no such thing. There is a clean fuel regulation. Actually, the member opposite, himself, along with his colleagues, campaigned on—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, once again, continuing to say the same thing over again does not make it true.

What is the cost per litre of carbon tax number 1?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I said, the Conservatives campaigned on a carbon price. Every single elected Conservative member of Parliament campaigned on a carbon price.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, what is the total amount for carbon tax 1, carbon tax 2 and the HST on a litre of fuel?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Canadians understand that not acting is a choice as well.

The price—

● (2240)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, the answer is 61¢.

What is the Nova Scotia GDP contraction as a result of carbon tax 2?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, in fact, economists are putting a number on the price of inaction. The Canadian Institute for Climate Choices says that we spent—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, the answer is the GDP of Nova Scotia will contract by 0.7%. Fascinating.

Business of Supply

The other thing I would like to discuss is that Nova Scotia is prevented from lowering the fuel tax due to the requirement in the carbon tax benchmark that provinces not offset the price signal. Would it be fair to say that Nova Scotia has been strong-armed into maintaining its provincial fuel tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what would be devastating for the people of Nova Scotia is a government without a climate plan. That would be devastating because it would destroy our planet, but also because it would mean—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, what would be devastating is Nova Scotians not being able to feed themselves, heat their homes or have a roof over their head. That is devastating, and that is what the Liberal government is actually doing.

Once again, finally, why did the Liberal government cancel the clean energy tidal power project in Nova Scotia?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, our government has a climate plan and investments are coming to Canada. The Conservatives disavowed their weak plan that they campaigned on in 2021, and Canadians know that.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Chair, we know very clearly that middle-income Canadians in Nova Scotia cannot afford carbon tax 1, carbon tax 2 and the HST.

When will the finance minister cancel the carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we have a plan to fight climate change. We have a plan to attract investment and to build the clean economy of the future.

The Conservatives have nothing except repeating childish phrases over and over.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Chair, the finance minister has not done a great job answering questions.

I am going to ask her if she has an idea of, by 2030, how much will the carbon tax cost the average farm family in Canada? I will give her a hint. The average farm is about 5,000 acres.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, my dad, before he retired last year, farmed 6,000 acres, so I am well aware of the size of the average Canadian farm.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Chair, I am glad she knows that. Perhaps she knows how much that is going to cost the average farmer. The answer to that question is that by 2030, the average farmer will have to pay \$150,000 in carbon tax.

How much of that carbon tax will the average farmer, like her father, get back from the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I was in Grand Prairie last summer, and I talked to some farmers. Some of them were actually married to people I went to elementary school with. They said to me that their kids now see the importance of climate action, and they see they are getting the money back, so—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Chair, once again, the finance minister is not even attempting to answer a question. The answer is that the farmer who pays \$150,000 in carbon taxes is going to get none of that money back, and the cost is all going to be passed along to Canadians trying to buy food.

I am going to try another question. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has said that the carbon tax will cost small businesses x amount of dollars in 2023. Does the finance minister know how much it is going to cost small business?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I want to talk about a farmer named Henry Vos. He used to farm around Fairview. He is retired now. He lives on Shaftesbury Trail. During the wildfires in Alberta, he emailed me to say to please thank the farmers who are taking time out from seeding to plough firebreaks around their neighbours' houses. Canadian farmers know the cost of climate change, and they know we have to do something about it.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Chair, does she know the thanks they got for taking their tractors to do that? They had to pay a carbon tax on the fuel to cut those fire lines. They would not have gotten a single penny back from the government.

The answer to my first question is \$8 billion. Small business in this country is going to pay \$8 billion in carbon taxes in 2023. How much money are they going to get back? Zero.

Is the finance minister going to do anything with respect to that \$8 billion coming out of the pockets of small business?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we know how important small business is. That is why, after years of Conservative inaction, we were able to lower credit card interchange fees, and Dan Kelly was with me in Brampton to make that announcement. We do not just talk the talk. We walk the walk when it comes to supporting small businesses.

