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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 1, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

AWARDING OF CONTRACT TO BOEING

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, during question period in recent weeks, the Bloc Québécois has been asking the government about the awarding of a contract to replace the Aurora aircraft without a call for tenders.

On November 24, I myself was told by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence that a decision had not yet been made. In answer to the first question that I asked on November 24, the parliamentary secretary said, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. We need to replace the CP-140 Aurora patrol aircraft. However, we need to replace them with something that will serve the operational capability of the armed forces. No decision has been made yet.

The parliamentary secretary's second answer was even more specific. She said, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear today. No decision has been made.

A few days later, on November 28, in answer to my questions, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement said, and I quote:

...I thank our colleague for acknowledging the expertise of aerospace workers not only in Quebec, but also in Canada. That is why the decision we will soon be making is an important one...

Given the responses from the minister and the parliamentary secretary, it seems clear that we were meant to believe that the government was still examining the issue and that the Privy Council had not yet decided to award Boeing the contract without a call for tenders.

However, a day later, in an article in *La Presse* published on November 29, we learned that the government had made its decision. The article was entitled “Ottawa set to award sole-source contract to Boeing”. This article also stated that *La Presse* had been informed by government and aerospace industry sources that the decision had, in fact, already been made by the government the week before, that is, prior to when we were told that it had not yet been made.

If we look at the calendar, this means that the government made its decision between Monday, November 20 and Friday, November 24. From this information, it is clear that, by the time the answers were provided by the minister on November 28 and the parliamentary secretary on November 24, the decision had already been made to choose Boeing without a competition.

The government's answers to the Bloc Québécois's questions were therefore incorrect and had the effect of misleading the House. I also submit that the House was not alone in being misled. The entire aerospace industry was also misled, including industry stakeholders in Quebec, which are closely monitoring this matter and demanding that a request for proposals be issued so that all companies get a chance to compete and submit better proposals to the government. The government led them to believe that a decision had not been made when it knew this was not the case.

I should point out that the Minister of Public Services and Procurement cannot claim in his defence that he was unaware that the decision to favour Boeing and avoid a request for proposals had already made, since he, as minister, is directly involved in the government's procurement process.

Madam Speaker, I should also inform you that on November 9, the Standing Committee on National Defence completed a report that was tabled in the House on November 24, calling for the government to issue a request for proposals. The report reads:

That, considering the joint statement of the respective Premiers of Quebec and Ontario dated November 7, 2023, concerning the public procurement of the CP-140 Aurora replacement by the federal government, the committee is of the opinion that the government must proceed by way of a formal request for proposals before awarding any procurement contract of the new Canadian multi-mission aircraft.

I would like to point out that the Liberals all voted in favour of this motion at the Standing Committee on National Defence.

Madam Speaker, we are therefore appealing to your informed judgment and to those same democratic rules that must always form the cornerstone of everyone's parliamentary work.

In conclusion, it appears that the government's answers were inaccurate and had the effect of not only misleading the House, but also calling into question the veracity of the answers obtained in response to questions asked in the House. The government has an obligation to set the record straight for Quebecers and Canadians.

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The hope raised by the government's answers, which indicated that the decision had not yet been made, contributed to the discontent felt by everyone in the Quebec and Canadian aerospace industry when they learned that the decision had in fact already been made by that time.

• (1010)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for raising this question of privilege. The Chair will come back to the House with a ruling as soon as possible.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 31—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-50

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.) moved:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-50, An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy, shall be disposed of as follows:

- (a) during the consideration of the bill by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources,
 - (i) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for the committee meetings,
 - (ii) all amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 4:00 p.m. on the sitting day following the adoption of this motion,
 - (iii) amendments filed by independent members shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill,
 - (iv) the committee shall meet at 6:30 p.m. on the second sitting day following the adoption of this motion to consider the bill at clause-by-clause, and if the committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by 8:30 p.m., all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively without further debate on all remaining clauses and amendments submitted to the committee as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, and the committee shall not adjourn the meeting until it has disposed of the bill,
 - (v) a member of the committee may report the bill to the House by depositing it with the Clerk of the House, who shall notify the House leaders of the recognized parties and independent members, and if the House stands adjourned, the report shall be deemed to have been duly presented to the House during the previous sitting for the purpose of Standing Order 76.1(1);
- (b) not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the bill at report stage, and 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders that day, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and, if a recorded division is requested, the vote shall not be deferred; and
- (c) not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the bill at the third reading stage and 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders that day, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and, if a recorded division is requested, the vote shall not be deferred.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of En-

ergy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. In this capacity I hold a responsibility to ensure the advancement of our legislative agenda in vital areas of public policy, including the future of our energy system.

I stand here today to provide an update on the status of Parliament's review of two very important bills, Bill C-50, Canada's sustainable jobs act, which this motion specifically addresses, and Bill C-49, amendments to the Atlantic accords.

Both of these vital pieces of legislation passed through second reading and were referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources well over a month ago. Parliamentary committees have a responsibility to Canadians to prioritize the laws that are put before them and to review these pieces of legislation. This is a principle of responsibility of members on committee, and I believe that is well understood by every member in this House.

However, I regret to inform the House that after being at the natural resources committee for over a month, with more than 20 hours of scheduled and publicly available meeting time, the committee on which I am proud to serve has been ground to a standstill by Conservative members who are deliberately blocking the work of the committee. We have not even reached a vote yet on a routine scheduling motion to put the study of this bill in place.

Let me set the stage. On October 30, a member of the committee brought a motion for a concurrence study of Bill C-50, the sustainable jobs act, and Bill C-49, the Atlantic accords act. This was a routine scheduling motion that would simply allow these pieces of legislation to be discussed and examined in a manner expected of elected officials.

Conservative members sought an amendment to that scheduling motion to add another area of study that was not a review of these bills and was designed to delay the bills that were before the committee for as long as possible. Not only that, they proceeded to stop votes on this motion via filibuster and then resorted to bringing subamendments to call witnesses from specific ridings. To date, our committee remains stuck because of Conservative obstruction. We are on the consideration of the subamendments, with no progress to getting to a decision on the scheduling motion for the concurrence study of these bills.

We are stuck in a scary pre-Halloween world. The Conservative Party continues to waste taxpayer resources with pointless interventions, unrelated amendments and nonsensical ramblings designed to block these bills from being discussed and from allowing workers to have a seat at the table.

For instance, the member of Parliament for Provencher wasted time discussing the challenges of drinking a triple-thick strawberry milkshake through a straw and about his love of muscle cars, including the Chevrolet Vega. I love the Vega. My grandmother had a Vega. That's a great conversation topic at a family table, but that is not on topic at all for something related to the bill, the sustainable jobs act, or the amendment they had proposed to that scheduling motion or the subamendment about calling witnesses from specific ridings. It was just a self-indulgent ramble to waste the committee's time.

The member of Parliament for Red Deer—Mountain View went on a tangent undermining the science of climate change and denying that extreme weather events like hurricanes, floods and wildfires are increasing in severity and frequency. I would expect better from a member of Parliament whose own community was blanketed in wildfire smoke this summer and faced severe drought.

The Conservative members were disrespectful, played childish games and did all that they could to ensure the voices of workers were silenced. If most Canadians had been able to watch this display of unpleasant and frankly unparliamentary behaviour, workers would have seen the disregard the members of the Conservative Party showed toward them. They would have been appalled.

Some Canadians were watching. A member of the natural resources committee explained that this horrible and shameless filibuster was being taught in university as an example of how parliamentary process can be undermined. Labour leaders also came to Ottawa to watch these proceedings, and they were not just shocked but outraged by what they saw.

• (1015)

After seeing the Conservatives resort to whatever tricks and conspiracy theories they could think of to block workers from coming to the table, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour said, "What we saw...in the committee meeting last night is the worst kind of performative, deceptive politics.... The Conservative members of the committee...are counting on Canadians not [reading the bill]".

The president of the Canadian Labour Congress, also in response to this horrible display, said, "By holding up this bill continuously, the Conservatives are not speaking for workers on this issue. They are not making sure workers have a choice or ability to have robust debate as they are holding up this bill. It is incredibly frustrating, it is disrespectful to workers who are worried about their futures and it is disrespectful to communities. We need it to stop."

It gives me no pleasure to recount all this and what we have seen in terms of the time and taxpayer dollars, frankly, being wasted by the members of the Conservative Party in this nonsensical campaign of obstruction.

The scheduling motion, which we have been blocked from adopting for over a month, would have allowed for the efficient review of both bills, Bill C-50 and Bill C-49, in a concurrent manner, allowing for orderly witness appearances and deliberation.

Unfortunately, here we are today, left with a Conservative Party that has ignored the pleas of workers, labour leaders, industry, envi-

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ronmental organizations, two premiers and all the other recognized parties in the House. They have asked the Conservatives to end the filibuster and allow these bills to at least be discussed. The motion we are debating today is the only option available to ensure that this important legislation moves forward in a reasonable and timely manner.

Before I return to the challenges faced in the natural resources committee, I will first remind the hon. members of what this legislation means for Canada and our future. Bill C-50, the Canadian sustainable jobs act, is critical to Canadian workers, to our economy and to Canada's future.

I wonder what part of this bill is so egregious to Conservatives that they would not even be willing to allow us to begin the study at committee. That is where we are at. Is it the "Canadian" part of the Canadian sustainable jobs act? Bill C-50 supports Canadians in every province and territory by bringing their voices to the decision-making table.

The bill supports Canadians by ensuring that they can access the most up-to-date data, resources and staff, to help our growing clean industrial facilities. It supports Canadians, because it allows us to get ahead of the pack and ensure that skilled Canadian workers can lead as we build the future economy today.

Perhaps they are opposed to the fact that it is a Canadian "sustainable" jobs act. We certainly heard an earful at committee from the Conservative member for Red Deer—Mountain View, who described warnings of increased hurricanes, floods and wildfires, which we saw in our country just this summer, as a narrative that leads people to believe in climate change, but, as he said, "The facts don't bear it out." Based on his own statements, I do not believe that sustainability is his top priority.

Perhaps the Conservatives are opposed to the "jobs" part. We already know that they oppose and voted against the tens of thousands of jobs we are attracting to sites such as the Volkswagen gigafactory, Stellantis plants in Windsor and Brampton, Northvolt in Quebec, Michelin in Nova Scotia, Air Products and Heidelberg in Alberta, BHP in Saskatchewan, E-One Moli in B.C. and so many more.

We know that they are not just against job creation but also good-quality jobs, including union jobs. Right now, they refuse to share their stance on Bill C-58, which would ban replacement workers and ensure that unions and employers can negotiate better deals. This is a win for workers and the economy. They also refuse to condemn their Conservative provincial partners in Alberta, who are putting in place a \$33-billion moratorium on renewable energy products and the thousands of jobs they create.

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• (1020)

It seems that perhaps they oppose the Canadian sustainable jobs aspect of this legislation. I can tell members one thing that they are not opposing: the final word, which is “act”. Acting is precisely what they have been doing over the past 20 hours and, during committee work, for over a month. I would say that they have done so quite dramatically. It has been a month of acting.

They have been acting as though they care about workers, while they actively prevent the union that represents hundreds of thousands of Albertan workers from speaking on the public record. They have even been acting as though they care about due process and democracy, while they shout into microphones in committee and, for weeks on end, prevent members, such as the member for Timmins—James Bay, from speaking about the motion and the bill, when he clearly had the floor to speak.

In fact, we know that it is an act because they have almost exclusively used this filibuster to create fodder for social media clips and fundraising efforts. This is all premised on baseless assertions relating to a bill that they have clearly not begun to read or study.

It is clear that the Conservatives have no interest in serious issues of public policy and are not friends to working-class Canadians. They have deliberately worked to ensure that Parliament does not work, and they are purposely ignoring Canadian workers, communities, industries and civil society, which are calling for an end to their acting and to begin real legislative action.

That brings me, and all of us, back to today. The president of the Canadian Labour Congress acknowledged recently that there is a lot at stake here in terms of moving this bill forward. She said, “This bill can make a meaningful difference to workers. It can give a real voice to their future.... It can strengthen good jobs and vibrant communities by supporting the decarbonization of good union jobs that exist today in those communities, and it can ensure that...as the rest of the world is attracting investments in future industries and good jobs that Canadian workers are not left behind in those investments.”

[*Translation*]

This delay is preventing Parliament from conducting an in-depth study of these two important bills. Despite the Conservatives' filibustering in committee, the Liberals and others continued to work with environmental groups and experts, unions, businesses, indigenous peoples and others in order to move forward on shaping our net-zero future.

Meanwhile, the Conservative energy critic publicly committed to blocking, delaying and challenging workers to prevent them from sitting down at the bargaining table and entering the workplace. We cannot let this ideological and obstructionist attitude curb our economic potential. I would like to quote the executive director of the Climate Action Network, who said, “The Conservatives can filibuster this bill but they cannot filibuster the energy transition.”

Bill C-50, the Canadian sustainable jobs act, is an essential bill that will help Canadian workers build a prosperous economy. It also builds on the work that our committee did last year when it studied the future of sustainable jobs. During a previous study of this bill in committee, the Conservatives filibustered in dozens of meet-

ings to prevent the witnesses from speaking, because they are obviously afraid of workers being represented.

At the same time, we are taking action. That includes making historic investments in clean technologies in budget 2023 and taking collaborative action with other levels of government and international partners. This solid foundation has put our economy and Canadian workers in a position of strength that will continue to build if we pass Bill C-50.

• (1025)

[*English*]

I would like to share with the House the five key elements that make up this legislation.

First, it would use guiding principles, such as social dialogue, that let us learn from international best practices to get this right.

Second, it would establish a sustainable jobs partnership council composed of workers, industry, experts, indigenous peoples, youth and others who would provide independent advice to the government on an annual basis and engage with Canadians.

Third, it would commit to publishing action plans every five years. The plans would build on the council's expertise and ensure that Canada is able to continue to chart a path forward that responds to our labour needs in decades to come.

Fourth, it would coordinate action across the federal government through a sustainable job secretariat.

Fifth, it would designate responsibilities to ministers for implementing this legislation as a standard practice.

The other side may fearmonger and claim that, with this bill, the sky will fall and pigs will fly. However, the fact is that these are responsible and targeted legislative measures to ensure that workers have a seat at the table and that we get them on job sites that we are building right across this country. The opportunities for workers are enormous, including the opportunities that exist today.

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Since taking office, the government has invested in clean growth and building a strong economic future, and our work is being noticed around the world. Companies are choosing to invest in Canada and create jobs here, because of our very clean electrical grid and the work we are doing to support clean technologies. The Conservative delays are risking the once-in-a-generation opportunity for Canadians to take the lead in these jobs and in the innovations that will reduce carbon emissions right across this country.

By the end of this decade, RBC predicts that the global move toward a low-carbon economy will add as many as 400,000 new jobs to the Canadian workforce. To best seize this opportunity, we need legislation that helps us to get the right skills and training to workers today, which Bill C-50 will do. Workers, labour market experts and employers have been clear, and so has this Parliament when we sent Bill C-50 to committee to be studied. Because of the Conservative tactics at committee, we have not been able to do this.

When we talk about the job opportunities, I also want to make sure we remember that some of these jobs are going to be due to offshore wind energy, which Bill C-49 was designed to facilitate. The delays we have faced at the natural resources committee have prevented us from doing the concurrent studies of Bill C-50 and Bill C-49, at the very moment when we are being told by Atlantic premiers and residents that they want to see this move forward. Let us not forget that the motion Conservatives have been delaying for over a month was one to concurrently review Bill C-49 and Bill C-50, allow witnesses to appear and allow the committee to make the most efficient use of parliamentary time. The witnesses would have appeared by now.

I want to make it very clear that we have an important choice to make today. On the one hand, we can choose, as Conservatives have, to waste our time waxing poetic about the days when it was easier to sip triple-thick milkshakes through a straw and drive around in muscle cars that were not even built in Canada. On the other, we can choose what Canadians and workers want. We can work to build an economy for the future that includes having workers at the table as we decide those next steps. We can build cars here in Canada, with skilled jobs, skilled workers and investments that are being made right here. We have that opportunity to be creating well-paying jobs that are, often, union jobs. It can be about developing the energies the world wants, such as offshore wind in the Atlantic provinces, in Canada. That is going to be the energy that powers our future and creates well-paying jobs.

To me, as I stand here, the Liberals have made this choice very clear: We are rolling up our sleeves to stand alongside Canadian workers and build that economy of the future. We are ready to build an economy that is responsive and has those opportunities put forward.

● (1030)

What the Conservatives have clearly chosen, from what we are seeing at committee, is to spend their time talking about themselves and not talking about Canadian workers and the needs of our country. That is why, today, I am asking the House to support the motion that has been put forward to allow the legislation to move forward and to do the work we need to do. It is important for the House to respect what it has voted upon in prioritizing the legislation to be

sent to committee to be studied. It is also about respecting Canadian workers and respecting what Canadians expect to see us do in this place. I would ask that we continue to work together towards that.

[*Translation*]

Canadians want us to claim our share of the global clean energy market, and the hundreds of thousands of high-quality, sustainable jobs that will result.

[*English*]

Parliament has a duty to study and to advance these two vital pieces of legislation. We cannot allow ourselves to sit back and allow rage farming and social media clips to be happening at committee. We need to do the work that Canadians sent us here to do. I stand here today asking that this be exactly what we work together to have done. That is why the motion we are discussing today would enable an expeditious review of the much shorter Bill C-50, the sustainable jobs bill. Then, it would allow for the committee to review Bill C-49 afterwards.

I would remind the House that we have been debating a scheduling motion, actually not even a scheduling motion but a subamendment to an amendment to a scheduling motion, for over a month. Since October 30, we have been debating that simple point. We have not been allowed to study the bill.

The Conservatives have points they want to register about the bill itself. The place to have done it would have been in the study of the bill. However, the Conservatives chose otherwise. They chose to filibuster a scheduling motion. That is not how we get work done here. It is not respectful to the process, to each other, or to Canadians and the workers who sent us here to get the job done. That is what we are asking today: Let us get the job done. Let us make sure that we do what Canadians sent us here to do. Let us get to studying the bill we have before us, Bill C-50, the sustainable jobs bill.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, what does the member have to say to the 92% of Canadian oil and gas companies that have 100 employees or fewer, and the 60-some per cent that are considered micro-businesses with five or fewer employees, none of whom are union workers and none of whom Bill C-50 contemplates?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I am saying that I want to hear from them in committee as we work on this important bill.

It is the Conservatives who are refusing to allow us to have witnesses come to study the bill. Instead, they have chosen, during the past month and more, to talk about sipping milkshakes, about muscle cars and about whatever else has come to their minds, including literally hundreds of points of order as to who could speak next. If we really cared about hearing from all of those industries, all of those workers, we would move to the study.

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● (1035)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I understand what is going on in committee. However, I would like to come back to the title of the bill. I imagine that it could perhaps be amended in committee if the work were to be done.

I would like to point out that even the Paris Agreement talks about a just transition, and that is the term that is used at all levels, internationally. I would like to come back to the substance of the bill. Why does this bill not include the internationally recognized term “just transition” in its title?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I am really glad the member asked that question, because sustainable jobs are really important for our economy. With this bill, we want to support workers so we can create those sustainable jobs of tomorrow.

This bill has everything we need to make sure that workers have a seat at the table as we discuss how we are going to participate in a changing global economy. With this bill, we are listening to workers.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, over the last year, with respect to issues regarding the energy transition that is happening, we heard from 130 witnesses over 120 hours of hearings. There have been 45,000 job losses in the oil patch, with 1,500 this year and many more coming. When workers came to talk about the right that they should have to be at the table, the Conservatives shut them down every single time. They shut down Unifor, the Canadian Labour Congress, the IBEW and the Carpenters Union. When we brought the coal workers, who have experience in the transition that happened in Alberta, there was not a single question from any Alberta member, yet they sat there and bragged about their muscle cars from the 1970s; let us talk about entitlement and boomer disconnect. As our planet is burning and our workers have been begging for and demanding a right to sit at the table, the Conservatives are playing these games.

What has it been like for my colleague to have to watch such toxic, juvenile, immature behaviour undermining the right of workers to be heard in the energy transition that is happening?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, the question is so important because what it touches upon is the fact that we have not had the opportunity to hear from the very workers who have such an important place in the Canadian economy. It has been incredibly frustrating. The president of the Canadian Labour Congress said, “To not pass this legislation is to basically tell workers to take a back seat, and that is not good enough”. I could not agree with her more.

Instead, Conservatives have been talking about themselves. What we should be doing at committee, what I and other committee members other than the Conservatives want to be doing at committee, is to be focusing on Canadians and on Canadian workers. That is what we need to do.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary completely avoided answering the question from the member for Lakeland, demonstrating that the bill

would not actually impact the workers most affected by the unjust transition act. I know she wants to avoid saying that. The member from the Bloc directly asked the parliamentary secretary why it is that the legislation is not called by what it would actually do, which is unjustly transition workers out of the jobs they have worked in for generations, in many cases.

The parliamentary secretary also avoided answering another part of the member for Lakeland's question, which was about the fact that the subamendment being proposed at committee is to invite witnesses from companies and people directly affected from worker-held businesses and small businesses, who are not even talked about directly in the legislation. They are people who work in energy and in oil and gas, and, again, who contribute to the shared prosperity of this country.

Why is the parliamentary secretary avoiding answering these types of questions? Why is she focused only on procedural matters? I will remind her that at the industry committee right now, her own members are filibustering.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I am focused on making sure we listen to workers and to Canadians as we move forward. It has been very clear: If the Conservatives cared about making sure these different perspectives are being heard when we consider the legislation, they would have allowed for voting on the scheduling motion. They have not allowed us to vote on a scheduling motion, so we are stuck in that scary pre-Halloween world where we are still debating strawberry milkshake straws.

If the member opposite actually cares about hearing from other workers, I would point out that the president of the Business Council of Alberta said that “[t]he Sustainable Jobs Act represents an important opportunity for Canada to shape our future and create jobs by providing the resources that the world needs—including energy, food and minerals.” That is from Alberta businesses. They actually care about the sustainable jobs act.

● (1040)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the hard work she did on the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to introduce an important bill in the House and invite witnesses.

I will ask my question in French because I know that the Conservatives have a tough time with French. They did the same thing during our consideration of Bill C-13. Two anglophone members from western Canada called bilingualism into question.

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Earlier, we heard someone say that the unions did not come give evidence before the committee and were forced to hold press conferences instead because the Conservatives are blocking discussions in committee. The Conservative Party is against Stellantis jobs, against Northvolt jobs and against this bill.

What is going on with the Conservatives?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I do not know what the official opposition is thinking. I have no clue. I do not know why the Conservatives consider it more important to talk about the cars they bought way back when, cars that were not even built here in Canada. They do not want to talk about how we can make plans to attract more investment so that we can build cars and all their parts too.

Why do they not want to talk about it? I do not know. They are more interested in talking about the past, before we had all these industries.

Opportunity is knocking and we have to answer.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, regarding the 1% of Canadian oil and gas companies that have 500 or more employees, and the fact that it is traditional oil and gas pipeline and oil sands companies in Alberta that are currently leading the creation of new union jobs in Canada, what does she have to say to all of them when the aim of the just transition, just like the Bloc member rightly pointed out the NDP-Liberals are trying to hide, is to shut down oil and gas in Canada as quickly as possible? What does she say to all the union workers in Canadian oil and gas companies in Alberta, where new jobs are being created at the highest rate of any company or sector in any place in the country, who are also going to lose all their jobs immediately because of the just transition agenda?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, once again, I will listen to the workers who are talking about the bill. The president of the Alberta Federation of Labour said, “what the Conservatives are saying in those committees hearings and what they're saying on social media is that this bill...is a blueprint for phasing out oil and gas...but nothing could be further from the truth.” He represents the workers on the ground.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was a spectacle. I would suggest that, if the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources cannot understand the connection between plastic straws and fuels for vehicles that Canadians like and want to drive, then that says all we need to know about the Liberals' understanding of oil and gas development and how this all works in Canada and the world. Does it not?

Make no mistake, today is a dark day for Canada's democracy. Unfortunately, these darks days are increasingly frequent under the NDP-Liberal coalition government. After eight years, I, like a growing number of Canadians, cannot help but reflect on how far away, quiet, dim and so obviously empty the promises of sunny days were. There were promises of sunlight being the best disinfectant, of being open by default, and of collaboration with other parties, provinces and all Canadians, no matter where they live or who they are.

The truth is that, after eight years, the Information Commissioner says transparency is not a top priority for the NDP-Liberal government. She says that systems for transparency have declined steadily since the Prime Minister took office in 2015 and that the government is the most opaque government ever. She sounded ever-increasing alarms about the closed-by-default reality of the NDP-Liberal government over the last couple of years.

Back in 2017, an audit done independently by a Halifax journalist and his team for News Media Canada, which represents more than 800 print and digital titles, pointed out that the Liberals were failing in breaking their promises and that the previous Conservative government had been more responsive, open and transparent, including during the latter majority years. Everyone can remember when the now Prime Minister made a lot of verifiably baseless claims. Today, the NDP-Liberals want to ram through a bill that their own internal briefings warn would kill 170,000 Canadian oil and gas jobs and hurt the jobs of 2.7 million other Canadians employed in other sectors in every corner of this country. I will say more on that later.

Canadians deserve to know what transparency has to do with this. I will explain, but first, members must also know this: The motion the NDP-Liberals have forced us all to debate today, with as little time as possible, is extraordinary. It is a measure usually invoked only for emergencies, and to be clear, it was used twice in nine years of the former Conservative government, but it is happening almost every other day with the NDP-Liberals.

Now, I will give the background. Last week, Conservatives and so many horrified Canadians challenged the Liberals on their approach to crime, being hard on victims and soft on criminals, which, at the time, was made obvious by the decision to send Paul Bernardo to a medium-security prison. As usual, the Liberals claimed to be bystanders that day, as they do with almost all things happening in the Government of Canada, which they have been ruling over eight long years. The minister responsible really had nothing to do with it. He was removed from that position in late July, so evidently, someone over there thought he was. However, I digress.

To change the channel during the last weeks of that session, the Liberals dumped a number of bills in the House of Commons with promises to those they impacted, which they must have never intended to keep, including Bill C-53 about recognizing Métis people, which they put forward on the last sitting day of the session. They told people it would be all done at once, a claim they had no business to make, and they knew it.

Government Orders

Before that, on May 30, the Liberals introduced Bill C-49, a bill to functionally end Atlantic offshore oil and to establish a framework for offshore renewable development that, get this, would triple the already endless NDP-Liberal timelines. There would also be uncertainty around offshore renewable project assessments and approvals. The bill would invite court challenges on the allowable anti-development zones and the potential delegation of indigenous consultation to the regulators, which has been drafted, never mind the 33 references to Bill C-69, which the Supreme Court said nearly two months ago was largely unconstitutional over the last half decade.

That claim may end up to be okay in the context of offshore development, but surely we can be forgiven for refusing to just trust them this time, since both the Supreme Court and the Federal Court have recently ruled against the NDP-Liberal government and affirmed every single jurisdictional point that Conservatives and I made about both Bill C-69 and their ridiculous top-down, plastics-as-toxins decree.

On May 30, there was no debate on Bill C-49. The NDP-Liberals brought it back to the House of Commons on September 19. They permitted a total of 8.5 hours of debate over two partial days. It is important for Canadians to know that the government, not the official opposition, controls every aspect of the scheduling of all bills and motions in the House of Commons. The government did not put Bill C-49 back on the agenda to allow MPs to speak to it on behalf of the constituents the bill would impact exclusively, such as, for example, every single MP from every party represented in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Instead, a month later, within two days, the NDP-Liberals brought forward a motion to shut down debate and send the bill to committee.

No fewer than seven Liberals and two NDP MPs argued to fast-track Bill C-49 to justify their shutdown of the debate, and they accused Conservatives of holding it up. This is about all the groups and people who must be heard. This is important because of what they then proposed at committee, which was not a concurrence study, as the parliamentary secretary claimed today.

- (1045)

When it comes to the last-minute name change to Bill C-50, which is still the globally planned just transition no matter what the NDP-Liberals spin to Canadians now. The Liberals first announced plans to legislate this in July 2021.

They introduced Bill C-50 with no debate on June 15, just a week before MPs headed to work in our ridings until September. They brought in Bill C-50 on September 29. They permitted only 7.5 hours of total debate over two months, and about a month later, over two days, shut it down and sent it to committee.

Bill C-50, which represents the last step and the final solution in the anti-energy, anti-development agenda that has been promoted internationally and incrementally imposed by the NDP-Liberals in Canada, and which they know would damage millions of Canadian workers in energy, agriculture, construction, transportation and manufacturing, just as their internal memos show it, was rammed through the first stages in a total of three business days.

Government bills go to committee and are prioritized over everything else. At committee, MPs analyze the details of the bills, line by line, and also, most importantly, hear from Canadians about the intended, and sometimes even more imperative unintended, consequences. They then propose and debate changes to improve it before it goes back to the House of Commons for more debate and comments from MPs on behalf of the diverse people in the communities we represent across this big country. That is literally Canadian democracy.

However, on October 30, the Liberals brought in a detailed top-down scheduling motion for the natural resources committee and changed the order of the bills to be considered, which was not concurrent. Their motion was to deal with Bill C-50, the just transition, first. This was a reversal of the way they brought them in. They also shut down debate on each, delaying Bill C-49, the Atlantic offshore bill they said they wanted to fast-track, even though they actually control every part of the agenda themselves.

Their motion limited the time to hear from witnesses to only four meetings, and there were four meetings to go through each line and propose changes, but they limited each of those meetings to three hours each for both bills.

On behalf of Conservatives, I proposed an amendment that would help MPs on the natural resources committee do our due diligence on Bill C-49 to send it to the next stages first, exactly as the NDP-Liberals said they wanted to do. I proposed that the committee would have to deal with the problem of the half decade old law Bill C-69, which was found to be unconstitutional two weeks earlier, because so many of its sections are in Bill C-49, and then move to Bill C-50, the just transition.

Conservatives have always said that both of these bills are important with disproportionate impacts in certain communities and regions, but ultimately very consequential for all Canadians. The NDP-Liberals had the temerity to say, that day and since, that they wanted to collaborate on the schedule, as we heard here today, and work together to pass these bills.

Government Orders

Let us talk about what that actually looked like. It looked like a dictatorial scheduling motion to the committee with no real consideration of the proposed schedule by Conservatives, and then there was a preoccupation to silence Conservative MPs' participation. They even suggested kicking a couple of them out, such as the MP for Peace River—Westlock and the MP for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who, like me and every Conservative Alberta MP, represent the hundreds of thousands of constituents that Bill C-50 would harm directly. They do have a right to speak and participate at any committee, like it is in all committees for all MPs and all parties here. Believe me, we have spent every single day fighting for workers, and we will not stop.

For an entire month, as of yesterday, the NDP-Liberals have claimed that they want to collaborate on the schedule for this important work, but other than a text message from the natural resources parliamentary secretary, which received no response when I replied with the very same suggestions Conservatives proposed in public and otherwise, and ironically, in the very order that they rammed it all through, they really have not dealt with us in any measure of collaboration or good faith at all.

I guess now would be an awkward time to put a fine point on it to remind the ever-increasing top-down NDP-Liberal government that Canadians actually gave Conservatives more votes individually in both of the last two elections, and they are a minority government, which most people hope or claim means more compromises and more collaboration. However, these NDP-Liberals do the exact opposite. Whatever happened to all those words long ago about respecting everyone, inclusion and working together? I guess we can never mind that.

That brings us to today, Friday, December 1. Close to midnight on Wednesday, Conservatives received notice of this motion. As usual, there is a lot of parliamentary procedure and legalese here, but I will explain exactly what it proposes to do about Bill C-50.

● (1050)

The motion would limit Bill C-50 to less than two hours of debate. The committee would hear no witnesses, so none of the affected workers, experts or economists would be heard. The committee would not hear from anybody. MPs would only have one day to review the bill at report stage and one day of debate at third reading. Given that debate at second reading was limited to less than eight hours, this is absolutely unacceptable for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians whose livelihoods this bill would destroy.

I want to make the following point clearly. Because of the NDP-Liberals' actions to date, no Canadian would be able to speak about the actual bill, Bill C-50. No MP would be able to hear from any Canadian in any part of the country about it. Of course, this is just like the Liberals' censorship of Canadian media, and now they are all howling that we have to communicate directly on the only option they have left us.

This bill would impact Canada and the livelihoods of millions of Canadians. As if the NDP-Liberals have not done enough damage already by driving hundreds of billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs out of this country. They definitely do not want to hear from anyone about it. It is bad enough that they did a last-minute copy-and-paste job to switch all the references from “just

transition” to “sustainable jobs”, even though no one had actually ever called it that before.

There was a National Post column in February entitled, “Most Canadians don't trust Liberals' plan for 'just transition' away from oil: poll”. The column says, “84 per cent of Canadians do not know what the 'just transition' plan actually is.” It also states, “40 per cent believe it will hurt the oil and gas sector; 36 per cent believe it will lead to lost jobs,” and, “Fifty-six per cent of Canadians are 'not confident' the government will be able to deliver, and 26 per cent of those people are 'not at all confident'.”

The article says, “About one quarter...of Canadians think the government is moving too fast to transition Canada's economy,” which is what this is really all about. About 60 per cent of Canadians “don't want to pay any additional taxes to support the transition and just 14 per cent were willing to pay one or two per cent more.” That is bad news for those who are pro quadrupling the carbon tax in the NDP-Liberal-Bloc coalition.

The article continues, “57 per cent of Canadians worry about the impact of lost tax revenue to governments should the economy transition away from natural resources. And 40 per cent believe that the plan to transition away from fossil fuels will make Canada less competitive in the global economy.” A whopping “60 per cent of all Canadians think we shouldn't make major changes before larger global polluters make serious efforts to reduce carbon emissions”. Of course, and luckily, common-sense Conservatives agree with all of those Canadians.

For the record, I believe all of those Canadians will be proven to be correct if Canadians let the NDP-Liberals advance the rest of this destructive agenda, but I am hopeful more Canadians than ever will see right through the Liberals now and will have a chance to stop it. It does look like it will come down to that since, despite all the NDP-Liberals' big talk, they really are not interested in adjusting their anti-energy agenda at all. They are only interested in escalating it to what would be more major costs and more brutal losses for the vast majority of everyday Canadians, whom they prove everyday they do not really care about.

Canadians can stop this attack on our country from our own government, this attack on our standard of living, our quality of life and our ability to buy and thrive here in our Canadian home. However, because of the NDP propping up the Liberals, Canadians have no choice, but they will have to deal with it in the next election. Luckily, they have a common-sense Conservative Party that is ready and able to bring our great home, our country of Canada, back up and away from this cliff.

Statements by Members

The NDP has abandoned its traditional, and often admirable, position of being a principled and plucky opposition party because it cries outrage everyday while it props up the Liberals, apparently with the co-operation of the Bloc now too, to keep them in power and to prevent Canadians from having a say in an election sooner than later. The NDP-Liberals are clearly parties of power at any price now, so it is logical to conclude that the truth-telling Canadians featured the February column about the polls on the just transition are exactly what caused the crass and obviously last-minute name change to cover up the facts and try to fool Canadians that Bill C-50 is not exactly what they fear and exactly what they do not trust the government to do. That is with good cause, after eight years, but it is the just transition.

I would also mention here that Alberta NDP leader, Rachel Notley, has also called on the NDP-Liberals to scrap this just transition plan, but they are not listening to her either, even though the NDP's federal and provincial parties are formally related, unlike, for example, the federal common-sense Conservatives, which is a federal party in its own right with no official ties with any similar free enterprise Conservative provincial parties.

• (1055)

The NDP-Liberals will say that this is all much ado about nothing. They will say, as the member did, that it went through committee last year. Of course, the bill itself absolutely did not. It was a study on the general concept.

I must note that, between April and September, we had 64 witnesses and 23 written submissions, and not a single witness, except for one lonely government witness at the very end, ever called them “sustainable jobs”. They all said “just transition”. However, the NDP-Liberals announced the Bill C-50 just transition before the committee even issued its report and recommendations, so that was all a bad charade too.

It is ridiculous that they are claiming this is not about what it plainly is, because of course, if there was no plan to kill hundreds of thousands of jobs and disrupt millions more, there would be no need for anything called a “transition” at all.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

HIV AND AIDS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today is World AIDS Day. This is a global moment to unite people in the fight against HIV and AIDS. World AIDS Day exists to shine a light on the real experiences of people living with HIV today, while celebrating the strength, resilience and diversity of the communities most affected. It is a moment to inspire the leadership needed to create a future where HIV does not stand in the way of anyone's life.

I am glad Canada is investing in global health, including funding for AIDS and education, and has other important global investments. Investments in the global fund and working with grassroots

communities through organizations like One Canada are foundational to ending AIDS. Canada has made a 10-year commitment to increase funding for sexually transmitted disease control, including HIV and AIDS.

* * *

JENN SCHOTT

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart. Kenora's Jenn Schott passed away on November 26 at the age of 51 after a courageous battle with cancer. She was well known as an early childhood educator and operator of they Coney Island Snack Shack, where I spent the better part of my summers growing up. However, she was so much more. She was a volunteer for almost everything, and her joy and positivity went unmatched. She spread it everywhere she went.

I was grateful for the chance to visit with her last week, and true to form, she offered some wise words of encouragement. Jenn's message was that we should be kind to one another and always try our best because we can move mountains. She added with a smile that ECEs should be paid more.

She will be dearly missed by our entire community, as was evident by the over 1,000 residents who joined a light tribute in her honour along the harbourfront. My thoughts are with her husband Doug, her daughters Skye and Starr and all of her loved ones during this very difficult time.

* * *

MASKWA AQUATIC CLUB

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Maskwa Aquatic Club, which in September won the national Sprint Canoe Kayak Championships for the third time and the Canadian masters championship for the first time in the club's history. Also, at nationals, every Maskwa para-athlete finished on the podium. This national success came on top of Maskwa athletes winning Atlantic championships in every age level. It has been one of the most successful seasons for a paddling club in Canadian history. For decades, Maskwa, located on beautiful Kearney Lake in Halifax West, has offered programming for all ages and caters to a wide range of abilities.

I want to offer my congratulations to all the athletes who competed this season, their families and supporters, and the club's coaches and staff, including head coach Christian Hall and Commodore Brian Smith. I cannot wait to join them this weekend at the club's annual awards ceremony.

Congratulations, everyone.

[Translation]

CLAUDEL PÉTRIN-DESROSIERS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the honour of being one of the spokespersons for Mothers Step In, a group of women committed to our children's future. Being a spokesperson means giving a voice to Quebec scientists on climate issues.

As COP28 gets under way today in a petro-state, I am speaking on behalf of Dr. Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers, a family doctor in Montreal and new mom-to-be. For years now, Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers has been concerned about the harmful and growing health consequences of climate change. She regularly treats people living with the consequences of our inaction, which include extreme heat, smoke from forest fires, allergies and eco-anxiety.

A member of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers works through the health care system, the media and universities to ensure that the climate crisis is properly recognized and treated as a health emergency. The scientific and economic data support that view, and climate action is an opportunity to protect and restore health.

As parliamentarians, let us take action to give our loved ones, and our future loved ones, the opportunity to live in a healthy environment.

* * *

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, despite the progress we have made, gender-based violence continues to be a problem in Canada.

According to the statistics, 44% of women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence at least once since age 15. That is unacceptable.

During the 16 days of activism, we all need to be united, men and women alike, in calling out violence against women. Women have the right to live in peace, without fear of harassment or sexual violence. Men have a duty to show our brothers, our friends, our sons how to respect women.

I want to thank organizations in my region like Interlude House and Centre Novas of Prescott-Russell for their hard work to provide women the support they need. Gender-based violence will not be solved tomorrow, but until it is eradicated, we must support these organizations that offer hope to women in abusive situations.

Let us be united in our efforts to address gender-based violence.

* * *

● (1105)

[English]

LOBSTER FISHERY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, last weekend I had the honour to take part in a tradition that goes back through generations of Nova Scotians. Steaming out of New Harbour, I joined my good friend Vincent Boutillier

Statements by Members

on board his vessel for the setting of his lobster traps for this season about 15 miles offshore.

All along the southern and western shores of Nova Scotia, the men and women of the lobster fishery set out to sea, in the face of winter weather, to fish their traps for the best quality lobster in the world, in LFA 33 and LFA 34, until the end of May. The dangers involved in the lobster fishery in winter are well known, and the lobstermen accept these challenges to catch food and support their families and communities. However, now they must deal with the challenges to their livelihoods brought on by the Liberal government, with its unwillingness to enforce the law and stop the illegal poaching harming the sustainability of this fishery.