● (2245)

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Chair, does the finance minister know what the cost will be for an Ontario family as a result of carbon tax 2 in the fourth quintile?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, there is no such thing as carbon tax 2. There is something called the clean fuel—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Chair, it is incredibly distressing that I have asked five questions today, but the finance minister cannot answer a single one. She is supposed to be responsible for the finances of this nation. Instead, we get bromides about how great things are. It will cost the average Canadian family \$611 as a result of carbon tax 2.

Business of Supply

What is the cost the average Ontario family is going to pay as a result of carbon tax 1 and carbon tax 2?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, what is incredibly disappointing is not only that the Conservatives have disavowed the admittedly weak climate plan they campaigned on in 2021 but also that they do not have a plan at all now.

How can they fail to answer the single biggest economic question of the 21st century and ask any Canadian to take them seriously?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Chair, how can Canadians take the finance minister seriously? She has been sitting here all night and has not had a number in response to a single financial question that is asked by Canadians.

How can any Canadian have faith in what she does?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I think Canadians do have faith, because they know that our government's policies have created 900,000 more jobs since the depths of the COVID recession. That is 129% job—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member has one minute.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Chair, what Canadians know is that they are going to food banks in record numbers. In my town of Orangeville, there has been a 65% increase in seniors accessing food banks since 2015. This is a result of the carbon tax increasing the cost of food and everything else.

Will the finance minister finally admit that the carbon tax is costing Canadians and driving inflation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, Canadians also know that the women's labour force participation rate in prime working age is 85% in Canada, compared to just 77% in the U.S. That is a record high. That is one of the things driving our economic recovery, and it is thanks to the child care program that these Conservatives voted against.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

I thank the minister for being here.

The first question is related to auto. Have you met with, and agreed with the terms and conditions from, Stellantis and LG about the specific amounts being requested for the Windsor battery plant?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member has to address questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the minister.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is a really important question. I want to assure the hon. member that this is a priority for our government. We are very seized with it. I have been in touch with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, is the federal government going to match the Stellantis-LG battery request with that of the Inflation Reduction Act in the United States? Will that be met? Is that the policy of the government?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I learned during the NAFTA negotiations never to negotiate in public, but I will say this: We are expecting the company to be reasonable because we need a reasonable deal for Canadians, and we are expecting Ontario to contribute its fair share. That is one of the things we—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, we are negotiating in public, including the company saying that the government has reneged on its position, clawing back responsibility. Does the minister agree with the company's position on that?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Certainly not, Madam Chair, but I am absolutely confident that we are going to get a good deal for Canada, a good deal for Canadian workers and a good deal for Canadians across the country.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, was the IRA ever brought up in any meetings, prior to the Volkswagen deal, with Stellantis in discussions of the agreement with the Windsor plant?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, again, I do not think it serves Canadians for us to negotiate in public. The IRA is definitely material here, and it is also material that—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

• (2250)

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, is the Volkswagen deal any different from the Stellantis deal?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: As I was saying, Madam Chair, it is also material that this deal predates the IRA. That is significant too.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, if the minister claims regional fairness, why is there a difference between what is taking place in St. Thomas and Windsor?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is very important that we have regional equity in Canada. It is one of the founding principles of our country. That means when there are—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, when was this model of regional equity introduced in terms of the minister's federal budgets? Is it just in this one, or is it in previous ones?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, regional equity and provincial contributions in major investments are a very long-standing Canadian tradition. Members can take a look at any major—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Business of Supply

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, since Windsor has been the automotive capital of Canada for over 100 years, with investments that have taken place and taxes provided to this country, does that length of tenure equate into the formula of the minister's regional analysis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am a huge fan of Windsor. I was proud to stand up for the people of Windsor during the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge. I was proud of the work our government did on getting Canada carved into the U.S. EV incentives, and I am proud of the work we did for the people of Windsor on NAFTA. We will—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, is the regional fairness equity model of the minister available publicly?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I am being public about it right now. Where there is a major investment in a particular province, we expect the province to contribute a fair share.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, where can the public get this model from the minister right now?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, they can hear what I just said. I think it is pretty straightforward, and actually it is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, if it is straightforward, what mathematical model was used for the minister to create her own model with regard to this regional fairness analysis? What timelines take place with regard to how she equates that, and what taxation and other policies follow to equate to what an investment is worth?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, this is a long-standing, fair and reasonable Canadian practice. Where there is a significant investment in a particular province, it is the expectation of the federal government that this province will contribute a fair share.