To lobster harvesters in LFA 33 and LFA 34, I hope for fair seas and bountiful catches this winter season.

* * *

HIV AND AIDS

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, December 1 marks World AIDS Day and the beginning of Indigenous AIDS Awareness Week. During this time, we remember those we lost to HIV and show our support for those living with it by raising awareness, increasing our knowledge and working to end discrimination surrounding HIV.

This year's theme, "Let communities lead", is a reminder to listen to communities as we work to end the stigma surrounding HIV. We are working to ensure that people across the country have access to testing and treatment for infectious diseases like HIV and that these resources are reaching those who need it most.

The first step to treatment is care and knowing your status. This week, we encourage people to get tested and learn more about the facts of HIV, because when we work together, we can put an end to AIDS.

* * *

HIV AND AIDS

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today is World AIDS Day. The UN reports that one life is lost every single day to HIV/AIDS. Even today, 9.2 million people living with HIV around the world do not have access to life-saving antiretroviral therapy. However, in the last 20 years, the world has made considerable progress.

[Translation]

Since 2002, Canada has been one of the main donors to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Last year, thanks in large part to the advocacy of Canadians through Results Canada and the One Campaign, Canada committed \$1.21 billion to the Global Fund. In countries where the Global Fund invests, AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 72% since 2002.

[Translation]

However, our progress is fragile. It is important that we recommit to putting an end to AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

* * *

*[English]***CARBON TAX**

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years, we have seen once again that the Liberal-NDP government is just not worth the cost.

According to a Statistics Canada study released this month, 18% of Canadian families are experiencing food insecurity, and it should come as no surprise. The Liberals' carbon tax applies to farming activities all across the country, and those costs inevitably get passed on to consumers every time they go to the grocery store. Unfortunately, the Liberals used this month's fall economic statement to double down on their ever-increasing carbon tax.

Fortunately, Conservatives have a solution. Conservative Bill C-234 would exempt certain farming activities from the carbon tax. Those lower costs would be passed on to consumers in the form of lower grocery prices and fewer Canadians turning to food banks to feed themselves. It is time for the Senate to pass Bill C-234 so Canadian can feed themselves.

* * *

● (1110)

HIV AND AIDS

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today is World AIDS Day, and I am wearing a red beaded ribbon pin to remember the significance of this important day, when we commemorate the millions of lives tragically taken by HIV and AIDS. However, we must also celebrate all of the incredible innovations in treatment we have seen over the past decades. Though fewer people die from this disease, more and more people are living with it. Thanks in some part to noteworthy innovations and medical advancements, those with HIV live longer than they used to.

This morning, I met with representatives from the Canadian AIDS Society, and I would like to thank its members for their hard work and advocacy. I encourage all Canadians, especially constituents in my riding, to learn more about the significance of today and to get involved.

Key to the eradication of HIV and AIDS is access to testing for individuals so they can know their HIV status. Unfortunately, stigma and discrimination remain as obstacles to this goal. Today, we are called on to support communities in their leadership in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

In Milton, across Canada and right around the world, we must continue to care for and empower one another. During a time when the world is in turmoil due to violence and hateful rhetoric—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years, this costly NDP-Liberal coalition is at it again, planning to quadruple the carbon tax on Canadian farmers. Canadians understand that when farmers, truckers and processors pay thousands of dollars in carbon tax, this makes the food we buy more expensive.

The price of food is so dire that the Ontario Hunger Report confirmed that food bank visits are up 38% in Ontario, the largest year-over-year increase ever recorded. It is not just in Ontario; the director of Saskatoon's food bank said, "After about 18 months of living through increased inflation, folks are really struggling. We're seeing about 23,000 [food bank users] per month." That is in a city of only 300,000 people.

Conservative Bill C-234 would create another carbon tax carve-out by removing the carbon tax on Canadian farmers. The good news is that this will make food prices cheaper in Canada. The even better news is that the environment minister has said that he will resign if this bill passes.

It is time for the Prime Minister to tell his appointed senators to stop stalling and pass Bill C-234 to bring home lower food prices for Canadians.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, food security in the U.K. focuses on ensuring food supply sources at home and abroad. To the Dutch, food security means promoting agricultural growth by increasing productivity and improving market access for producers. In the United States, food security is having enough access to food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. In Canada, there has been an 82% increase in the number of workers in Ontario using food banks. When it comes to food security for Canadians, the NDP-Liberal government policy is to send us to food banks.

Other countries create the conditions for farmers to succeed to grow more food so that there is plenty to go around, and no one needs to go hungry. In Canada, we have shorter growing seasons and higher heating costs, so food security should mean taking the taxes out of production costs. Instead, the Prime Minister has slapped a carbon tax on food production at every step along the way. He is not worth the cost.

* * *

[Translation]

CENTRE ACTION GÉNÉRATIONS DES AÎNÉS DE LA VALLÉE-DE-LA-LIÈVRE

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Wednesday was a very special day. I had the opportunity to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Centre action générations des aînés de la Vallée-de-la-Lièvre. I would like to thank and commend the volunteers for their outstanding dedication and commitment. They have made a huge difference in making the centre a wonderful place where seniors in our community can turn for support and compassion. I am extremely grateful that we are celebrating their invaluable contribution.

I especially want to applaud our outstanding executive director, Michèle Osborne, who has been helping seniors for over 35 years. Her inspiring leadership has helped elevate the organization. Her determination to bring positive change to the lives of seniors is truly commendable.

I thank them all for their hard work, compassion and generosity. Together, we will continue to make our centre a beacon of kindness for our seniors—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

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[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, CEBA loans saved hundreds of thousands of businesses and millions of jobs across Canada during the pandemic, but recovery has been slow.

I received messages from two businesses in my riding: the Ginger Room hair salon, managed by Nicole Doyle, with eight employees; and the Fish Bowl Cafe, managed by Jessica Fetchko, with nine employees. At this time of hardship, one is struggling with lower sales and the other with higher costs. Both are extremely worried about their ability to pay back their CEBA loans and are having to choose between cutting staff hours and very high interest loans.

In response, the Liberals only extended the repayment deadline by 18 days. Why is this Liberal government so inflexible on this simple request, and why is it choosing to put the small businesses in my riding in danger at such a tough time for our communities?

On behalf of the many small businesses in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, I call on this Liberal government

Statements by Members

to extend the CEBA loan repayment deadline. There is still time to do the right thing.

* * *

• (1115)

[Translation]

CLUB FADOQ ST-FÉLIX

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the Club FADOQ St-Félix. Rather than having just one big party for the 50th anniversary, its members decided to celebrate all year long.

I can say that they have had plenty of opportunities to do so, because the seniors of Saint-Félix-de-Kingsey are extremely active. They never stop, and it is pretty obvious. Their schedules are so full, one would say they have full-time jobs. From pétanque to board games and card games, from dinners and dances to sports, conferences and even theatre, these seniors are unstoppable.

The St-Félix club has 153 active members. The village has a population of 1,500. The rest of the FADOQ network should be jealous of that. It is inspiring to see these seniors on the go. It is heartwarming to see that they are so active, so tightly knit and so involved in their community. They set an example for others to follow.

Long live the Club FADOQ St-Félix and happy 50th anniversary.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the current Liberal-NDP government, we continue to discover more ways that this Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. This week, the Chiefs of Ontario, representing more than 130 first nations, sued the NDP-Liberal government over its job-killing carbon tax, saying that it is discriminatory against indigenous peoples, especially those living and working on reserves and that it disproportionately harms indigenous Canadians and their constitutional rights. The Chiefs of Ontario had to sue this Prime Minister because he failed, for almost a year, to respond to their request to axe the tax.

Eight years of this Prime Minister have made life unaffordable and Canadians see that he is not worth the cost. Indigenous Canadians can count on common-sense Conservatives to have a common-sense plan to respect them, to stop dividing Canadians and to turn hurt into hope by axing the tax on everything for everyone and bringing home lower prices for all.

*Oral Questions***LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every day that we hear the leader of the official opposition speak, we have a better understanding that the leader of the Conservative Party is just not worth the risk. Let us think about it: Just last week, an explosion took place at the Rainbow Bridge. The leader of the Conservative Party watched Fox News and ran into the chamber and said there was a terrorist attack. That is what he implied in his question to the Prime Minister. How irresponsible is that, for a leader of Canada's official opposition? That is not leadership. That in fact demonstrates that he is not worth the risk.

Let us take a look at the collective vote that the Conservative Party had on the Ukraine-Canada trade agreement. It is an agreement that is powerful and would make a difference not only here in Canada but also in Ukraine. How did the Conservative Party vote? It voted no. I would suggest again that, with the MAGA element within the Conservative Party today coming from the leadership, that leader is just not worth the risk.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FINANCE

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is Friday and the Prime Minister is still not worth the cost. We know that, this summer, Canada's economy actually shrank while the American economy grew by nearly 5%, all because of higher government spending, which leads to higher interest rates and higher inflation.

Canadians are getting poorer and no amount of rattling off statistics is going to change that fact.

When will the government finally commit to balancing the budget and axing the tax so that Canadians can afford to eat, heat and house themselves?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, while the Conservatives continue to talk down the Canadian economy, I would like to take the opportunity to remind them about some of the key results of our economic plan so far.

Canada is working because Canadians are working. Our GDP today is actually 4.1% above prepandemic levels. That is higher than Italy, the European Union, France, the U.K. and Germany. The IMF projects that Canada will have the highest economic growth in the G7 in 2024.

I would note that this is the same report that showed significantly upward revision in Canada's growth over the second quarter.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, they can talk all they want but the plan is not working. We have never spent so much in this country to achieve so little. Government spending went up by more than 7% and the economy still shrank by 1.1%. We have the lowest GDP per capita growth today

and for the next 40 years of any advanced economy, according to their own budget.

Canadians get higher taxes, higher spending and more regulation. They are getting poorer.

Why do they think that plan is working for Canadians?

• (1120)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what the Conservatives do not realize is that when they continue to talk down the Canadian economy, they are talking down Canadian workers, Canadian innovators and Canadians, who are working hard to build up our economy. On this side of the House, we know that Canada is the best country in the world. That is why I am glad to share some more good news.

Canada had the strongest growth in the G7 over the course of 2022. The IMF predicts that we will see the strongest average growth in the G7 in 2024.

Earlier this month, Moody's reiterated Canada's AAA rating and that is not something that the Harper Conservatives could attest to back in their day.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are talking down the economic malpractice that is coming from that side.

These numbers tell a very different story. Worse, they are actually even tied with those guys.

Just yesterday, the first nations leader sued this government, claiming that the carbon tax unfairly punishes indigenous communities. There is legislation in front of the Senate right now that will help indigenous Canadians and all Canadians by taking the tax off the farmers who grow the food, so that Canadians can afford to buy the food.

Why are the Liberals ordering their senators to block the bill that this House passed?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is still clear that the Conservative Party and its members do not really understand how indigenous people are not indigenous Canadians but, in fact, indigenous people of their own nations. The idea of self-determination is something that this Conservative Party just cannot wrap its head around. The colonial Conservatives just will not quit.

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years, Canadians can no longer afford the excessive costs of this Prime Minister. Next year, Canadians will pay more in interest on the debt than is put towards health care. The government is putting bankers ahead of nurses and orderlies. Some two million Canadians are using food banks every month, including more and more middle-class families. Children are asking Santa for boots and snowsuits to keep them warm, rather than toys to play with.

Will the Prime Minister finally understand that it is time to put an end to his inflationary policies that increase the price of everything?

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

When it comes to helping Canadians, the Conservatives need to understand that that is exactly what we are doing by introducing the affordability bill. I know my colleague; he is a man of influence in this party. He is a man people listen to. He must convince his colleagues to vote in favour of the bill. If he wants to give Canadians a gift between now and Christmas, he can help us overhaul competition, because he knows, and Canadians who are watching us know too, that the best way to stabilize prices in Canada is to have more competition.

Will he use his influence once and for all to help Canadians?

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, we all did it. We voted for this bill at second reading. I have absolutely no idea where the minister is going with this.

What I do know, however, is that the Journal de Montréal reported yesterday that children are now forced to ask Santa Claus for snowsuits. One child even asked him for a gift card to pay for a good Christmas dinner. That is the reality.

Does the minister have enough clout in this cabinet to persuade the Prime Minister to end the inflationary policies that have forced children to trim down their Christmas wish lists?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, talking about Christmas presents, I have an idea for the Conservative Party of Canada: It could give Canadians a Christmas gift for once.

Third reading of the affordability bill is just around the corner. If the Conservatives mean what they say, why not prove it to Canadians and vote in favour of competition reform? The best gift that Canadians could get is help in stabilizing prices across the country. People tuned in are wondering what, after eight years, the Conservatives are going to do for them.

In the lead-up to Christmas, they have a chance to do something for everyone. Will they?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, Quebecers are happy to do their part to welcome asylum seekers. The problem is that the federal government is not asking us to do our fair share. It is asking us to do twice as much. Quebec takes in 48% of Canada's asylum seekers. Ottawa is asking us to pay nearly five times our share, meaning 100% of the bill, or \$460 million in total, and that is without taking into account integration capacity.

Instead of lecturing us, will the federal government finally do its part and reimburse Quebec?

• (1125)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question in French, and I would also like to answer in French.

I would remind her, as I am sure she knows full well, that the agreement we have with Quebec gives it the power and jurisdiction to choose its immigration thresholds. We are working very well with Quebec, and we will continue to work with our Quebec counterparts to create an immigration system that meets our needs, the needs of Quebec and the needs of francophones in Quebec.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are talking about the Canada-Quebec agreement, which stipulates that Quebec must take in a share of asylum seekers that is at least equal to its percentage of Canada's population. That is not a problem, but we are currently taking in twice our share, or 48% of asylum seekers. In the meantime, British Columbia is taking in 10 times fewer. The four Maritime provinces combined have welcome 285 people. That is not even 1%.

In Quebec, we will continue to do our part, but will the federal government ensure that we are not the only ones?

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Again, Quebec is the only province that has an agreement with the federal government on immigration. We send Quebec more than \$700 million a year, including for work on the integration of immigrants into French-speaking society in Quebec.

We will continue to work with Quebec. As my colleague mentioned, he has a meeting with the Government of Quebec to discuss immigration thresholds and how we are going to work together to ensure that we properly welcome refugees and asylum seekers.

Oral Questions

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, today marks the 42nd World AIDS Day. Countless Canadians have lost someone to AIDS, and Canada is heading in the wrong direction as new infections are increasing, especially among indigenous communities. For an annual investment of just \$100 million, HIV in Canada could be eliminated. People living with HIV, and organizations like HIV Edmonton, have the tools to do this work; they just need the proper resources.

When will the government provide the funding needed to make the elimination of HIV a reality?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on this World AIDS Day, ensuring that Canadians have access to testing and treatment for HIV is a top priority for our government. That is why we recently announced nearly \$18 million in funding to make decentralized forms of HIV testing, including HIV self-test kits, more widely available across Canada. HIV self-test kits are helpful in reaching those who are undiagnosed, by offering greater accessibility, privacy and convenience. They can also reduce stigma.

* * *

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, this coming Monday, the CEO of Sobeys will be back to testify about food prices.

For two years, the Liberals have been beating around the bush both on bringing food prices down and on standing up to grocery CEOs. Anyone can tell us that the minister's little meeting, where he asked the rich CEOs nicely to stop gouging Canadian grocery shoppers, had no impact.

By bringing back the grocery CEOs, the NDP has given the minister a chance to right his wrongs, so will the Liberals crack down on the out-of-control price gouging?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will not take the "little" meeting personally. I am sure he was not referring to me when he said that. In fact, it was a big meeting. It was the first time in Canada's history that we had the five largest grocers in Canada. What I did was express the frustration of 40 million Canadians. I welcome my colleague to express his own frustration.

Together, we are going to stabilize prices. One of the tools we presented that would make a difference is a reform on competition. That is the best way to stabilize prices. We are really committed, and I hope every member of the House will vote in favour.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always difficult to follow the member's large impression.

After eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canada is facing challenges not seen since the Great Depression. Two million Canadians are visiting food banks a month. There has been a doubling of rents and mortgages. Perhaps worst of all, there are heart-breaking reports of children asking Santa for something to eat this Christmas.

To quote the current Liberal finance minister, from 2015, "[t]his is no global problem, as the government likes to pretend to excuse its shoddy management. This is a made-in-Canada runaway to recession.

Why are the Liberals so hell-bent on impoverishing Canadians?

● (1130)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the one hand, it is good to see the Conservatives finally talking about poverty reduction strategies, but on the other hand, it is clear that they are still reading only the headline and not the article.

While the Conservatives continue to talk down the Canadian economy, I would like to take an opportunity to remind them of a couple of key facts. There have been over 1.1 million more jobs created since the pandemic, and we have recovered all the jobs in the economic growth since after the pandemic.

The important thing to recognize with respect to poverty reduction is that the current government was the one that modernized the Canada child benefit and pulled hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. Poverty reduction continues to be one of the pillars of our government strategy.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want people at home to listen carefully, because what we will not hear from that side at all is "per capita", "per Canadian". Every Canadian, on average, is getting poorer. In fact, our economy shrank by 1.1%. Our per capita growth is the worst in the OECD. In the U.S., it has gone up by nearly 5%.

I am just curious; what would cause the Liberals to reverse direction? Is it longer food bank lines, worse economic numbers or perhaps even worse polling numbers?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been paying attention to the same headlines, but I do not just read the top line; I read the entire article.

What a lot of the poverty reduction organizations, the food banks and the organizations that are helping keep some of the most vulnerable Canadians afloat during challenging times are asking for is continued programs, like guaranteed livable income strategies, the Canada child benefit and the guaranteed income supplement. They are asking for more programs to support Canada's most vulnerable.

Those are the exact same programs the Conservatives would cut if they were ever in government. Their programs, when Harper was prime minister, did nothing to alleviate poverty. We will continue to help the most vulnerable Canadians with these—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kenora.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, first nations leaders know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

The Chiefs of Ontario, representing over 130 first nations, are asking the federal court to exempt their communities from the carbon tax, a policy they say leaves them worse off and breaches the principles of reconciliation.

When will the Liberals stop violating the constitutional rights of first nations, and simply axe the tax?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will reiterate that there is no relationship more important to the current government than Canada's relationship with first nations and indigenous peoples.

No one understands the risks and dangers of climate change better than first nations communities. They are on the front lines with the record wild fires and horrible destruction we have seen over the last couple of years. Like us, first nations are asking for more climate resilience and more climate action. Just last month, I was proud to meet with members of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative about its Land Needs Guardians approach. The price on pollution is the most effective way to fight climate change, and we will continue to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kenora.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, first nations do see, first hand, the effects of climate change, but the Liberal government misses climate target after climate target. The plan simply is not working. The Liberals are only driving up the cost of living for first nations and people right across the country.

Meanwhile, NDP and Liberal politicians across northern Ontario are planning to quadruple the tax. Again, why are they so committed to their failed plan that they are ignoring the concerns of first nations?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since we took

Oral Questions

office in 2015, indigenous spending has increased by 168% in first nations communities. That is no small number.

What underlies that number is the ongoing systemic discrimination of the previous Conservative government, which spent nothing in first nations communities, discriminated against children and ensured that generations of poverty would continue.

We are reversing that trend. Liberals are the ones who are working on reconciliation. These folks have nothing to say.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, instead of listening to Canadians, the Prime Minister is quadrupling down on his failed carbon tax. Yesterday, left with no option after being ignored by the NDP-Liberal government, Ontario chiefs filed a judicial review asking for their own carbon tax carve-out. After eight years, they have realized the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

This is the Prime Minister who claimed that the relationship with first nations is the most important one to him and his government. If that is true, will he stop forcing first nations to go to court to defend their constitutional rights, and axe the tax?

• (1135)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I spent last summer with first nations leaders in community after community evacuating people from the onslaught of incredible wildfires and floods that devastated community infrastructure and that put people out of their homes for months on end. That is the risk of climate change to first nations communities.

They are first on the line in terms of people affected by the devastation of climate change. Indigenous leaders know that, and we are working with indigenous communities to ensure that they have the infrastructure they need, the support they need to manage this astronomical—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, first nations leaders are simply tired of managing poverty. They have realized the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Unlike the Prime Minister, they are forced to think about monetary policy, and they know that he is simply not worth the cost. In fact, last January, the Ontario chiefs wrote to the Prime Minister, saying that the carbon tax was a grossly unfair burden on their nations. Four out of five first nations communities have median incomes that fall below the poverty line, and they are asking for their own carbon tax carve-out.

Oral Questions

Will the NDP-Liberal government finally listen to first nations leaders and simply axe the tax?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for a decade, the Conservative government kept people in poverty, refused to invest in infrastructure and refused to support education. Can colleagues believe it? When we were elected in 2015, we made sure there was parity for first nations education so kids could get a decent education. The member knows the record of the Conservative Party.

We will not stop our work in reconciliation. The Conservatives' record speaks for itself. That is the gap we now have to close.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): I have a riddle for you, Madam Speaker. Do you know what a lack of vision is?

It is awarding a \$10-billion aircraft contract to Boeing when a Quebec company has the expertise to fulfill that contract. It is giving Quebecers' money to Quebec's biggest aerospace rival without a call for tenders. It is belittling our industry in front of all of its partners by not even deigning to look at its offer. It is flying blind as the only country among the big players without a national aerospace policy. It is kowtowing to Washington rather than defending Quebec's interests.

Why is Ottawa fundamentally incapable of having a vision for our aerospace industry?

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

I would caution him to be careful because the decision that we announced yesterday was based on national security. We have to be careful when it comes to matters of national security.

I have good news, and the people in the Canadian aerospace industry clearly understand that. Boeing is going to invest \$5.4 billion in Canada's aerospace industry. Not only that, but Boeing is also going to open an innovation centre in Montreal.

I would invite my Bloc Québécois colleagues to speak with CAE. I would invite them—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Terrebonne.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, the unemployment rate is on the rise in Quebec. In October it was at its highest since January 2022. It is not going to go down because the federal government is pushing tens of thousands of small and medium-sized businesses toward bankruptcy as of January 18.

By keeping the January 18 loan forgiveness repayment deadline for the Canada emergency business account, the government is putting hundreds of thousands of jobs in jeopardy in the middle of the holiday period.

Why does this government simply not reassure the workers that they will not be unemployed after the holidays?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us be clear.

Plan A: the business owner has the money, repays the CEBA and gets some loan forgiveness.

Plan B: the business owner has the capacity to take out a loan, repays the CEBA and gets some loan forgiveness.

Plan C: the business owner does not have the capacity to take out a loan, stays with us for another three years and has to pay the minimum, which is 5% interest, or \$250 a month at most.

That is not going to bankrupt anyone.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is what Canada looks like today after eight years of this Liberal government.

This week, the Journal de Québec reported that a 13-year old wrote to Santa, like many children, and asked for food. That is what Canada has become after eight years with a Liberal government in power.

We cannot have food without agriculture. Bill C-234 was adopted here in the House of Commons. It seeks to reduce and cancel the carbon tax for farmers. Unfortunately, as we speak, senators appointed by the Liberal government are delaying passage of this bill.

When will the Prime Minister stand up and tell the—

● (1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that the Conservative Party of Canada has senators sit in its caucus. We do not.

As a farmer, I fully understand how important it is to take care of our land and the environment, but I will tell my hon. colleague the questions that I received from farmers and ranchers. Number one was why the Conservative Party of Canada does not have a plan for the environment. They also asked me why it does not support the Canada-Ukraine trade deal.

I can tell everyone that our—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, what every farmer is telling us, without exception, is that Bill C-234 will save them \$1 billion. That is tangible, that is real and that is what the farmers want.

There was a dramatic turn of events this week. The bill was adopted here in the House of Commons, and this week, the Senate was asked to speed up the process. The Liberals voted against that request and even the Bloc Québécois voted against. It is outrageous.

The Bloc Québécois voted in favour of Bill C-234, but it voted against asking the Senate to adopt it. We cannot be on one side and the other and act like—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are in the middle of 16 days of activism to end gender-based violence. Meanwhile, the Conservatives have taken to social media to promote the harassment of women senators in the Senate. At the same time, they are blocking legislation here in the House and now they are trying to distract by bullying women parliamentarians.

Conservatives' social media attacks are forcing women in the Senate to take action to protect themselves because they are facing threats. No woman should ever have to face harassment—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, at the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund, they are rewarding corruption with appointments to their failed Infrastructure Bank. One Liberal insider admitted at committee that she funnelled money to not one, not two, not three, but four companies that she has a stake in. This kind of corruption would get someone jailed or fired at any other organization. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is clear the Prime Minister is not worth the cost when he is promoting these very same people.

Will the Liberals shut down this failed slush fund and fire everyone responsible for misappropriating tax dollars?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians are tired of the Conservatives spreading misinformation across the nation. They are getting influenced, I do not know by whom, but it is very concerning.

The agency the member is talking about has been helping hundreds, if not thousands, of companies in Canada for a number of decades. We took the right action. The moment we heard of the allegation, we investigated. The people who took that action have re-

Oral Questions

signed. We are determined to have the highest level of governance when it comes to any organization that receives public funds.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister talks about who the slush fund has been helping. It has been helping Liberal insiders. The one I just mentioned helped herself to \$1.2 million in taxpayer dollars and the minister then had her appointed to the Infrastructure Bank. She should have been fired. The Liberals did not fire a single person. They commissioned a whitewash report. What did the Conservatives do? We called for the Auditor General to investigate, and that is happening. We asked the Ethics Commissioner to investigate, and that is happening.

When are the Liberals going to start firing people and stop shovelling tax dollars into the pockets of well-connected Liberal insiders?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the extent the Conservatives go to talk down our economy and small and medium-sized businesses is amazing.

I would tell the member on the other side to be prudent because that particular organization has helped companies across the nation with clean technology. One thing is true for Canadians. The moment we heard of the allegation, we investigated. We took the right action. We will get to the bottom of this, but we are not going to hurt clean technology companies in this country because they deserve our support.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Bloor line needs new subway cars and Thunder Bay has the workers to build them. Toronto had an RFP ready to go earlier this year to replace the cars, but had to pull it because the Liberal government refused to come to the table with funding. The Liberal indifference on transit is bad for the people of Toronto, bad for the workers of Thunder Bay and bad for the climate.

I have watched subway cars come off that line in Thunder Bay. I have spoken with the workers who have the skills and they are ready to take on this work. Why are the Liberals leaving Toronto's subway system to crumble and Thunder Bay's Alstom workers to fend for themselves?

● (1145)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is an important question. It allows me the opportunity to underscore the intense and significant financial supports that this government has put in place for the city of Toronto since 2015. In 2015, the Conservative Party saw fit to supply Toronto with about \$200 million a year. This year, we are providing Toronto with \$1.8 billion. Next year, that will rise to \$2.1 billion. The supports for transit in Toronto and for infrastructure in Toronto are legion on this side of the House. I and other colleagues from Toronto will continue to defend our city.

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps patting himself on the back for a job well done in housing, except anyone can tell us that the Liberals are failing. Yesterday, in his latest photo op, the Prime Minister stood in front of his newest housing investment: a luxury condo where a one-bedroom unit starts at \$2,150 per month for rent. People already stretch every dollar and investing public money into luxury condos does not help. Will the Liberals stop putting rich developers over Canadians and immediately release the promised funding to build more affordable homes right now?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are leading the national effort to solve the housing crisis by ramping up the construction of housing, protecting renters and homeowners and bringing home ownership back within reach. The fall economic statement introduces measures to unlock more than 30,000 additional apartments, help affordable-housing providers build 7,000 more homes and promote and expand co-operative housing. Not only that, but we are cracking down on short-term rentals to unlock up to 30,000 more apartments and helping protect homeowners from the stress of elevated interest rates.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, climate change is a global crisis that affects the entire world, but its devastating effects are not shared equally among countries. Developing countries that contribute the least to the pollution that causes climate change are the most vulnerable to some of its harshest consequences. Today, the real work begins at COP28 where the Minister of Environment and Climate Change represents Canada. Can the parliamentary secretary to the minister inform us with respect to Canada's first contribution at this conference?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a first move at COP28, Canada is announcing support for developing countries to address loss and damage due to climate change, with a \$16-million contribution to the start-up cost for a global fund. This is a significant step and a big win for the planet as we are helping climate-vulnerable developing countries that face the harshest impacts from climate change. We are honoured to be among the first donors to this historic fund at COP28.

As the world comes together to assess our progress so far, we recognize that there are still challenges ahead. Canada will continue to play a leadership role to fight climate change.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of inflationary spending, after eight straight years of deficit, after doubling the national debt, after creating record-setting interest hikes and after implementing a punishing carbon tax, a record number of Canadians cannot afford food. Therefore, why will this Prime Minister not call his appointees in

the Senate and have them pass Bill C-234 and take the tax off food production? What do farmers have to do to get a little respect around here; elect a few more Liberals?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we all know that the economy and trade go hand in hand. In fact, one in five jobs in Canada depend on trade, so let us talk about that.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress has once again expressed its disappointment with the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives for voting against Ukraine and free trade. The congress has written directly to the Conservative leader, calling on his party to change its position and vote for the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. Will Conservative members have the courage to defy their leader, vote for trade, vote for this agreement and stand with Ukraine?

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Conservative bill, Bill C-234, to axe the carbon tax for farmers remains stalled in the Senate. Senators appointed by this Prime Minister continue to make life unaffordable by delaying this bill.

Dave and Devon run a dairy operation in my community. They pay thousands more on the carbon tax just to heat their barns. Now the Prime Minister wants to quadruple the tax on them. Will this Prime Minister take his carbon tax off them, to make food affordable for Canadians?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that member from Alberta represents thousands of Ukrainian Canadians, as I am proud to do. Let me tell him a little bit about one of my constituents, Alexandra Chyczij, and what she wrote to the Conservative leader. She happens to be the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. What she underscores is the fact that when we are concerned about the food in this country, we need to be concerned about geopolitical crises that are causing food prices to escalate. She underscored that she was disappointed to see the official opposition vote against the adoption of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, that Ukraine needs assistance and that Ukraine's government, led by Volodymyr Zelensky, is asking for that assistance. What I am asking him to do is—

• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Oral Questions

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are struggling to afford the basics. In fact, Canadians are heading to the food bank in record numbers. This Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

Kelly in my riding spends \$6,300 a year in carbon tax on his farm. Now the Prime Minister wants to quadruple that.

Will the Prime Minister simply axe this tax off Kelly's operation to make it more affordable for Canadians to feed their families?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the fundamental principle is that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues are not worth the cost.

What is the cost? The cost has been underscored by the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress herself, a woman who happens to be my constituent. She has said that Ukraine needs assistance. The Ukrainian government is begging for that assistance.

What we have seen is a failure of leadership on the part of the official opposition to make supporting Ukraine a non-partisan issue. It should never be partisan to confront an authoritarian ruler in an illegal war who is driving up the price of food in this country and around the world.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight long years, it is clear that this Prime Minister simply is not worth the cost.

Jack, a grain farmer from southern Manitoba, paid over \$6,000 in carbon taxes to dry his grain in October alone and, no, the government rebate is not making him better off. I assume Jack's money is now paying for the environment minister's high-carbon, high-hypocrisy, two-week trip to Dubai. Now the Liberals want to quadruple that carbon tax on farmers like Jack.

Will the Prime Minister tell his Liberal senators to pass Bill C-234 to help make food more affordable for Canadians?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member opposite speaks about a high-cost trip. Let us speak about the Conservatives travelling to the U.K. to sip on champagne and eat oysters. That trip, for one Conservative member, was actually paid for by the Danube Institute, which has regularly advocated against Ukraine in support of Russia. Lo and behold, Conservatives come back and vote against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

When it comes to the champagne Conservatives, they are not worth the cost to Canadians or Ukrainians.

[*Translation*]

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, the agreement with Google is a step in the right direction, a first step. Of course, we were hoping that the government would take more steps. Initially, there was talk of \$172 million—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to interrupt the hon. member to ask for silence in the House. I would like to hear the hon. member for Drummond's question.

The hon. member can start his question again.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, the agreement with Google is good news. It is a step in the right direction, a first step. Obviously, we were hoping that the government would take more steps. Initially, there was talk of an amount of about \$172 million, but let us still recognize that this is good news. Now, if Meta could be more open, that would also help. However, the fact remains that \$100 million is not going to resolve the crisis that our media are in.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage assure us that CBC/Radio-Canada, which is already largely funded by taxpayer dollars, will not be taking any money out of this pot that is already too small?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. This agreement will inject \$100 million annually into our media, and it will be indexed to inflation each year. This is good news for our local media. It is good news for media in Quebec.

Our agreement also provides that, if better conditions are reached with other countries, we will automatically be given the same conditions. We have been saying that access to information is something we will always support, and that is exactly what we are doing. This is good news for our media outlets across Canada and Quebec.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, it was so nice of the member to explain the agreement. However, that was not the question. I was talking about CBC/Radio-Canada and funding, but I am sure we will come back to that.

Another thing the minister can immediately do is ensure that there are no further job cuts in the media. That will enable struggling online, radio and television media to have access to the 35% tax credit for journalists that print media already have access to. Bell Media, Québecor and Cogeco Media have asked us to do this in recent days. She needs to do it before the holiday break, before we see more newsrooms closed and the diversity of information pay—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Oral Questions

• (1155)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, let me say that my thoughts are with the workers and their families affected by the TVA layoffs.

We have implemented measures to help the journalism sector, and we are looking into what else we can do. The Minister of Canadian Heritage is open to all proposals.

Today we see the effects of Conservative obstruction in preventing the modernization of laws and programs that allow Canada's media and culture to exist.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, this week, we learned that our Canadian economy shrank by 1.1% in the last quarter, while the U.S. economy grew by 5.2%. When our leader pointed this out, a Liberal minister responded by saying, “we actually have an economic plan”. Rarely has the word “actually” been less convincingly used in a sentence than that. The last time we saw a plan like this was from the equally incompetent Trudeau government of the 1970s and 1980s, which obliterated our economy.

When will the government realize that those Trudeau economics are as bad for Canada now—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member said Trudeau, as in the father. I am sorry; it was the seventies.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are advancing the government's plan to grow the middle class, build more homes faster and build an economy that works for everyone. Meanwhile, the Conservatives have become this one-issue party claiming that axing the tax will solve all the country's problems. It will not.

This week, we introduced Bill C-59, our fall economic statement, which is going to help deliver on key measures of this economic plan. In this legislation, we are modernizing competition laws to help stabilize grocery prices, doubling the rural top-up on the pollution pricing rebate, and removing the GST on new rental home construction and co-ops, which the Conservative stand against, calling co-ops Soviet-style—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals love to bury the very real hardships of Canadians in ridiculous non-answers such as that.

The per capita GDP numbers represent the real world, where Canadians actually live and where they are getting to be worse off.

It has not been this bad since the Trudeau economic rampage of the 1970s and 1980s, which took us decades to recover from.

Does anyone over there have the courage to look the Prime Minister in the eye and tell him that following the Trudeau economic blueprint is destroying our economy?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, from the beginning, we have been delivering for Canadians. From a personal perspective, I would like to highlight what, a couple of weeks ago, the Conservatives continued to say: When we build affordable, non-profit, non-market co-op housing, they say it is Soviet-style housing. That plays right into the Conservatives' recent vote against the Ukraine-Canada free trade agreement. What are they thinking over there?

I would ask that these members consider voting for our fall economic statement, so we can build more homes faster and bring affordability to Canadians through good, proven mechanisms such as non-market housing.

* * *

[Translation]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years, the government still does not understand that it could quickly bring down food prices just by giving farmers a break. That is why passing Bill C-234 is so essential.

The costly Bloc-Liberal coalition is really out of touch and wants to radically increase the carbon tax. It is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois. Farmers in my region are calling on me to get this bill passed quickly.

Will the Prime Minister tell the independent senators that he appointed to stop blocking Bill C-234 in order to bring down the cost of groceries for all Canadian families?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is something I do not understand about my Quebec colleague's intervention.

Whatever happens with this bill, it will have no impact on Quebec. In fact, it will actually put farmers in Quebec and British Columbia at a disadvantage because they will continue to have their price on pollution while the other provinces will not, to the same degree.

What my colleague from Beauce is doing is trying to put Quebec farmers at a disadvantage.

*Oral Questions**[English]***SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when Canadians needed support during the pandemic, community groups and charities stepped up to provide crucial assistance. Now many are having difficulty generating revenue, managing increased costs and demand for services, and attracting and retaining paid staff and volunteers.

Can the parliamentary secretary update the House on what is being done to support these organizations?

• (1200)

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, through our community services recovery fund, nearly 5,500 organizations nationwide have been funded. This means that, in the member's riding of Halifax West, the Fairview Resource Centre can continue offering family programming and services to new parents, as well as community meals for families and seniors. This also means that groups like the Halifax Sexual Health Centre can continue offering vital reproductive and gender-affirming care to the community. These are local groups that are making a real difference in the member's riding and across the country.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal Minister of Industry admitted he had not read the \$15-billion Stellantis contract that will cost every taxpayer in Canada a thousand dollars in new taxes. Conservatives put forward a motion requiring the government to make contracts public. When one takes taxpayer money, transparency is expected. For 10 hours, Liberals have been obstructing the passage of this motion on a filibuster, hiding their bad deal.

Will the Liberals put transparency where their mouths are and release the contracts?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always so outrageous for Canadians to hear the Conservatives make such crazy allegations. Not only have they been against the Stellantis deal, but they have also been against the Volkswagen deal. They are against the Northvolt deal. They are against the Ford deal, and they are against the GM deal. Will they ever do something for Canadian workers? Will they ever do something for the auto industry or do something for the communities? On this side of the House, we have a plan. We have brought record investment and will continue to invest in our auto sector.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, will he have the guts to show the public and Canadians the contract, the thousand dollars of taxes per household, to assemble batteries with parts made from China and shipped to the U.S. for cars assembled and sold in the U.S.? Taxpayers will cover the cost of batteries of these cars, with no guarantees of Canadian jobs and no guarantees that these plants will survive after the 100% battery subsidy ends in 2033.

Liberals are obstructing the Conservative motion to release the contracts by filibustering the committee. These contracts must be way worse—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there will be 2,300 Canadians building the plant and 2,500 Canadians building batteries, maximizing work for our world-class trades. Conservatives never supported the EV battery plant in Windsor, and they are now working overtime to tear it down. Our Liberal government worked with labour to deliver the plant, we are working with labour to secure the plant and we will fight tooth and nail to protect the plant from Conservative attacks.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, after a set of incompetent negotiations, the NDP-Liberal government acceded to a \$15-billion subsidy to Stellantis. That is \$6 million in taxpayer funds per job, but more than half these jobs may actually be coming from Korea. After eight years, the government is not worth the cost. First we had a cabinet minister who did not read his emails, and now we have one who will not read the contracts. The jig is up. Will they release the Stellantis contract so Canadian contributors can see what they are paying for?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is so outrageous to hear the Conservatives. Not only did I read the contract, but I also negotiated the contract. These guys have never seen it, and they make all these claims. They have all these numbers. They do not know what they are talking about. It is not me who is saying that, but the leader of Unifor. These guys do not know what the hell they are talking about. When their leader was the minister of employment, it was not 3,000 jobs or 30,000 jobs but 300,000 jobs that were lost in the manufacturing sector. I will take no lessons from any of them. I will fight every step of the way.

* * *

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this week we have begun marking 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The campaign started on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and will conclude on Human Rights Day, December 10. Unfortunately, we are too well aware that, every day in this country and around the world, women still face emotional, physical and psychological abuse. As a society, we have made progress, but so much more needs to be done.

What concrete action is the government taking to confront the threat—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler for speaking up for women everywhere.

We take the issue of gender-based violence very seriously and have implemented more supports for victims, for survivors and their families, supports for violence prevention and a more responsive justice system, and indigenous-led approaches to challenges faced by indigenous women and girls. We have brought forward responsible firearms safety measures, including red- and yellow-flag gun laws. We know there is more to do, but we are committed to making sure we end gender-based violence.

* * *

● (1205)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, something is rotten in the CRA. Following a phone call from Deloitte to a senior official at CRA, it gave a company \$63 million in tax rebates that are being referred to as “illegitimate”. The CRA was auditing the company in question, yet it took less than 24 hours after a phone call from a powerful accounting firm to not only make the problem go away but also give away millions of dollars of Canadians' money.

The minister needs to come clean. How many audits have they cancelled at Deloitte's request, who else has this kind of power and why are the Liberals not ensuring tax fairness at a time when Canadians are struggling?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure my colleagues that the decisions made at the Canada Revenue Agency are administrative decisions, and they are made following the same rules that apply to everyone.