I think that is entirely reasonable.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, does the minister feel that there have been regions pitted against each other by a proposal that we do not understand?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, on the contrary, I understand that, as a government, we are making massive investments in the clean economy.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, how many regions are in the minister's actual model that she uses to evaluate this proportion of the budgetary resources of Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, all regions of Canada.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, does the minister have a specific number of how many regions? Are they provinces or municipalities? Is this based upon square footage? What is it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is a long-standing and essential—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, when the member mentions that it is long-standing, what date did that start, that there were actually regional evaluations related to financing? Is St. Thomas in the same region as Windsor?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, it is reasonable and actually the expectation of Canadians across the country that where there is a particular project in a particular province, that the province—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, if St. Thomas receives a different deal than the Windsor auto workers who have been producing for over 100 years, with a plant that has been here for over 100 years, does the minister feel that this is actually the same situation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, no federal government has supported auto workers or supported the auto workers of Windsor more than our government, and I am proud that we have done that. This is an essential part of—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, if this project fails, will the minister reimburse the City of Windsor and its residents for all the money, time and negotiations that have taken place?

• (2255)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, this project will not fail.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Chair, has the minister talked to Premier Ford, and is it her opinion that the problem is at the provincial level? Is that her excuse for regionalism, as opposed to taking the responsibility for doing the project through a national auto policy in which everyone would be treated fairly?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, of course I have spoken to the premier, and I have every confidence that, together, we are going to get this project done.

He believes in the car sector, just as our government does.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Chair, for those in the chamber who are wondering if I have crossed the floor, out of respect for the minister, I would like to see her as I ask the questions. I hope to make this more like a conversation and less like ping pong, if for nothing else, then for a bit of a break.

I do want to use my time well though, so I want to start with something rather basic. I have observed, over the years, that provincial governments get announcements in the minister's budget, such as \$3 billion for ventilating schools to improve safety during COVID. Does the minister have any way to track whether provinces spend money on health care or school ventilation or anything else, as allocated by the federal government to the provinces?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, the member opposite is an extremely experienced parliamentarian and has a lot of experience in the federal government from before. She knows that each investment has its own requirements.

I certainly agree with her that tracking how federal investments are spent is really important, and we definitely seek to do that. It is something that we need to put a lot of emphasis on.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, I want to switch to the climate crisis. Given the comments and a lot of good questions that were asked by the hon. member for Repentigny, which I might have asked, I just want to put into context that, while this federal government spends more money than others, I would not say that it has the best plan, compared with even the previous Liberal government of Paul Martin.

The current context is that we are up against the very edge of too late. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned us that if we do not ensure that global emissions peak and begin to fall no later than before 2025, we will go past 1.5° and past 2°, meaning no new fossil fuel infrastructure is possible and no new fossil fuel exploitation expanding is possible.

Given that, and looking at the Trans Mountain pipeline, the minister said, in February 2022, that there would be no more public monies going to that project. However, as economists like Robyn Allan have pointed out, the debt load amounts to \$700 million a year, as in last year's debt. The Government of Canada is responsible for the interest payments on that debt.

Does the hon. minister have any comments on how we square these two realities: the promise of no public money being spent and the constant pressure that the government is responsible for \$10 billion, minimum, in debt on the project?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, there were lots of points put in there. Let me just start where the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands started, with the urgency of climate action. I totally agree, and that is why I found some of the discussion tonight very frustrating. The reality is that this is the existential challenge of our time, and I think it is worth paying tribute to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for the very many years she has spent working on this.