Obviously, as everyone knows, I cannot comment on a specific case. I can guarantee that the CRA remains independent.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I have a document that I am asking for unanimous consent to table. In essence, it states, “The UCC therefore asks that the Official Opposition revisit their position on BillC-57”, which is the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement, “and vote to support the Bill in 3rd reading.”

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I have here an article from the Journal de Montréal related to a question that was raised during question period—

Some hon. members: No.

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

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, also known as the mighty OGGO, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B), 2023-24”.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move that the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presented on Tuesday, May 17, 2022, be concurred in.

It is always a pleasure to be here, and I will say, if I am allowed to make this observation to the Chair, that question period was well run. It kept people on time.

Today I am going to talk about something incredibly important to the people of Northumberland—Peterborough South and those across Canada. We are talking about protecting Canada's food system. This report was concurred in when I was on the fabulous public accounts committee. Unfortunately, I have moved on to the finance committee, but I very much enjoyed my time on public accounts.

We are talking about something near and dear to my heart, which is food security. Of course, food security is always an issue, but it was highlighted during the great pandemic years, when Canadians were reliant on food and we saw, unfortunately, shortages in our grocery stores. It was not too long ago, even though in some ways it seems like a lifetime ago, that grocery stores were short on food.

It is incredibly important that we have food security in our country. One of the issues that will drive that is, of course, the carbon tax. The carbon tax is raising the cost of food. It is also driving food production offshore.

Routine Proceedings

There are those in the House who may have been here back in 2019 when I was elected. I found out early on in my time as an MP, in 2019, that I had won the lottery. I remember a staffer coming to me and saying, “Mr. Lawrence, you won the lottery.” Of course, I had no idea what that meant at the time, but it meant that I had won the PMB lottery. I actually got number six.

We then had a very difficult decision to make, as there were lots of things that needed to be changed in 2019, and even more now in 2023, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, which is certainly not worth the cost. Our team did a search of various issues. Of course, a large portion of the Northumberland—Peterborough South economy is agriculture, so our farmers came to us and said the carbon tax was killing them. They presented me with bills for tens of thousands of dollars in carbon tax. That was back when the carbon tax was a lot lower than it is now, when it was only \$20 a tonne. Now it is headed up to \$80 a tonne next year. To everyone at home, that is quadruple what the current carbon tax is. We then said to farmers that they were right and we needed to provide relief. We would have loved to just axe the tax in a private member's bill, but that is not permissible because of the limited scope of a private member's bill.

I was told I have to split my time. I was hoping to have a lot more time to speak here, because food security is important and critical. My mentor from Winnipeg North has taught me the incredible importance of brevity in this House, but I will be splitting my time with the wonderful member for Calgary Shepard.

Farmers came to us and said the carbon tax was killing them, because not only is it potentially making them globally uncompetitive, but there are many markets where they simply cannot pass that cost on. The challenge is that it is making their farms unprofitable. In the system of capitalism we have, if their farms or businesses are not profitable, they simply cannot continue them.

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● (1210)

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 31—PROCEEDINGS ON
BILL C-50**

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 31, at the next sitting of the House a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South may continue with his speech. I would remind him that under the rules of the House, members may not name members, including themselves.

The hon. member.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I continue to try to speak French. In the future, I hope to do an entire speech in French.

[*English*]

For today I will continue in English.

In 2019, we started a journey to remove the carbon tax on farmers. Our farmers said that it did not make sense to them that diesel and dirtier fuels were exempt for farmers but natural gas and propane were not. Propane's carbon footprint is considerably less, fully 50% less, than that of diesel.

Here was my naïveté coming into 2019, which was not far from 2015, when we were hearing things like “sunny ways” and “open by default”. I thought the Liberals probably made a mistake, that it was probably a drafting error. I was positive that once I brought it to their attention, they would say, “We do not want our farmers to be suffering. We have that one farmer in Milton, so we need to take care of this.” I thought, in my naïveté, that when I would bring this to their attention, they would say we would not even need to pass legislation; they would fix it in their next budget. However, somehow that did not happen.

We therefore brought it forward, and members will not believe this, but we got the support of the Green Party. We got the support of the NDP. We got the support of environmental activists; they were on our side. They realized that propane is cleaner than diesel, so why would we give an exemption to diesel but not propane?

The Liberal logic world is a very muddled place, because we then found out that they doubled down. Instead of providing an exemption on home heating with natural gas, which is way cleaner than oil, they gave an exemption to oil. It boggles the mind. The logic behind the carbon tax is to put a cost on fuels with a higher carbon intensity to reduce their usage. If that is true, they should be making it go up eight or 10 times on fuel, but they know it is not true. The logic behind Bill C-234, which is in the Senate right now, is that if we give farmers an exemption and give them control of their resources, they will make the right decisions. They will invest in the technologies that will clean our planet.

Routine Proceedings

This ham-fisted stick-before-carrot approach of the carbon tax has been proven to not only increase costs but also increase global emissions, because it drives production, whether it be in a factory or on a farm, off clean Canadian energy and into coal-producing jurisdictions around the world. This is the ultimate in greenwashing. There is no bigger greenwashing tool than the carbon tax, because it moves farms and factories to Guangdong province, where, instead of being powered by clean Canadian hydro power in Quebec or Winnipeg or by natural gas in Alberta, they are powered by coal.

We are raising worldwide emissions because of the carbon tax. Instead of energy being produced here in Canada in a clean, sustainable way, we are exporting it. Worst of all, we are impoverishing ourselves to do it. Instead of having paycheques going to workers in our clean Canadian energy sector, those paycheques are going to Dubai. What is going on in Dubai? I believe they are in an air-conditioned dome in the middle of the desert. Can we get any more ironic than that? The fossil fuels they are burning will somehow reduce the amount of fossil fuels. The hypocrisy has no end with the Liberals.

Bill C-234 needs to be passed. Even if someone is a wholehearted believer in the carbon tax, Bill C-234 gives equity to our farmers. It does not matter if members are in the Green Party or the NDP. We all agree, except for the Liberals, that farmers deserve a break.

• (1215)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only one thing is happening here, and Canadians should take note.

This morning, on the Order Paper, we were scheduled to debate once again the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement, and once again, Conservatives have used a procedural tactic to slow down the process. The member should be absolutely ashamed for what he and all Conservatives are doing right now. He needs to come clean and tell Canadians why he does not support Ukraine and why his leader does not support Ukraine. They need to stop slowing the process down and start doing the responsible thing: stand up for Ukraine and stop telling Ukraine what it needs. I think Ukraine has heard enough of what Conservatives have to say about what it needs.

It is time for Conservatives to start listening to Ukraine, to listen to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and to do the right thing: allow us to debate the free trade agreement and get to a vote.

• (1220)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, unlike in Putin's Russia, this is not a dictatorship. We still get to vote and to have the ability to work in Parliament. Liberals do not get to decide everything.

Conservatives support Ukraine. That is why we are going to send them arms and not a carbon tax.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the motion we are debating was moved by the Conservatives. It is very obvious and unfortunate that it is an attempt to block a debate on the free trade agreement with Ukraine that is supposed to be taking place, an agreement New Democrats support.

There is a terrible situation going on in Europe, and I would hope we could get to a point in the chamber where partisanship can take a back seat to the realities facing our planet. This is a serious issue. There are warmongers on the loose, attacking countries like Ukraine, an ally of ours.

Simultaneous to that, the member, whom I respect deeply, knows exactly what is taking place here and what his party is doing, which is blocking the debate. I sincerely ask the member to sympathize with Ukrainians for a moment and realize how important the bill truly is to them. Can the member please speak to Ukrainians about why Conservatives are doing this?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely understand. That is why we want to send fuel, energy and arms, not the carbon tax, to Ukraine.

The carbon tax and food insecurity are important in my riding. There are people lining up at food banks because the cost of food is so high, so I resent the member's saying that it is not important. Food insecurity is important. If he does not believe it, he should come to Cobourg and see the food bank.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague's speech. There is something about agriculture that fascinates me. Why are we not focusing on local distribution channels? Obviously, my Conservative colleague will say that, if we focus on local distribution channels, we will be spending less money on transportation and using less oil, and that is not good for that industry.

I think that, when it comes to agriculture, the solution is to promote local production, local distribution channels and buying local through investments near farms and investments in agricultural cities and towns, so that we can process food, especially in slaughterhouses. That would cut down on the cost of fuel to ship these agri-food products to the five continents.

How can we focus on that? Does my colleague have a recommendation on local distribution?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree.

[*English*]

We do need to focus on local farming. In my riding, there are some great farmers' markets in Port Hope and Cobourg. People driving from Toronto to Ottawa, or maybe people from Quebec who want to go to Toronto, though Quebec is beautiful and I do not know why anybody would want to leave Quebec, should come to my riding and stop at the Port Hope market or the Cobourg market from 9 o'clock to 12 o'clock on Saturday mornings.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to see someone from the Bloc in the position of representing all of Canada and our main democracy. I know that the member supports that above everything else.

Routine Proceedings

In this year's public accounts, there is \$3.5 billion in losses by the Bank of Canada, and this year it is projecting \$3.9 billion in losses. I wonder whether my colleague could tell us some of the things we could help Canadians with instead of Bank of Canada losses.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, we have billions of dollars going to the Bank of Canada, by the way. Only the Canadian government could lose money selling drugs and running a bank. That is money that could go to health care, to education and to helping the most vulnerable.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a great honour to rise on behalf of the constituents of Calgary Shepard.

This is the 14th report of the Public Accounts committee, a committee I got to chair briefly. I know that there are other members here who have had the honour of chairing that committee as well. It is one of the most interesting committees to be on because it is one that deals very closely with the Auditor General and with their reports.

For constituents back home, the 14th report is an audit of several government programs, and I see five of them, that account for hundreds of millions of dollars, and of how the money is spent. All of these programs deal with input costs and how the government is trying to offset the high cost of certain grocery products available in the aisles. The report accounts for how, in this particular case, the programs try to provide reasonably, affordably priced groceries for people who are trying to purchase them.

For weeks now, we have been talking about Bill C-234, which is now stuck in the Senate because Liberal-appointed senators will not lead it to a vote so it can be passed after the House has already spoken. I have always been taken by the argument, made by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, that Bill C-234 is a spending bill. The House has Standing Orders, and there is a long constitutional tradition that, when we pass spending bills in the House of Commons, the Senate of Canada, the other place, does not have the right to continuously block it; it has to pass those types of bills.

In a private member's bill, we cannot pass new taxation but we can do a carve-out, and Bill C-234 would do a carve out. There is already a carve-out that was, by the Liberal government's own admission, created by the government for individuals with heating oil—

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am tabling the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1814 to 1823.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that answers to questions have been tabled in the House.

[*English*]

The government has now created one carve-out for heating oil. It did it for electoral reasons. One of the Liberal cabinet ministers said exactly that, that if westerners, prairie Canadians like myself, ex-

pected to get a carve-out for natural gas, which is the primary fuel used to heat our homes in the winter, then we should have elected more Liberals. It is very much political. The Supreme Court decision on the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act confirmed that a carbon tax was possible in Canada. The Supreme Court specifically said that if applied all across the board, then there was a defensible nature to it. Carve-outs undermine that legal argument.

Bill C-234 demonstrates the willingness of the House to try to make groceries and food affordable again. After eight years of the Liberal government, we do not have that. Consistently, the number one issue I get emails about from the people in my riding is the sticker shock they get when they go to the aisles for fresh produce, cereals or meat. Everything is more expensive.

A lot of the government programs in place on which the Auditor General did an audit are trying to achieve affordable food, but we are not talking about more than \$1 billion. Bill C-234 would give our farmers a billion-dollar tax break on the carbon tax by providing them with a carve-out. During question period today, members raised individual cases of farmers who are paying thousands of dollars a month on their farms for things like grain drying. These thousands of dollars then have to be passed on to consumers.

In my riding, I think the closest connection we have to farms is our grocery stores. I say that because a lot of farmers and ranchers retire to my riding; a lot of multi-generational farmers and ranchers choose to retire in the city. There is a very large hospital in my riding, and retirees want closeness to services. They retire to the city, but their kids continue the farm operations. They continue the long-standing family tradition of owning and operating a family farm. They are all facing tens of thousands of dollars in additional costs that they must pass on to consumers. That is what happens every time there is an increase that the government imposes. This is not a market mechanism; this is an imposition. It is going up \$15 every single year. It does not care what the market says; it is just a government-imposed tax. It is simply driving up the costs of everything we buy in the grocery store.

As the Auditor General did an audit on these programs, I want to make sure people back home understand that the Senate continues to block Bill C-234 and not leave it to a vote because the Liberal senators do not want to see the vote. Liberal-appointed senators do not want to see a break for farmers of \$1 billion. That billion dollars would be huge in my riding and would make a huge difference to the price we pay for groceries.

Routine Proceedings

I always have a Yiddish proverb when I rise in the House. I think I may have forgotten once. The member for Edmonton West said “finally”, because he was waiting for this: “Truth never dies, but lives a [wretched] life.” That is a truth I want to share with the House today, because when we have heard from the government side, the Liberals' talking points are that they do not know how the Senate works. We do know how the Senate works. We have Conservative senators whom we caucus with. They explain to us what is going on on the floor of the Senate, what discussions are going on and which individual Liberal-appointed senators are leading the charge, making amendments and trying to stall at committees.

We have a bicameral system, two Houses in our Parliament. I am an Albertan, and I would like to see more elected senators. I hold firm to that position. A triple-E Senate is a long-standing Alberta position. Albertans have been demanding an elected Senate for generations now. We do have Senate elections. I want to pay homage to the fact that we do have them and that the Prime Minister should be appointing from our senatorial election list: Pam Davidson, Erica Barootes and Mykhailo Martyniuk, who is a proud Ukrainian Canadian. The government refuses to appoint them. The Prime Minister refuses to appoint a Ukrainian Canadian senator from Edmonton who earned the right to sit in the Senate by running in an election. I just checked, and he has received more votes, over 220,000 votes in the senatorial election, than any member of the House, including myself. I came near, as close as probably any other member, with over 44,000 votes in my riding. It was close, but not close enough to what Mykhailo got.

• (1230)

Some of our elected senators have received over 300,000 votes. They have earned the right, by universal suffrage in Alberta, to sit in the Senate and represent people and they have a right to do that.

Leading back to this audit and leading back to the Yiddish proverb that I shared, every single time the government rises in the House and tries to make a claim that we do not know how the Senate works, that senators are doing their jobs and that these are independent senators, I have not seen a single Conservative senator appointed by the government. I have not seen a single senator appointed by the government side that does not—

Mr. Charlie Angus: Larry Smith, Pamela Wallin, Patrick Brazeau, Mike Duffy.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I hear a member heckling again. It is the same voice I hear all the time, from the member for Timmins—James Bay. He spends more time heckling and talking about Toronto subways than he does about the people from Timmins—James Bay. I want to wish him good luck in a future life when he perhaps will try to go and get a pundit job with maybe the CBC; sorry, not the CBC because we are going to defund that once we earn the right to govern. Maybe he will have a good time at his condo in Toronto and will have a long time in retirement there when he keeps fighting for those subway systems that his constituents do not use. His constituents are also paying. They are seeing the sticker shock in their grocery stores, like my constituents are.

Farmers are paying a carbon tax that they get no relief from. This was not audited in the Auditor General's public accounts report here, but I am speaking of a \$1-billion tax relief for our farmers,

and they deserve it. They work hard. I see this in those who retired to my riding who are ranchers and farmers who spent 40 or 50 years doing back-breaking labour producing the food that we eat that is in our grocery stores. The government imposes new taxes and raises the personal income tax and in fact went after farmers when it went after professional corporations. It jacked up taxes. I watched an orchard farmer from Atlantic Canada break down and cry at the finance committee because he was facing the destruction of his business, pre-2019, when the government was changing the small-business tax rate. He wanted to be able to pass the orchard on to his daughters. That is the current government. This is what it does every single time.

Therefore, as we are standing here drawing the attention of Canadians, of the House of Commons and of members of Parliament and senators who are watching, we want the senators to pass Bill C-234 before Christmas and the faster the better, so that Canadians can put a good healthy meal on the table and have a merry Christmas this winter, which they deserve and they work hard for.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we see the Conservative Party playing a very unfortunate game. There is a substantial consequence to the games that the Conservatives play here. There is a great sense of disappointment that goes far beyond Ottawa, outside of Canada.

We were supposed to be debating report stage of the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement today. The Conservatives are determined not to allow that to proceed or even to allow it to come to a vote at the very least; that would have been the honourable thing to do.

The member's whole premise of his argument was based on the price of food and getting rid of the carbon tax. Ukraine has a price on pollution. It just seems to me that the Conservatives are being very reckless in their approach to dealing with the House. How does the member justify denying a vote on the Canada-Ukraine agreement?

• (1235)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I have respect for the member for Winnipeg North. He does the best he can for his Liberal side, rising consistently in the House and trying to do the best that he can with the miserable talking points that the Liberals receive.

Let us go back to the record. There is RADARSAT satellite imagery of where Russian troops went across the border. The Stephen Harper government gave access to the Ukrainian government to use RADARSAT. The government took it away in 2016 and denied the ability of Ukraine to prepare itself for a possible Russian invasion.

Former minister of foreign affairs, Stéphane Dion, at the foreign affairs committee used to claim that we must speak of Vladimir Putin and restore relations and talk to him wherever possible. The chair of that foreign affairs committee, Bob Nault, repeatedly said things that I would say were for the restoration of a pro-Russian line and speaking more to Russians.

That same party keeps denying that we already have a free trade agreement. The Liberals keep expecting that we could do more free trade now, but we already have a free trade deal with Ukraine.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we could engage in long debates with our colleague from Calgary Shepard over whether the Senate is necessary or whether senators should be elected. We could have a great discussion on that.

However, the Senate exists. It is there and it has to do its work of considering bills from the House of Commons. I felt the same frustration as my colleague when Bill C-11 was before the Senate. At the time, Conservative senators were the ones slowing down the process. Nevertheless, we let the Senate get on with its business.

Here is what happened: Conservative senators literally bullied women senators, including a Quebec senator who is a Paralympic athlete, the pride of Quebec and a wheelchair athlete admired by all Quebecers. Until recently, tweets by the House leader of the official opposition were still being posted from the lobby showing two photos of these senators, including the one who was forced out of her home for security reasons.

Does my colleague think that this is the best way to get the Senate to work faster?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about Bill C-11, which was passed in the Senate. I think there is a big difference when we are talking about a bill that seeks to determine what people have the right to access online, the freedom of speech that they should have and what the government can control on YouTube, Facebook and the Internet in general.

With regard to the cost of food, we know that more than two million people have visited food banks over the past few months. With Bill C-234, we see an opportunity to tell the Senate, as we have before, that we, in the House of Commons, are the ones who have the right to impose taxes and create tax credits. That is \$1 million for our farmers. It is an opportunity to ensure that people can put food on the table this Christmas.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on a day we are supposed to be debating Ukraine and the right to a free trade deal, with the Conservatives opposed, we hear about democratic Conservative senators, like Larry Smith; Leo Housakos, the bagman; and Pamela Wallin. I would use my favourite Yiddish phrase: This man cannot count to two.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, there is not enough time to respond to that ridiculous statement.

I just want to wish the member a happy defeat in the next election when the people of Timmins—James Bay send him packing, and I hope that he enjoys his retirement.

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[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Before I recognize the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, I would ask for a bit of decorum in the House.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by providing a comment on the type of leadership that we are seeing coming out of the Conservative Party today, and Canadians need to be very much aware of that.

By the way, I will be sharing my time with my friend and colleague, the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I must say that this type of leadership is disturbing. I often make reference to it as being the far right. If we take a look at someone like the former president Donald Trump and the way he catered to the far right in the U.S., what I am seeing more and more is the current leader of the Conservative Party adopting that extreme right, Donald Trump style, and we all need to be concerned about that.

There is a different way that the Conservative Party and its members put on that Conservative spin, and I want to be parliamentary, which deviates from the truth at times, if I can put it that way, and I am being exceptionally kind. Today what we are seeing from the Donald Trump party across the way is that its members have now put forward yet another motion of concurrence and, sadly, this is not the first time that they have done it on the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. We had to force them through the process of getting it out of second reading. If members recall, that happened on several occasions—

• (1240)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member for Edmonton West is rising on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, as a current member of the public accounts committee and a Public Accounts geek, I have read all three volumes, page after page, and none of what the colleague across the way has talked about has anything to do with Public Accounts volumes I, II or III.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons wishes to rise on the same point of order.