I do accept that better is always possible, and we have not said the final word on climate action. We need to continue to do better. I also accept, although it makes me very sad, that I will never fully satisfy the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands with our climate action, but I hope she recognizes that the plan we put forward in our budget is meaningful, a meaningful advance, and that these investments that our set of tax credits will enable will make a real difference in Canada.

Finally, as I hope the debate this evening has helped underscore for the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, there is still a live debate in Canada about having a price on pollution. I actually also want to pay tribute to my Prime Minister, who knew early on when we formed government that this was important, and he has held his—

• (2300)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, it is not about whether the hon. minister can satisfy me, but whether my grandchildren will have a survivable future, or whether the hon. minister's or the hon. parliamentary secretary's children will. There is science behind what I am saying, which is that building the Trans Mountain pipeline means the Paris commitments cannot be held to.

The hon. minister said, earlier tonight, that she believes in economic independence. Does she not know that the Trans Mountain pipeline will ship mostly dilbit to refineries in the United States?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I always enjoy my conversations with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, and we agree on a lot of things. I think the Trans Mountain pipeline is something we disagree on. I believe very strongly in the importance of Canada having sovereign control over our natural resources, and this is an important measure to give us that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, with respect to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, which has been completely condemned by every international science organization, not in its specificity, but because any new fossil fuel infrastructure is condemned as it goes against the interests of future generations and blows through the Paris agreement, will the hon. minister consider this? Since the budget does not mention this current project to expand the Trans Mountain pipeline, perhaps we could take the Crown corporation that exists, and convert it to use all the multi-million dollars' worth of equipment and manpower to build fire breaks, expand culverts, and otherwise protect communities from climate emergency events.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, our government's position on the Trans Mountain expansion is clear. The project is close to completion. It will bring economic benefit to Canada, not the least of which will be to indigenous peoples. Indigenous participation in the project is an important element for us, and I very much support the decision our government made previously to undertake this project.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Chair, the hon. minister may be unaware that the Tseil-Waututh, Musqueam, Squamish and WSÁNEĆ peoples, the people along the coastline of the Salish Sea, know that their entire future will be wiped out with a single tanker accident, which is inevitable with dilbit, which cannot be cleaned up in a marine environment—

The Deputy Chair: I have to let the hon. minister respond briefly.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, let me just say that I respect very much the advocacy of, and concerns raised by, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I think we are going to have to agree to differ on this issue.

Business of Supply

Indigenous participation in all major projects in Canada is important for our government.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Chair, I would like to begin by indicating I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the MP for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I rise today to talk about the desperate need for tax fairness in our country. Canadians are struggling. Workers and people on fixed incomes are struggling. In my constituency, children and their families are struggling. Northern Manitoba has the second highest child poverty rate in the country. First nations and indigenous communities are living in third world conditions.

However, all the while the rich are getting richer in our country, and this did not just happen. This is an accumulation of wealth, a hoarding of wealth, that is aided and abetted by the consecutive federal Liberal and Conservative governments' policies that benefit the ultrarich in their tax avoidance, and even tax evasion, schemes.

However, I want to, for a moment, point to the fact that during COVID-19 we saw something very interesting. Two things happened concurrently: there was a massive reduction in child poverty as a result of COVID-era supports; however, the gap between rich and poor grew to historic levels.

While most Canadians would choose to further reduce child poverty, the minister and the Liberal government eliminated the benefits that lifted so many out of poverty, but maintained the tax policies that keep so many in it and benefit the ultrarich. This is shocking. It is not just the moral thing to do, but it is the popular thing to do, to bring about tax fairness.

No one would ever accuse the government of doing things because they are right, but I would think the government would do it because it is popular, at least.

Over 90% of Canadians believe that the ultra-wealthy need to pay with fair share, so my questions today are focused on why the government is failing to act on this front. In fact, 11 years ago the finance minister wrote a book calling attention to the concentration of wealth into a new billionaire class.

My question to the minister is this: Does the minister know what percentage of wealth created in the last 10 years has gone to the richest 1% in Canada?

• (2305)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I actually had been intending to mention plutocrats, so I am glad the member opposite got there before me.

I do agree with many of the core assertions the member opposite has made. I agree that tax fairness is really important, and—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, I did not hear an answer. The answer is that 34% of the wealth created in the last 10 years went to the richest 1%.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Niki Ashton: There is a preamble that is allowed—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Chair, my understanding is that both the question and the answer have the same amount of time, so in this case it seems like a bit of an imbalance.

The Deputy Chair: The member said, “My question to the minister is this”, so it started when she said that “my question to the minister”. There is a preamble there, and then if it is clear as to when the question starts, the time is from when the question starts.

The hon. member.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, I repeat that there was no answer to the question, but 34% of wealth created in the last 10 years went to the richest 1% of Canadians, and only 5% went to the poorest 50%.

Why are the minister and her government upholding the same plutocratic systems that her book criticizes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, the answer is that we are not. We are the government that introduced a luxury tax on luxury cars, planes and yachts. We are the government that introduced the Canada recovery dividend of 15% on banks and insurance companies. We have permanently raised the corporate income tax by 1.5% on the largest and most profitable banks and insurance companies. These are real, concrete and meaningful measures to—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, my answer to that is that it is nowhere near enough, given the accumulation of wealth we are seeing, a kind of accumulation we have not seen before in our country.

Let us turn to the climate crisis. Canadians expected leadership from the government, but they have been sorely disappointed. The government has instead offloaded its climate transition plan onto our tax code, preferring to line the pockets of wealthy CEOs by investing \$80 billion in tax credits for the ultra-wealthy.

How can the minister guarantee that the tax credits will actually go to decarbonization?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I have to say I am surprised to hear the tax credits being attacked by the member opposite. They are strongly supported by our union colleagues, with whom we consulted extensively in the design of these tax credits, and these tax credits are going to do a double job. They are going to help build a clean economy in Canada, and they are going to help create good-paying, middle-class jobs.

Business of Supply

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, turning to the so-called multi-lateral action that the government is a fan of, the Liberal government guaranteed that the global minimum tax would come into effect by 2024, yet it has not even begun to start the process that would implement a tax on multinational profits in every country where they are made, continuing a long tradition by the Liberal Party of coddling large multinational corporations.

Can the government guarantee that there will be a minimum tax on international corporations by 2024?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, absolutely. We were clear about that in the budget. I believe the member opposite is referring to OECD pillar two and we were very clear in the budget that we will be implementing pillar two.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, yes, I am referring to pillar two. I am wondering how the minister could guarantee a movement in 2024 when no public agreements and timelines committed to so far have actually been met.

How is Canada going to move forward in 2024 when nothing that should have been done by now has been done?

• (2310)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, that is simply inaccurate. The pillar two agreement came together recently. Canada was at the table as it came together. Canada is fully committed to implementing that and we are working very closely with our international partners, including in the EU on the implementation. It is a priority for us.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, quickly speaking of what others are doing, the U.S. passed a book profit tax as part of its Inflation Reduction Act that is already generating revenue. If Canada had a 15% minimum tax on book profits in 2021, it would have generated \$1.4 billion in revenue annually.

Why is the government dragging behind the U.S. and letting corporations get out of paying their fair share of taxes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I actually believe that Canada is ahead of the U.S. in many crucial respects, certainly when it comes to a price on pollution, certainly when it comes to our tax on share buybacks where our level is higher and President Biden has said he regrets setting his level as low as he has done.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Chair, my riding, as I mentioned, has consistently had one of the highest child poverty rates in the country. Why will the government not make COVID-era benefits permanent, which would make poverty history?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, we are proud to be the government that lifted 435,000 Canadian children out of poverty. There is more work to do and we are committed to doing it.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Chair, I thank the Minister of Finance for being here. It is an exercise that not many people know about, but it is very interesting for parliamentarians on both sides of the House.