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[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on the same point or order, Conservatives obviously do not want to talk about this, and that is clear. The member is talking specifically about the motive; why Conservatives have tabled this motion. The motion is not even actually on the report itself; the motion is that we concur in the report. I think it is extremely germane that the member has the opportunity to express why he believes the Conservatives are trying to block this piece of legislation.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that there obviously needs to be a link with the report being debated, but members are given a lot of leeway. I invite the hon. parliamentary secretary to continue his intervention. He has eight minutes remaining.

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

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that point of order will be deducted from my time.

It is important to recognize the previous speakers talked at great length about the price on pollution, which coincidentally is the red herring Conservatives are using in voting against the Canada-Ukraine agreement, even though Ukraine currently has a price on pollution. There is a direct link between the behaviour the Conservative Party members have been expressing and the way in which they have been preventing this Ukraine-Canada trade agreement from ultimately passing.

They cannot have it both ways. They cannot say that they do not want a price on pollution and argue that for the last half hour and then say that I cannot deal with the argument of the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement based on the fact that the Conservatives do not want the price on pollution incorporated into the trade—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have read the Public Accounts and it does cover the price on pollution. It clearly shows that the government is taking more than it is actually distributing to taxpayers. However, that is in the Public Accounts; the free trade agreement is not. I ask you to bring the member to order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as we can see, Conservatives are very sensitive about this issue, and I can appreciate why. There is no doubt, especially if one is from the Prairies, that one has to be concerned about the reckless behaviour of the Conservative leader today. In essence, he is mandating every Conservative MP to vote against a trade agreement. That is going to have a profoundly negative impact on how many Canadians perceive the Conservative Party today, because of the mixed messaging.

The president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress even wrote a letter addressed to the leader of the Conservative Party. Maybe the members of the Conservative Party are not aware of this. I will not read the entire letter, but I will read a part that is very relevant to all members. One needs to keep in mind the reason we are debating what we are debating today; it is because Conservatives do not want to vote on this issue.

The issue is this: As the letter states, “The UCC therefore asks that the Official Opposition revisit their position on Bill C-57 and vote to support the Bill in 3rd reading.”

We were supposed to be voting at report stage today, which would ultimately see it go to third reading.

I suspect the reason for this is twofold. They bring up the issue of the price on pollution and food affordability. This is something we had a great deal of discussion on this past week, and we are going to continue to have that discussion; there is no doubt about that. However, today, the Conservative Party of Canada has taken a measure to prevent, once again, an important piece of legislation from being voted on. I find that very unfortunate, and I am not alone. I ultimately believe that not only people of Ukrainian heritage but also all Canadians will see through the games that are being played.

When Conservatives talk about the cost of food, let us recognize that one of the reasons Canada has some of the lowest food costs in the world is that it has things such as trade agreements. Our trade agreements provide opportunities in many different ways. I have often talked about the trade benefits in the province of Manitoba on many commodities. From canola to peas, pigs and all sorts of farm-produced products, the current government has consistently supported our farming communities, our rural communities. We recognize and value the many contributions they make, not only within the community and Canada but also throughout the world. Much of that is achieved by the status Canada has brought forward through the many trade agreements we have signed off on.

No government in the history of Canada has signed off on more trade agreements than the current Prime Minister and government have; we understand and appreciate the true value of trade agreements for all Canadians. That is why it is stunning and shocking to see the position the Conservative Party is taking on the Canada-Ukraine modernization agreement. It is not acceptable. This is something we would expect to see out of the MAGA conservatives in the United States, that far right element. This is why I am saying we have that Donald Trump element in the Conservative leadership across the way today. That is why we have the leader of the Conservative Party now instructing his members to vote against the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement.

● (1245)

I find that this is completely unacceptable and one of the reasons why I will continue to tell whomever is listening that this Conservative Party is reckless and it is not worth the risk.

We have seen that amplified today by the behaviour of the Conservative Party. Even if we had passed through and not had the debate on the Canada-Ukraine deal, we were then supposed to go on to Bill S-9. Bill S-9 deals with the convention of chemical weapons. We brought it in and we had to do it through the Senate. This is the second day that we have brought it forward, hoping to get it debated. The last time, it was on Wednesday. On Wednesday, the Conservative Party brought in another concurrence motion, in order to prevent Bill S-9 from being debated.

Draw a couple of lines and see where that brings us. On Bill S-9, I do not think Russia would be very supportive of it. If not directly then indirectly, there are some very strong links there.

That is the reason why, once again, I would suggest to us that we do need to listen to what Canadians are saying and listen to what some of the stakeholders like the Ukrainian Canadian Congress are saying.

Earlier, I asked if I could table the letter that was sent to the leader of the Conservative Party. Now I hope that they will ask for the leader to see a copy of it. Read the letter. Understand what it is that they are doing because it is not right.

• (1250)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Before I begin, I just want to recognize that there was a tragic car accident, I believe, two days ago in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, that took the life of a young volleyball player and injured multiple others. I just want to take a brief moment of silence and send my condolences to all those who are suffering. May eternal light shine upon that young man.

I have listened to my colleague's speech and what really troubles me is this: from the whole narrative, I will say it right here, Vladimir Putin is a thug. He is a dictator and I am fully on the side of Ukrainians.

We can talk about a vote and why we are doing what we are doing but to say that I am pro-Russia is deeply offensive. This is a time when we need to be united.

We could talk about the debates but to say that is highly—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what the member should do is tell his leader what he just finished saying to the chamber. Why did he vote against the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement? One cannot have it both ways.

Do not go around saying, "I am pro-Ukraine, I am not pro-Russia", and then vote against the Ukraine trade agreement. Who do we think that helps? Do we really think that this helps the people of Ukraine? Do we really think that this helps the people of Canada, in terms of trade agreements?

The Conservative Party has voted in favour of every other trade agreement except this one. Why? Why have they not done that? Is

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it because they come up with some sort of a red herring, because that is all it is?

Instead of telling the House, he should tell the leader of the Conservative Party what he just finished saying to the House and maybe the leader of the Conservative Party will understand that they have the wrong position on this issue.

[*Translation*]

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I would like a little decorum from the members, please.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak to the member for Winnipeg North through you. I want to offer him my sympathies for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers' loss to the Montreal Alouettes in the Grey Cup final.

That aside, we are having a discussion about protecting Canada's food system. Obviously, the Ukraine issue is important when it comes to inputs. I would like to talk about the other end of the chain.

I feel that Canada is not doing enough for our agricultural producers. What is happening in Ukraine has had an impact and driven up costs. Then there is climate change. There was a drought back home in my region.

Agricultural producers are struggling. They do not even have the option of deferring repayment of the Canada emergency business account for a year so they can keep a little more cash on hand. The federal government wants to make sure it basically bleeds them dry. It wants them to repay the money right away, even though they are barely making any income in the regions.

I would like my colleague to talk about the urgent need to supply an income to our agricultural producers to protect the Canadian food system.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am still hurting a bit about that loss, but I am glad it was Montreal. It was a great game.

We are talking about food security, and Purolator is a big supporter of the CFL and donates tons of food. I think that is a wonderful thing for it to be doing. I will compliment the CFL organization for making it a hugely successful Grey Cup game. Both teams played exceptionally well.

Having said that, the government has taken a number of measures to support our farming community, along with consumers, through direct subsidies in the form of rebates or grants to see expansion and diversification in our communities.

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• (1255)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for being very clear and certain as to the activities of this place and what we should be debating, which is the free trade agreement with Ukraine, an ally of Canada, a country that is currently at war. Warmonger Putin is unrelenting in his campaign against the Ukrainian people. That is why time is of the essence.

Would the member please speak to how important this bill is to Ukraine and Ukrainians here at home? What message does today's lack of debate on it represent to them?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I wish I had enough time to give a good explanation of how important this legislation is. We have to go back to 2014, from my perspective, when Ukraine wanted to expand trade relations with the European Union and wanted trade agreements with Canada.

It is such a critical thing to do. Hopefully, we will be able to get that legislation passed soon.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely disgusted with what we are seeing unfold here today in the House of Commons.

For those who are watching at home and those who might be tuning in, it is important to understand what happened here today. We put forward the Order Paper, and that Order Paper says what we plan to debate during the day. Conservatives would have seen on that Order Paper that we were taking the report back from committee, with respect to Bill C-57, the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. They knew it was our intention to debate this today.

For the fourth, fifth or maybe even sixth time, the Conservatives have, once again, used a concurrence motion to shut down debate on something they are absolutely afraid of talking about. I find it most egregious that this comes the day after the Ukrainian Canadian Congress published an open letter to the Leader of the Opposition that said:

The UCC was disappointed to see the Official Opposition vote against the adoption of Bill C-57, the implementation of which would modernize the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA).

Ukraine needs assistance in strengthening economic resilience. Ukraine's government has stressed that the modernization of CUFTA would play an important role in this regard.

The UCC therefore asks that the Official Opposition revisit their position on Bill C-57 and vote to support the Bill in 3rd reading.

The Conservatives knew this was coming. They put forward this particular concurrence motion the day after the Ukrainian Canadian Congress published this open letter.

There are two red herrings on this matter I would like to talk about. The first is the price on pollution, the carbon tax and the Conservatives' so-called reasoning for not supporting this. I would remind the House that we do not have to go that far back in Debates to see that they never talked about the price on pollution and they never talked about the carbon tax the entire time we first started debating this. They used every reason not to.

As a matter of fact, the first time I gave a speech on this, I stood in this exact same place and spoke to it as though it were a foregone

conclusion, that this entire House was going to support it. I talked for about 10 minutes, and then I sat down. The member for Cumberland—Colchester stood up and started to talk about the agreement as though it were woke legislation. I could not believe it. I almost fell over. Members can go back and review the tape. I stood up in shock. I did not know what was going on.

Then we started to find out, as little bits of information started to make their way forward, that that member and four other Conservatives travelled in June to London, where they had meetings with people from the Danube Institute, who also sponsored some of their travel. It is a right-wing Hungarian think tank that, coincidentally, has also referred to the Canadian and western approach towards Ukraine as being woke.

Then the Conservatives show up back here, a couple of months later, and they start parroting the exact same information from that particular organization. It is not a far stretch to understand why they are in this position. That is the first red herring.

The second red herring, the newly developed one that just came out of committee a couple of days ago, was when Conservatives tried to put forward amendments about arms. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan kept saying, "Ukraine needs". What Ukraine needs is for Conservatives to start listening to them when they say they want this agreement. What Ukraine needs is for Conservatives to listen to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress when it says they want this agreement. What Ukraine does not need are Vladimir Putin and the Conservatives telling it what it needs. That is not what Ukraine needs. It needs Conservatives to listen. Now it is in an open letter, which was just distributed yesterday.

Once again, we see the same tactics from the Conservatives. They have two red herrings, and it is a red herring because I reminded the committee members, when I was there earlier this week, that there was half a billion dollars in the 2022 budget for arms for Ukraine. They voted against that. They could perhaps somehow justify that being in the opposition meant they had to vote against the budget, but I went back and looked at the speeches from the four members who were in that committee, and not a single one of them actually spoke about those arms during the budget debate. It is a red herring.

It is red herring after red herring. The Conservatives are looking for reasons not to support it.

• (1300)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning relevance. If the member wants to speak to free trade, then he can speak to the free trade agreement when that bill comes up. He has not referred to public accounts for one second.

Further, on a second point of order, the Speaker has repeatedly made a very clear ruling in the House about comments such as those that the member made suggesting that we are supportive of the ruthless dictator Putin. We are clearly not.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that you bring this member back to the topic to end this rant and back from using unparliamentary language.

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, we are debating the concurrence motion on a report. We are not even debating the report. We are debating whether or not the report should be concurred in. I am speaking directly to the procedure and to why I think Conservatives are using this motion right now. I am extremely relevant on my points.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would invite the member to try to refer to the relevance of the motion we are debating.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, as you know, with procedure and traditions in the House, when a party is blocking legislation, in this case the Conservatives are blocking the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement with their procedural delays, it is perfectly legitimate that it be part of the debate. This refers to not only to the procedural motion blocking the Canada-Ukraine trade deal, which the Conservatives are opposing, but also, of course, the fact that they have moved this procedural motion to block the Canada-Ukraine trade deal. It is a perfectly legitimate point of debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are entering into debate on the point of order.

I would invite the member to bring some relevance to his comments, but it is true that we are in a concurrence debate.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, there is also the second point about the member's unparliamentary language.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Yes, members should be wary of using comments that the Speaker has already judged inappropriate.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have not said anything that is not factually true. The reality is that—

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

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, the Speaker ruled on this issue, and I ask that you enforce the rules of the House. It is ridiculous. This member should be ashamed that he repeatedly pushes this garbage upon the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member was referring to certain events, and I take it that is the point the hon. member is going to raise.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

• (1305)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I just want to reiterate that it is perfectly legitimate to point out that Conservatives have now moved from opposing to now blocking the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are now getting into debate on the point of order on a concurrence motion, so we are going back to the concurrence motion at hand.

The hon. member has the floor to finish his speech.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, Vladimir Putin has tried to tell Ukraine what it needs, and the world finds that to be incredibly offensive. When I sat in the trade committee earlier this week, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan tried to tell the rest of Canada what he believes Ukraine needs. My only point was to say that the people of Ukraine do not need either Vladimir Putin, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, or any Conservative member to tell them what they need.

They are very capable of telling us what they need, and they have told us that they need the Conservatives to start supporting them because Conservatives are not supporting them. I recognize the fact that this member and many other members feel really uncomfortable about this, and I encourage him to bring it up in his caucus meeting to start talking about why they are not supporting Ukraine and why they are coming up with these red herrings to try to make up reasons for not doing so.

My point is to tell members that I believe the reason Conservatives are doing this is that there are elements within their caucus that support these alt-right narratives that encourage the world to turn against Ukraine. Members do not need to take it just from me. They can take it from the Leader of the Opposition's very own supporters.

I published a poll on Twitter not that long ago in which I asked, "Do you support [the Leader of the Opposition] importing MAGA politics into Canada?" Ninety-one per cent of the respondents, of over 20,000 respondents, said yes. People do not have to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to remind the hon. member that one of the rules of the House is to not cause disruption. We are having a debate on a concurrence motion. I would invite the member to bring his speech to it because I am seeing a lot of disruption in the House, and I really do not stand for it.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, where is the disruption coming from? Is the disruption coming from me pointing certain things out and people feeling uncomfortable about that? Yes, it is very possible.

All I am trying to say is that I know for a fact, based on polling I have done on social media, that it is very well understood and regarded that a lot of the member for Carleton's supporters are all over my Twitter feed. They voted, and 91%, which is over 20,000 votes, said they support MAGA politics.

I am not even trying to draw a loose link here. I am giving a direct result. A lot of Conservative supporters support the alt-right movement. As a result, these Conservatives do not want to put themselves in a position where they could possibly lose some of those supporters to Maxime Bernier. That is what is going on here. Everything else is a red herring.

I think Canadians can see through it. I think Ukrainians can see through it. I think the Ukrainian Canadian Congress can see through it. It is becoming extremely clear to Canadians that Conservatives have turned their backs on Ukraine.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Before we go to questions and comments, I will remind the hon. members of the Speaker's ruling yesterday. It stated, "Going forward, I would ask all members to stay away from such inflammatory statements and to not attempt to make such provocative associations. Neglecting to do so may result in a member being cut off by the Speaker and a withdrawal being insisted upon." I just want to refresh everyone's minds about that so they try to stick to the subject of the discussions.

The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, in light of what you just said, and in light of what the member has just done, which is to speak about playing to alt-right people and the Conservative Party therefore trying to play to pro-Russian elements, I think this is completely germane to what you just raised. He should be withdrawing that statement.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I just reminded everyone of what the Speaker ruled yesterday, and I would like members to keep that in mind.

Continuing with questions and comments, the hon. member for King—Vaughan has the floor.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, does the member not realize, as I was raised, to not kick someone when they are down? That is exactly what the Liberal-NDP government is doing to the Ukrainian people.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I am speaking.

• (1310)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask other members to allow the member to finish her thoughts.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for King—Vaughan has the floor. She is asking a question of the member who just spoke, and I would welcome all members to be attentive to what the hon. member was asking.

The hon. member for King—Vaughan.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Madam Speaker, I am asking the member across the way, and I do not want him to have heart attack as it sounds like he is really emotional, if the Liberal-NDP government could explain to the Ukrainian people, who have been devastated by this war, why they would have to absorb an additional cost? We are for the Ukrainian people. We are not for incurring a devastating cost to them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, Ukraine already has a carbon tax. It has since 2011. It was part of getting into the European market. To suggest—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The same respect has to be given to both sides.

The hon. deputy government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, what a ludicrous defence they have. They are trying to suggest that we are imposing something on Ukraine that it already has. To make matters even worse, the Ukrainian president is asking for this. He came to this country. He signed the deal with the Prime Minister. I get a kick out of it when she says we are trying to kick somebody when they are down. That is literally what they are doing to Ukrainians right now.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to change tack.

First of all, yes, there is a connection between Ukraine and food security, because wars do nothing to help food security. Wars are not the only issue. There is also climate change.

Looking back at what happened in Quebec this summer, farmers were hit hard by the flooding and everything else, and they are asking Ottawa for emergency assistance. This request was made in August. It is now December, and Ottawa still has not provided any assistance.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right that climate change is going to impact farmers, probably more than anybody else. When we think about it, where we used to be able to grow certain crops in the world at one point, we will not be able to; suddenly, in other areas, we will be able to. This is a result of climate change. I strongly believe that the current government has been there for farmers and will continue to be there for farmers, to provide them with the supports that they need, particularly in relation to climate change.

The trumped-up rhetoric coming from the other side about a carbon tax, or a price on pollution, is absolutely just that. Of course, Conservatives always neglect to tell Canadians about the rebate they get out of that, which puts eight out of 10 Canadians in a better position compared to what they spent on the carbon tax.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives chose to vote against the Canada-Ukraine trade deal. On the Day of Dignity and Freedom, the 10th anniversary of Ukrainians reclaiming their democracy, which is profoundly symbolic, the Conservatives repudiated support for Ukraine.

Following that, the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, representing 1.5 million Canadians of Ukrainian origin, asked the official opposition to revisit its position on Bill C-57 and vote to support the bill in third reading. The reply from the Conservatives has been now to fully block the legislation before the House, to block any attempt to provide support to Ukraine.

What are the ramifications of the Conservatives' doubling down, first repudiating Ukraine on its Day of Dignity and Freedom and now blocking any attempt to provide support through the Canada-Ukraine trade deal?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It leaves me speechless, Madam Speaker. Eight years ago, when I was a new member of Parliament, I travelled with the defence committee to study operations Reassurance and Unifier. Members of the Conservative Party were there. The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman were there. They cared about Ukraine. They talked as though they were there to support Ukraine. Now, all of a sudden, they are absolutely silent.

I do not doubt the member Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman's commitment to Ukraine. What I have a problem with is how he is being influenced by the Leader of the Opposition and the alt right fraction of the Conservative Party of Canada.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives want to debate a report about food security within the federation that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts studied almost two years ago. The Conservatives' intentions are probably questionable, but unlike the members who like to play partisan games and the Canadian parties who can only argue with one another, I am quite happy to talk about food security. Even though this report was completed almost two years ago, it is still a very topical issue.

Indeed, for a supposedly self-respecting G7 country, Canada and Quebec still have major problems with food security.

Unsurprisingly, the report highlighted shortcomings regarding one fundamental duty of any self-respecting country: making sure its citizens do not go hungry. It is not a coincidence that Maslow's hierarchy of needs puts food at the bottom of the pyramid. I know that my colleague from Beauport—Limoulou will be very happy to hear me mention Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

It is also not a coincidence that many a monarchy in the not-so-distant past has been toppled by food riots. It is not that we want to preserve Canada's monarchy, but food security comes first.

Let us consider what this report tells us and, above all, what it says about the Liberal way of governing. Let us take a look at the Auditor General's findings.

First, in 2009, the government designated food as a critical infrastructure sector. That was written down back in 2009. However, the Auditor General noted:

...the government had not developed a national emergency preparedness and response plan that considered a crisis affecting the entire food system and Canadians' food security.

The pandemic struck in 2020. In 2009, food security was identified as a critically important issue. Eleven years on, the government still had no plan and still had done nothing to prepare for a crisis.

Second, the Auditor General noted:

...although gender-based analysis plus and sustainable development were considered during the design of each program, the responsible departments and agen-

Routine Proceedings

cies could not always measure gender and diversity outcomes, and the programs' contributions to sustainable development were not always clear.

How is that for another surprise? We can tell what really matters to the government in a crisis. Clearly, it is not sustainable development, women, visible minorities or gender minorities. Wow, just wow.

Third, the Auditor General noted the following:

...the responsible departments and agencies had many oversight controls in place for the delivery of the emergency food programs and monitored that the funding was spent as directed. However, [the Auditor General] also found some inconsistencies in program design, which led to unfair treatment of applicants and recipients across regions.

I will come back to that.

When the pandemic hit, the government decided to take action on food security. We were in crisis. With that in mind, the government created an emergency fund with various programs to address food security across the country. Criteria were established for how that money would be spent, especially for the organizations receiving it. Not surprisingly, some organizations did not meet the criteria, but they received government money anyway. Why is that? It is because we were in a crisis and money had to get out quickly, they said. However, that was not the real reason. The government is doing the same thing with Boeing.

Fourth, the Auditor General also noted the following:

...each of the programs helped to mitigate some effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on elements of Canada's food system. However, because of shortcomings in how the responsible departments and agencies gathered information, they could not show that they had achieved results against all of the outcomes intended to reduce food insecurity or support the resilience of food processors in the agriculture and agri-food and the fish and seafood sectors.

Again, there was absolutely no follow-up mechanism to determine whether or not the organizations, some of which received hundreds of millions of dollars, had met their objectives. That is just great. It is truly fantastic.

Let us come back to food security and the organizations that were selected for these emergency funds. The organization that was supposed to cover the beautiful nation of Quebec did not meet the criteria. That was La tablée des chefs. The department invited organizations to submit a request for the funding that was available rather than opening a competition to all. Does that not remind members of what happened last week when we learned that there had been no open competition? Does that not ring a bell for anyone? It is funny, because it does for me. Again, I am thinking of Boeing.

Routine Proceedings

• (1320)

The reason given by the department when I questioned it was that these are well-established and financially robust organizations with wide-ranging networks that cover the entire country. The first thing we see when opening the financial statements of that organization is that it received funds from the Canada emergency business account. Is that what we would call financially robust? I do not think so. What were the criteria for giving out hundreds of millions of dollars in emergency funding? It is difficult to fathom. How can one organization receive emergency funding and, at the same time, take part in a program of such magnitude?

Again, no surprise there: it is all in a day's work for the Liberal government. When the Liberal government gives an untendered \$9-billion contract, it claims that no decision has been made, that it is still unclear, but it still goes ahead. Once again, in a time of need or in a crisis, it brushes aside that which it considers to be unimportant. This time, it is Quebec's economy that is brushed aside to accommodate an American company, with no call for tenders, just as we see in this report.

As I mentioned earlier, food insecurity is always there, crisis after crisis. I do not know how long it will take for the government to realize that food security is an important issue. The pandemic might be behind us, but we are in an inflationary crisis. Looking at what the Auditor General wrote in her report in 2021, we can see that not much has changed, unfortunately.

Here is what the Auditor General said:

According to a May 2020 study by Statistics Canada [and we cannot argue with the numbers], food insecurity among Canadians rose during the COVID-19 pandemic to 14.6% (almost 4.4 million people), up from 10.5% (almost 3.1 million people) according to a 2017–18 survey. The May 2020 study also noted that the level of food insecurity for households with children was even higher, at 19.2%, [or almost one in five households] and reached 28.4% for those absent from work because of business closures, layoffs, or personal circumstances as a result of the pandemic.

What are we seeing? The situation is basically the same right now. This year, when the cost of basic necessities skyrocketed, the Liberal government simply allowed normal market forces to prevail, without intervening with any tangible measures. Take, for example, the fact that grocery prices have increased by about 10%. As a result, one in five Canadians are eating smaller meals, and one in 10 Quebecers are using food banks. Once again, this report was published in 2021 with data from 2020. It is now 2023, almost 2024, and as we approach the holiday season, we are still talking about food insecurity and food banks. One in 10 Quebecers are using food banks.

Four years later, having made zero investments in this area, the government may want to think about continuing to reflect, move forward and act. In 2019, the Liberals pledged to introduce a national school food program. Those were promises. There have been crises, yet we still have nothing, four years later. There is no national food program making sure children can go to school with full bellies so they can learn. The only thing we ask of them is to go to school. Kids are going to school hungry, and that is unacceptable in any self-respecting country.

While children go to school hungry, their parents wonder how they will pay the next grocery bill, and food insecurity is on the rise

in Canada, what are we learning? We are learning that this government is still taking its time setting federal standards that ignore all special local circumstances and that, after years of delays, it is still unable to ensure its citizens have a modicum of food security in the event of a disaster. The Liberals have not even considered including first nations in their approach, when it is obvious that isolated communities will be the first victims of a major disruption in the food supply.

How many more crises will it take before this government finally starts planning for the future?

• (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on a point of order.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, there have been consultations and I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find consent for the following:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, I seek unanimous consent to table petition e-4649.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today with a great deal of emotion to present the largest petition in the history of this Parliament. This petition has received no less than 286,719 signatures from Quebecers and Canadians.

Following the October 7 attack, when 1,400 Israelis lost their lives and 240 Israelis were taken hostage, the Israel Defense Forces heavily and indiscriminately bombarded the Gaza Strip. To date, 15,000 Palestinians have been killed, including 6,000 children, not to mention the tens of thousands of people left with life-altering injuries and trauma.

The 286,000 signatories are demanding an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Palestine conflict and asking Israel to lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip and meet its commitments under the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law. They are also calling on Canada to take any measure necessary to protect civilians, both Israelis and Palestinians, and help foster a climate conducive to building a lasting peace.

These 286,000 Quebecers and Canadians have spoken. I think the government needs to listen.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the ways to address food insecurity is through the strengthening of the Canadian agriculture sector and the agri-food processing sector. This is one sector of our economy that has always chosen free trade agreements and has made Canada the fifth-largest exporter in the world.

Does the member agree that strengthening the modernized free trade agreement with Ukraine would go a long way to further strengthen the Canadian agriculture sector, the equipment and machinery manufacturing sector that supplies to the agriculture industry, and the food-processing sector, which can work with rebuilding Ukraine and also provide for the prosperity of Canadians?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, our position has always been clear. Obviously, we support a free trade agreement with Ukraine, as long as the interests of Quebecers are well served.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to elaborate on how this situation will affect our farmers. Are we doing enough for our farmers from a public accounts perspective?

It is easy to look at other countries. Indeed, inputs are a major issue. This has changed in the past two years. My colleague reminded us that this report was produced two years ago. Are we doing enough for our farmers? I am thinking in particular of those who applied for CEBA loans. Could the government not have waited one more farming season?

I would like my colleague to elaborate on that.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for that brilliant question.

Indeed, we are not doing enough for our friends in the agriculture sector. We know that the sector has gone through a lot. Obviously, we talked about inputs costs. We talk about climate change, which has had a serious impact on crops. There is also the Canada emergency business account.

The Union des producteurs agricoles, a very important player, was among the first in the sector to note that the CEBA loan forgiveness repayment deadline needed to be extended by at least a year to help the agricultural sector, which is especially hard hit. That is what we want and what we are asking for.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1330)

[English]

FOREIGN HOSTAGE TAKERS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC) moved that Bill C-353, An Act to provide for the imposition of restrictive measures against foreign hostage takers and those who practice arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations and to make related amendments to the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, it is a first for me, as I stand here to speak to my own private member's bill, the foreign hostage takers accountability act.

I will start with the fact that we are very blessed to live in a nation that, at its core, values human rights, justice, equality and the rule of law. These are the principles that define who we are as a people, the story we have written thus far and the kind of country we want to protect and, frankly, build up.

These are also principles that are shared by many, but they are certainly not universal or even widespread around the world. There are still many places today where basic human rights are not recognized, where they are under attack and where simply being a Canadian can put one in grave danger.

When I proposed this legislation, the events of October 7th were not even within the realm of imagination. The brutal attack and subsequent hostage-taking by Hamas terrorists of innocent civilians on a holiday Saturday have cast an undeniable light on the power of hostage-taking, even thousands of miles away.

The events we bear witness to almost daily in the news impact the stability of our own country and, of course, of fellow democracies around the world. We watched the slow return of innocent civilians who had been viciously torn away from their homes and their families, at least those whose fate was not outright murder, .

Virtually every democratic administration on the U.S. side of the border, from Carter to Reagan, and here at home, from Harper to our current government, has had to cope with wounds inflicted upon them by state and non-state hostage-taking. This has tilted the histories of both of our nations.

The events of October 7th set a new precedent that is being watched very carefully by the most malevolent forces on earth, which happen to despise Canada no less than they do any other democracy of freedom-loving people. There has never been a comparable incident, in numbers or in its systemic nature, which has involved Canadians. In these events, hostages as young as 10 months old and as old as 85 were taken in an unusually ruthless way.

Private Members' Business

These hostages have subsequently become the focus of international hatred and violence in the streets of virtually every western city everywhere in the world. While the October 7th attack is not the focus today, it cannot be ignored.

The last two months opened a new chapter in hostage-taking that has proven to be a serious security threat in the world. It has the power to not only change the victims, who must live forever with the consequences and the trauma, but also the internal dynamics of sovereign countries.

Every malevolent force on earth has taken note of just how much power this hostage-taking has provided for its perpetrators. How we respond is truly going to matter as to how others will act. Our legislation must be adjusted accordingly.

In a world that is increasingly authoritarian, unsafe and, frankly, unstable, the threat of hostage-taking presents a real and pressing danger. Faced with these challenges, the importance of having comprehensive, up-to-date modern legislation to prevent and mitigate hostage-taking situations must be a priority. It must be something that we think about.

The truth is that most legislation dealing with terrorism generally only comes to be in the aftermath of the most egregious terrorist events. Virtually every major terrorism-related UN resolution or domestic law was only in response to the specific events that compelled injured international communities to change the rules regarding terrorism. Every leap in international and domestic law was forced on western democracies by the imaginative murderers of al Qaeda, ISIS or anyone of their ilk.

• (1335)

Canada has always risen, and should always rise, to defend civil liberties and freedoms wherever and whenever they have been challenged. On the beaches of Normandy, in the jungles of Rwanda and in the deserts of Afghanistan, we must ensure we can continue to rise to that occasion and must ensure we can protect innocent lives and assert our values as a nation.

That is why I have introduced this bill. If passed, this act would strengthen Canada's ability to deter, to minimize and to resolve instances where Canadians are taken hostage abroad. It would increase government power to levy sanctions, establish more support for families and provide incentives for global co-operation. It would be a vital tool in Canada's arsenal, helping us continue to protect the lives and rights of Canadians taken hostage or arbitrarily detained. It would provide valuable support here at home and to the loved ones of hostages, who endure long periods of sacrifice and extreme stress. We have seen that in recent cases.

The bill is not the silver bullet by any means to prevent and solve such incidents, but it is a necessary bullet in our arsenal as a democracy in order to deal with the bad actors more effectively and to limit the damage they can inflict on our country. Reviewing a list of the Canadian hostages taken abroad in recent years reaffirms this phenomenon. There is Nigeria, Mali, Pakistan, Haiti, the Philippines and of course China, the case in recent memory that affected two Canadians who sat in this gallery, the two Michaels.

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development studied complex consular cases in 2018, recommending unanimously that Canada should provide greater support to the families of hostages and establish a more transparent information-sharing structure. Many of those recommendations informed and influenced this bill.

I have worked in this space as a staffer in the prior government in the office of the minister of foreign affairs, and what I saw was a gap between what Canada could say and do. I decided to use my time as a parliamentarian here in this House to address that gap so that Canadians feel safe wherever and in whatever situation they might find themselves.

Many of my colleagues have reached out to me in recent days with questions, which I take as a positive sign, but if they have questions, it means others might have questions too.

First, I should make clear that this bill would not change Canada's current and long-standing policy of not paying ransom. We do not and should not ever provide financial rewards to those who seek to kidnap, imprison or otherwise harm our citizens. The proposed incentives in this bill are not a repudiation of that principle. Rather, as an extension from the foreign affairs report, these incentives would promote greater collaboration among the government, innocent third parties, NGOs and others so we can do everything possible to bring our loved ones home, to bring our Canadian citizens home.

Second, hostage-taking and arbitrary detention are not the same thing. Hostage-taking is a form of arbitrary detention. However, it goes further because it includes threats of physical violence or even murder if certain conditions are not met. In other words, the element of extortion is present in hostage-taking, and extortion is a grave threat to our entire country, the decisions we make, how we do business and our governance. Arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations occurs when an individual is arbitrarily arrested or detained "to compel action from, or exercise leverage over, a foreign government". I hope that provides some clarity so we can move forward into making this a new reality in Canada.

Private Members' Business

• (1340)

I would also like to thank a few key people and groups that have played a critical role in advancing this idea all the way to the floor of the House of Commons. First, I want to thank Sarah Teich, Danny Eisen, Sheryl Saperia and Stacey Granovsky for their long-standing work on the issue and on the legislation, and on behalf of Canadians at Secure Canada. I want to also thank strong advocates such as my friend Irwin Cotler, one of Canada's greatest advocates for human rights, and to acknowledge support from groups like the Iranian Justice Collective, Muslims Facing Tomorrow, Muslims Against Antisemitism, The Greater Toronto Kurdish House, Hong Kong Watch and the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, just to name a few, and from synagogues and churches. I also, of course, want to thank my own staff, who have worked on multiple iterations of something that had long been in my brain and in the brains of some of my colleagues to make that a reality and bring it through the process. We must never underestimate how much work goes into that process.

These organizations, advocacy partners and our own staff understand that this concept needs to be enshrined in law because that is the way democracies establish our values and what actually matters. Statements, including statements we have heard over the last number of years, simply do not cut it any more. That is what we have become very good at in this country in far too many instances.

I will be slightly crass for a moment and say that we do not just declare our objections to things like child abuse or intimate partner violence; we legislate them. We establish them as truths of our value system through law. Law is the last arena we have in which we can level the playing field against forces, including the hordes gathering around the world that are currently applauding the dismemberment of babies and the rape and mutilation of women and children. They will inevitably be back to applaud such other atrocities against those they consider deserving. There is simply no way, given the millions of trips that Canadians take a year and the tens of thousands of Canadians living outside the country in dangerous places, that the Government of Canada, regardless of its politics, regardless of who sits in what seat, will be left unscathed by this.

The bill is about protecting Canada as much as it is about protecting Canadians. It is about protecting the sovereignty of the Canadian government and the lives of Canadian citizens. Voting against it would delight the hostage-takers around the world, and I ask the House to please do not give them that satisfaction, particularly after what we have seen in the last two months around the world. Every Canadian deserves to be safe and secure. They deserve a government that can help them when things go wrong. I think that anything we can do to make that a reality is worth doing. Anything we can do to make sure we bring Canadians home safely needs to be done. I hope that all my colleagues from across all parties will support the legislation.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know that the member mentioned that she worked in the office of the minister of foreign affairs in a previous government, and she said that she had identified some gaps. I would just be curious to find out what this particular bill includes to address the gaps she outlined.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, the bill has, effectively, three pieces.

It has a dedicated sanctions mechanism that we could impose on other countries. Second, it would increase support to families, which has been a big gap that was identified, making sure that the Canadian government is communicating and providing supports to the families of those who have been kidnapped or arbitrarily detained and who live without them for so long. The third important thing is that it recognizes that none of this happens alone. Getting Canadians back into the hands of the Canadian government and back onto Canadian soil does not happen without some kind of partnership. The bill would fully give the minister the discretion to provide compensation to those who cooperate in the international community, not those who are the ones detaining but those who provide any information to be able to help bring our loved ones home.

• (1345)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, sometimes there are bills that come before the House that require royal recommendation and, typically, those types of bills do not get through. I had some concerns when reading through the bill as to whether or not this one was going to fall into that category.

I wonder if the member can comment as to whether or not she has had any advice on that and whether it would require royal recommendation.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I have had some advice on that. We are willing to discuss that, hopefully when the member votes in favour of this bill and we send it to committee to make the appropriate changes so that, something as important as this, at a time like this, can be made a Canadian law by all members of this House.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, during my speech, I will come back to the Bloc Québécois's position on the bill. For now, I would like to ask the member a question.

Does she not get the impression that perhaps a bit too much discretionary power is being given to the minister and that, conversely, there may not be enough checks and balances?

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, it would be up to the government's discretion. The act would expand the government prerogative rather than restrict it. Right now, the minister is restricted from being able to use any kind of compensation to seek or reward co-operation. We want to provide that prerogative, but in an additional way, to be able to bring home Canadians safely and give people the incentive to co-operate with Canada in a way they do not have currently.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Thornhill for bringing forward this legislation. It is very commendable. I think everyone in the House recognizes the part about bringing Canadians home as being so important.

Private Members' Business

My one worry with this bill is this. I certainly hope we can address at committee, when it goes there after second reading, the idea of incentivizing PR, the monetary incentives. Does the member have any thoughts on whether or not that could be exploited or if there is a risk there? It feels to me that, when we put up PR as something that can be used as a carrot, the potential for exploitation is really high in that situation.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, certainly that is a concern. I think the bigger concern is that, right now, there is no incentive for any kind of co-operation. We wanted to ensure that the discretion lies entirely with the minister to be able to provide that and to be able to make an informed decision, with the help of the brilliant public service we have in this country, to make sure we are doing that in a way that helps bring people home, rather than of course to play into the hands of those trying to exploit the system.

• (1350)

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, promoting and protecting human rights, a rules-based international order, the rule of law and judicial independence are principles that are integral part of Canada's foreign policy and that will continue to guide the Government of Canada's efforts with respect to arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations.

This practice of arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations undermines our democratic values and our security. It also threatens the foundation of our international system, which is based on trust and friendly relations between states. The taking of hostages by terrorist groups often affects innocent civilians and poses a serious threat to national security. We need to be aware of the immeasurable impacts that these practices have not only on victims, but also on their families, their friends and their supporters around the world.

That is why Canada has implemented a strong system for dealing with hostage takings, which includes the recent appointment of a senior official responsible for hostage affairs. That is also why Canada launched the initiative against arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations about three years ago, and that is why Canada is leading the fight against arbitrary detention.

When states target foreign nationals for diplomatic pressure or retaliation, they endanger the security and freedom of all people who travel, work, study or live abroad. People should never be used as bargaining chips. For the victims, their families and friends, the human cost is profound. We know that it is extremely difficult for victims and their loved ones to recover.

Not only do these practices blatantly violate the rights of those affected, they also jeopardize friendly relations between states, international co-operation, security, travel and trade. What is more, they undermine the rule of law. Arbitrary detentions and convictions for diplomatic purposes compromise the independence of the judicial process while undermining international norms and values.

In light of these grave concerns, in February 2021 we launched the Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations, an international effort to discourage, and ultimately end, this

practice among states that arbitrarily arrest, imprison and convict people in order to exert diplomatic pressure. The declaration establishes a common front and lays the groundwork so we can put an end to this abhorrent practice through international co-operation. It aims to protect innocent people from becoming pawns in bilateral disputes.

In that sense, the declaration is about human rights and a rules-based international order. It helps not only protect citizens, but also revitalize the basic principles of co-operation, loyalty and mutual respect between states. It is also a question of international security. Arbitrary detention as a tool of political pressure engenders fear and mistrust between peoples and states. It undermines opportunities for dialogue and hinders bilateral co-operation at a time when the world needs it most.

Since 2021, Canada has consistently mobilized the international community against this unacceptable form of diplomatic leverage. The coalition of states supporting the declaration has grown from 58 to 75 signatories and comprises countries from all over the world. In recent months, the declaration has received the support of Barbados, Dominica and Grenada. The declaration also has the support of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the G7. This growing number of endorsements and expressions of support is a testament to the international consensus that is building to call for an immediate end to this insidious and unacceptable practice.

Canada is playing a leadership role in rallying support around the world for the declaration and moving this critical file forward for all nations.

• (1355)

These efforts are a testament to Canada's commitment to finding peaceful and effective multilateral solutions to pressing global issues.