My first question is the following. Recently, I met with people from ACFAS who were concerned about the fact that scholarships

for post-graduate students at the master's and doctoral level had not been indexed since 2003. That is 20 years.

Her government brags about being the government of excellence, innovation and competitiveness, so why was there no indexing in the minister's recent budget?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, that is an excellent question. Support for students is a priority for our government. We have already done a lot.

However, the member across the way raises an important question. We are in the process of looking at and discussing this important issue, including with the universities and the students.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Chair, I hope that will result in action on that front. I believe that students deserve better than what they are getting at this time.

Let us talk about the issue of housing, which is perhaps what most concerns the people I represent in my riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. Many people are waiting for social housing. Social housing is the best way to reduce the cost of rent and to lift people out of poverty.

Does the Minister of Finance know how many people in Quebec are on the waiting list for social housing?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I agree that housing is perhaps the main concern among voters. That issue is raised the most.

Our government has already made large investments, which are being rolled out. For example, the housing accelerator fund, which was implemented this spring and which will have—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Chair, speaking of implementation, I would like to ask a question about the national housing strategy, which was established by the Liberals after a Liberal government stopped investing in affordable social housing in 1994.

How many housing units were built as part of the national housing strategy in 2022?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, everyone understands that the COVID-19 period was an unusual period for all aspects of the economy, but I want to mention an important part of our housing plan that was also mentioned by my colleague from Milton, and that is support for co-operatives.

Business of Supply

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Chair, the answer is that we do not know. We do not know how many housing units were built under the national housing strategy. The housing advocate appointed by the Liberal government told us in her last report that there are no numbers. Meanwhile, in Quebec, 37,000 people are waiting for social housing, including 23,700 in Montreal alone.

Is the Minister of Finance prepared to commit to requiring federal land, such as the Peel Basin in Montreal, to be used only for building social housing in urban areas?

• (2315)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, our government understands the importance of building social housing. We understand the importance of building housing, full stop. We understand that the biggest need in Canada today is that there is not enough housing for all Canadians.

We will support every measure to encourage more housing construction.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Chair, in that case, I hope we will see more money for the national housing strategy, because right now, it is not delivering results, and people in urban and rural areas are suffering.

For the first time, the Canada Revenue Agency calculated the tax gap, meaning the difference between the amount of tax that individuals and businesses should be paying and the amount of tax that is actually received. This comes from the Canada Revenue Agency.

I would like to ask the minister what the tax gap is in Canada.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I stated in my discussion with our colleague from Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, it is very important to our government that all Canadians pay their fair share. Of course the wealthiest must pay their fair share. Our government has put in place many measures to accomplish that, and we are proud of it.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Chair, I am not sure there is anything to be proud of when the Canada Revenue Agency tells us that the tax gap is between \$18 billion and \$23 billion. That is the

amount that we collectively lost last year. That means we should be able to afford public universal pharmacare insurance. We should be able to pay for everyone's dental care. We should be able to reform employment insurance.

Why are the Liberals dragging their feet again when it is time to make the ultrarich and big business pay instead of sending their money to tax havens?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, I disagree. Our government has done a lot to close tax loopholes, and I would include budget 2023 in that. This is work that we need to continue to do, but we have already done a lot. We are absolutely convinced that this is necessary and we will continue to do that work.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Chair, I have one last question.

We are seeing absolutely obscene wealth gaps in our society. Mr. Weston, the owner or CEO of Loblaw, earns 431 times the average salary of his own employees. We in the NDP have a proposal to cap it at 50 times the average employee's salary.

Are the Liberals prepared to listen to our proposal to limit the wealth gap between employers and employees?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Madam Chair, as I have already said, it is important to us that everyone pay their fair share. We have introduced a number of measures to ensure just that. Poverty and inequality are also important issues for us, as is economic growth. Our government is targeting all of these issues.

The Deputy Chair: It being 11:19 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Thursday, May 18, and Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported and the committee will now rise.

• (2320)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:20 p.m.)

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