As part of the initiative against arbitrary detention, Canada put forward a partnership action plan, which was welcomed by G7 ministers in May 2021. The partnership action plan advances the declaration by establishing six areas for international co-operation to stop arbitrary detentions. They include advocacy and awareness raising, research, case tracking, information sharing, and civil society and multilateral organization engagement.

Canada continues to take every opportunity to hold international discussions on the use of arbitrary detention as a political tool. In addition to holding bilateral talks, Canada is leading a multilateral awareness raising campaign by bringing the issue up at the United Nations General Assembly and the UN legal committee, which considers legal matters of interest to UN member states.

Private Members' Business

Canada has also sent messages concerning arbitrary detention to the European Parliament and continues to be asked to lead discussions on the subject at major international events. In addition, Canada facilitates crucial discussions on this issue in order to create a space for countries that support the declaration to share their viewpoints and advance the objectives of the partnership action plan.

On the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and the foreign affairs ministers of Malawi and Costa Rica, co-hosted a high-level dialogue on arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations with the participation of 20 foreign affairs ministers and 100 guests. I was there and it was a packed house. An important conversation took place in the fight against arbitrary detention.

This dialogue revealed the growing coalition of countries that support this initiative. It also deepened international partnerships for a more coordinated response to future cases of arbitrary detention. It provided an opportunity to reiterate the importance of establishing international standards to fill gaps in international law, while anchoring the issue in the multilateral agenda.

We will continue to fight tirelessly against arbitrary detention, while recognizing the need to fill the gaps in the multilateral system on this issue. To that end, we announced the creation of a new, independent, international expert panel that will strive to entrench the principles of the declaration into existing international laws, organizations, and mechanisms. This panel will be composed of eminent jurists from around the world, who will formulate an authoritative opinion on the state of this issue in the international system and who will seek to identify effective legal tools and mechanisms to fill the gaps.

Although the purpose of arbitrary detention is to influence state-to-state relations, we are well aware of the human repercussions of this heinous practice. Many people in the world and their families are living a nightmare, wondering when they will see their loved ones again. Canada continues to stand in solidarity with the victims, survivors and families who have endured this terrible practice that blatantly violates the fundamental rights of everyone affected.

In addition to providing personalized consular services to Canadian victims and their families from the beginning to the end of a case, we will also continue to involve our partners, as well as individuals who have been detained before and their families, in our efforts, so that we can share best practices and lessons learned. The approach that we are taking must always be well-thought-out and informed by extensive knowledge of and experience with this complex and difficult issue.

As the debate continues, I look forward to working with the member for Thornhill and all members of the House to strengthen our efforts and our determination to fight against arbitrary detention and hostage takings in state-to-state relations, and I commend the member for Thornhill for introducing this bill.

• (1400)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are discussing Bill C-353.

This is a vitally important measure for protecting the rights of our fellow citizens, but the text of the bill raises some crucial questions and legitimate concerns.

When the member for Thornhill introduced her bill, she said it would “strengthen Canada's ability to deter, minimize and resolve instances of hostage-taking by increasing governmental power to levy sanctions, by establishing a family liaison office and by providing incentives for foreign co-operation.”

The bill states that its purpose is “to enable the Government of Canada to take restrictive measures against foreign nationals, foreign states or foreign entities that engage in hostage taking or arbitrary detention [of Canadians]”, “to ensure that families of such hostages and detained individuals receive timely information and assistance”, and “to encourage individuals to cooperate with the Government of Canada to secure the release of such hostages and detained individuals.”

The minister responsible for enforcing this bill would be the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In keeping with its commitment to defending the rights of all human beings, the Bloc Québécois recognizes this bill's laudable intent. It seeks to fight against arbitrary detention, protect citizens who have been taken hostage and provide vital support to the families involved. However, it is important to recognize the substantial flaws in the bill as it now stands.

The very essence of the bill deserves to be commended. It seeks to take restrictive measures against acts of arbitrary detention or hostage takings committed by foreign entities. This bill also highlights the critical need to help the families of hostages and encourage co-operation for their release.

The bill seeks to take restrictive measures against foreign nationals, foreign states and foreign entities that engage in hostage taking or arbitrarily detain Canadians, Quebecers or eligible protected persons. The Department of Foreign Affairs will also have to provide assistance to the families of such hostages and set up programs to encourage co-operation for the release of these Canadians and Quebecers. The bill will make related amendments to the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

That being said, the bill creates grey areas and raises concerns that need to be addressed. The Conservatives claim that it will protect Canadians and Quebecers detained abroad based on unfounded accusations, but they should realize that the bill would not have stopped the recent detentions that had the whole world holding its breath. The bill implicitly refers to the two Michaels and the Meng Wanzhou saga, but it would never have prevented their detention.

Private Members' Business

The bill also gives the government the power to pay money to individuals who provide information on or help hostages. This could have the opposite effect because kidnappers could figure out a way to indirectly receive payment from the federal government, even if the government does not pay the ransom. In other words, ironically, this could create an incentive to take hostages. The bill has some major flaws, including the possibility that Canadians and Quebecers could be forbidden from providing goods or services to foreign states. That could expose ordinary citizens to severe and unfair consequences, like significant prison sentences of up to five years.

Moreover, the discretionary power granted to the government without an appropriate judicial review mechanism raises legitimate concerns about the potential for abuse. The bill is overly broad in scope and lacks appropriate judicial review mechanisms. It gives broad powers to the minister without any real judicial checks and balances. It is essential to recognize the importance of this issue while also considering the potential implications of this bill.

A thorough committee review is imperative to address glaring gaps and ambiguities that could lead to unintended consequences. That is why we will be voting for the bill at this stage.

We have a responsibility to protect the rights of our constituents while avoiding the legal and diplomatic pitfalls that could result from this legislation. We must work together to strike a balance between protecting Canadians and Quebecers and maintaining international relations.

• (1405)

The Bloc Québécois will continue to support the fundamental principle underlying this bill, while urging the House to make substantial changes to guarantee its enforceability and its consistency with the democratic values that we defend.

Bill C-353 will have to be studied in committee and amended; otherwise, the Bloc Québécois will probably not support the bill at third reading, if it gets that far. That being said, again, we support it at this stage.

In closing, we must join our efforts to draft a bill that will preserve the rights of our fellow citizens without compromising our international relations. To ensure we get this bill right, we must carefully study it in committee and make crucial adjustments so as to strike this delicate balance between protection and co-operation.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Thornhill for introducing Bill C-353. At a time when Canadians and people around the world are concerned about cases of hostage-taking and arbitrary detention, we are all desperate to see action in having people returned who have been taken hostage.

The member for Thornhill spoke about the brutal, horrific hostage-taking by the terrorist organization Hamas on October 7. Everyone in the House felt the brutality and horror of that. The stories we have heard from that have rocked all of us. We have all been disgusted, and our humanity has been tested.

As a mother, I cannot even imagine what some of these families have gone through. I watched a mother reuniting with her teenage

daughter recently on social media. I tried to imagine what this mother and her daughter had to go through. She hugged her daughter; I thought if it were my daughter, I would never be able to let go. It really touched me because I have a teenage daughter.

Of course, New Democrats want Canadians who have been taken hostage or arbitrarily detained to be safely repatriated and for those responsible to be held accountable, which is why we are happy that this legislation came forward. Obviously, it is unacceptable that Canadians who work, live or have family members abroad should worry about whether their loved ones will have access to the correct consular services if they are needed.

New Democrats have worked at the committee level, and we feel strongly that there is a better response to situations of hostage-taking and arbitrary detention. Previous studies, including the 2018 study by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on consular assistance, as the member for Thornhill mentioned, have shown that consular services have failed to protect Canadians who were detained overseas in the past.

When the member for Thornhill introduced this bill in the House, she stated, "It would strengthen Canada's ability to deter, minimize and resolve instances of hostage-taking by increasing governmental power to levy sanctions, by establishing a family liaison office and by providing incentives for foreign co-operation." While we think these are commendable objectives, New Democrats are very concerned with the methods by which Bill C-353 seeks to achieve these ends. That is why we will be supporting this bill at second reading, but we need some serious study to be undertaken before we can support it at third reading.

I am going to talk about some of the concerns that New Democrats have. First of all, in terms of increasing governmental power to levy sanctions, Bill C-353 aims to impose restrictive measures, such as seizing property and assets, to deter individuals and entities from dealing directly or indirectly with those responsible for hostage-taking or the arbitrary detention of Canadians. However, the bill does not clarify for me what that "indirect dealing" is. Is this merely something that the Governor in Council has discretion to decide? Which individuals or entities are deemed responsible for complicity? For me, that is not clear enough, and without that detailed clarification, there is a risk of ambiguity and subjectivity that could leave a grey area. Innocent Canadians who provide financial support to charitable or relief organizations or directly to family members overseas might find themselves targeted by the bill, so we have to be very cautious that there is not unintentional harm being caused.

When it comes to the idea of helping the families of victims, this bill could do more. I feel that it is inadequate in terms of helping with the needs of families. First, the member said that this bill would establish a family liaison officer, yet nowhere in the bill does it mention this officer or even provide a framework for it. Second, the bill would not guarantee much-needed mental health supports to families of victims, and I think that is where Canada can do more. Third, this bill would do nothing to decriminalize private ransom payments, a mechanism that is essential for many families to resolve such cases. This is something that we could look at again.

I also want to highlight something, going back to the question I asked earlier of the member. In terms of providing incentives for foreign co-operation in locating and repatriating victims, this bill would do two things.

● (1410)

First of all, it would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to enable the MFA to provide PR status to foreign nationals who would otherwise be inadmissible or fail to meet the requirements of the IRPA. They could be free from any applicable criteria, obligations, payments or fees so long as they provide information that leads to the release and repatriation of a Canadian national or eligible protected person. The second thing the bill would do is give the MFA the ability to pay monetary rewards to informants who provide information that leads to the release of victims.

Obviously, one of the concerns I have is that handing out free PR and monetary rewards to individuals in exchange for information opens a pretty dangerous precedent and a pretty dangerous avenue for exploitation that we would be very concerned about. For example, who is to say these potential informants would not be co-operating with criminals? How do we know? It is not much of a leap to think some nefarious individuals would use these conditions to their advantage. I am not sure if this bill addresses that adequately, so I have some serious concerns with that.

Despite these concerns, New Democrats still feel this bill is good. It just needs a lot of work and more study so that in the future, victims and their families are better protected and supported abroad and at home.

We have a few recommendations that we will be bringing forward. Some of these recommendations seek to improve the resolution of instances of hostage-taking and arbitrary detention, and to truly support the families of the victims.

We would like to see, for example, that mental health supports are provided to families of victims and that they are guaranteed access to mental health support. We would like to establish a framework to track the extent to which consular services meet service standards and produce post hoc review reports to assess consular personnel performance. Being able to measure is part of how we make sure we are doing what we can to support families. We should also establish a framework for a family liaison office to meaningfully improve communications with families and should work toward decriminalizing the private payment of ransom in a foreign context.

Those are some of the supports we will be bringing forward at committee as we work to strengthen this piece of legislation. New

Private Members' Business

Democrats feel, as I think all members of this House feel, that Canadians and their families deserve to be cared for. They deserve to be supported during the terrible, extremely painful and extremely dangerous situations where one of their loved ones is being held hostage or arbitrarily detained.

We will be supporting this bill at second reading, and we will do what we can to work with all parties and the member for Thornhill to make sure this legislation is as strong as it possibly can be. Let us protect Canadians and do everything we can to bring hostages home.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for the introduction of Bill C-353, the foreign hostage takers accountability act.

Canada's promotion of human rights and a rules-based international order are pillars of our foreign policy. The practice of arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations undermines our democratic values and our security and threatens the foundation of our international system, which is based on trust and amicable relations between states. Incidents of hostage-taking by terrorist groups often ensnare innocent civilians and pose significant threat to national security. We also recognize the immeasurable impacts that these practices have, not only on victims but also on their families, their friends and their supporters around the world.

This is why Canada has responded. Almost three years ago, we launched the initiative against arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations, and we have been playing a leadership role in the fight against arbitrary detention. In addition, to deal with instances of hostage-taking by terrorist groups, we have put in place a robust system and most recently named a senior official for hostage affairs. Our government continues to explore all options to deter, prevent and respond to these egregious acts and to defend the rights of Canadians.

I welcome this opportunity to discuss the proposals in the private member's bill introduced by the member for Thornhill. I believe that all members in this House agree that Canada must continue to uphold its firm commitment to protect Canadians, to defend human rights and international peace and security, and to respond to cases of wrongful detention and hostage-taking in an effective and meaningful way.

Private Members' Business

To respond effectively to the egregious practices of arbitrary detention and hostage-taking, we must have the appropriate tools and services in place. These issues are incredibly complex, and any response must be very carefully considered. Bill C-353 focuses on the tools at the government's disposal to combat arbitrary detention for diplomatic leverage as well as hostage-taking of Canadians, permanent residents or eligible protected persons outside Canada. We agree on the importance of enhancing the tools available to the government and of refining our approach. However, these issues are incredibly complex and any response must be carefully considered in order to minimize any potential harm to victims. Our overriding concern must always be the well-being of the detainees. Therefore, my remarks today will focus primarily on this consideration.

This bill addresses two extremely serious but distinct issues: arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations and international hostage-taking. The motivations, tactics and risks of harm to the victims can vary greatly. For example, while a state may be more receptive to diplomatic pressure to release a hostage, non-state actors may be less responsive to this type of pressure. Also, the risks of serious harm to the victim may vary across such cases. Every situation is unique and each case therefore requires a sophisticated and tailored response.

Further, there are distinctions to be made among types of hostage-taking incidents. There are those involving terrorist entities versus those perpetrated by criminal groups. In general, the government considers hostage-taking by terrorist groups as a threat to national security and therefore our response differs compared to how we deal with kidnappings by criminal gangs, for instance. This bill, however, proposes the same set of tools for all of these scenarios and would mandate some actions on the part of government in response to these cases, which raises a range of concerns.

We know that an effective response must be designed to respond to each unique situation to ensure the safe release of the victim. Moreover, the imposition of sanctions must be very carefully considered. The pros and cons must be weighed in each case. Imposing sanctions during a hostage situation could, for example, increase the risk that the hostage is mistreated in retaliation by his or her captors.

● (1415)

The use of monetary and migratory incentives, as the bill proposes, may give rise to serious unintended consequences. It could increase the amount of false information provided by opportunistic individuals, including those associated with captor groups. This could complicate investigative work and leave families more vulnerable to scams by predatory individuals seeking a payday. In fact, there is potential that this could create a market for hostage-takings in Canada.

I think we can all agree that no member of the House wants to see taxpayer dollars ending up in the hands of terrorist organizations. No member wants to increase risk for Canadians travelling, working or studying abroad. Further, the reporting and information-sharing provisions in the bill also require careful consideration in order to avoid any potential repercussions to efforts used to secure release of detainees. In pursuing the safe release of a Canadian, we must always be very careful about how information is shared. It is

imperative that we not share information that could jeopardize negotiations for the safe release of a detainee. It is also important that we have the discretion to share information with families of victims as and when appropriate. There are cases where victims do not want to have their information shared with family members, for instance. Family dynamics can be complex. We must respect their wishes.

Responding to these egregious practices and protecting Canadians are priorities for the government. As a result, many programs, policies and authorities have already been put in place and are being used to support Canadians facing arbitrary detention and hostage-taking. I am pleased to confirm that we already have, in our tool kit, many of the elements that are proposed in Bill C-353.

First, Canada already has two autonomous sanctions regimes, which have been used to respond to a variety of circumstances in the international context, including gross and systemic violations of human rights. Further, existing legislation, such as the terrorist financing provisions in the Criminal Code, and regulations regarding sanctions related to terrorist entities, already impose asset freezes and dealings prohibitions on terrorist groups.

Second, the government has an established set of mechanisms to assist victims and their families. For example, there are robust policies and practices in place to adopt a trauma-informed approach to aiding former hostages and their families.

Global Affairs Canada has implemented standard operating procedures, and works closely with other governmental organizations and external partners in efforts to resolve these cases. There are also existing programs and funding mechanisms that facilitate access to financial support, medical assistance and counselling for Canadians. We continue to refine and enhance our approach to ensure effective and tailored support to victims and their families.

No one doubts that the government must have effective tools and programs to respond to the egregious acts of hostage-taking and arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations. Bill C-353 is an example of the House's recognition of this fact. Nonetheless, we require solutions that are carefully considered and that are informed by deep knowledge and experience of the challenging, complex issues. It is clear that a one-size-fits-all solution may have unintended consequences, and that having the discretion to respond to a particular case, depending on the circumstances at hand, is key to an effective, victim-centred approach.

As debate continues, I look forward to working with the member for Thornhill and with all members of the House, to enhance the tools at Canada's disposal and to reinforce our commitment to address arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations and hostage-taking.

I will just comment briefly on my intervention earlier today, when I asked the member for Thornhill about royal recommendation. Royal recommendation is something that is very rarely afforded to a private member's bill. I know this for a fact, because I brought a bill before the House early in my time as a parliamentarian that did require royal recommendation, and my very own government did not give royal recommendation to the bill. The bill did, nonetheless, still pass, as far as it could go without the royal recommendation, with the support of all members of the House. However, we cannot underestimate the importance of triggering such an action by the government. What is of critical importance is recognizing that when royal recommendation is required, it is very easy to allow it to go through in one particular case, but setting a precedent is where it becomes very dangerous.

• (1420)

I understand any government's reluctance, whether it is Liberal, Conservative or NDP, to use a royal recommendation based on that rationale. Nonetheless, I look forward to continuing discussion on this important bill.

Mr. Shivaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-353, the foreign hostage takers accountability act. On my first day in the House as a member of Parliament, my dear friend, the hon. member for Thornhill asked me to second this bill. It was inspired, in part, by a report copublished by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the Canadian Coalition Against Terror, now known as Secure Canada, entitled "Fighting back against global hostage-taking".

In my previous, non-partisan life, where I founded and led the Macdonald-Laurier Institute's foreign policy practice, I had the opportunity to work with the authors of this report, Sarah Teich, Daniel Eisen and Sheryl Saperia. As the hon. member for Thornhill so eloquently noted, their contributions to securing victims of terrorism, of extremism and of hostage-taking are, frankly, unparalleled.

The hon. member for Thornhill knows this. She is not only the sponsor of this legislation and my deputy leader but also a fierce Canadian proponent for human rights, unafraid to challenge authoritarians who would do Canadians harm. Therefore, I am especially proud to rise in this chamber as her cosponsor today, in support of the champions who contribute ideas and in support of a fearless legislator who knows how to turn those ideas into laws.

I have three reflections on this legislation, looking at hostages and sanctions, support for families and co-operation with third parties. In the past decade, we have seen Canadians increasingly seized as hostages by terror groups and authoritarian regimes.

In China, the world watched Xi Jinping's "wolf warrior diplomacy", holding Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor for over 1,000 days as retaliation for arresting Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou.

At the same time, there were several cases of Canadians receiving harsher sentences in China. Robert Schellenberg, a Canadian who was convicted for alleged drug smuggling in China, previously sentenced to 15 years in prison, was retried and sentenced to the death penalty. Fan Wei, another Canadian, received the death penalty

shortly after the Meng arrest. In Iran, the clerical regime arrested Saeed Malekpour, a Canadian permanent resident originally sentenced to the death penalty, while visiting his ill father.

Private Members' Business

Today, we see Hamas, a sadistic death cult, using their own people as human shields and murdering innocent Israelis and Canadians. Hamas has proven that they only have one goal. It is to eradicate the Jewish people and any freedom-loving person who stands in their path. They have shown that they do not care about any civilian life and are willing to use innocent hostages, right now, as bargaining chips to further their terror apparatus.

By clearly directing that sanctions may be implemented against states and individuals alike, if they are responsible for engaging in hostage-taking and arbitrary detention in state-to-state relations, this bill provides the tools necessary to combat these crimes and gives greater teeth to the government in stopping our enemies from taking hostages in the first place.

Alarm bells are ringing across the world, and the urgency to protect and defend our citizens has never been higher. This brings me to my second point, which is the need for tools to support families of hostage-taking.

When confronted by authoritarians and their use of hostages by those who practice state terror as statecraft, we currently have limited tools in this country to defend our own people. Families are often left in the dust, with varying levels of support. Canada has not taken enough meaningful action to combat or deter this behaviour. In the case of Zahra Kazemi, her family could not even seek damages from the Iranian regime.

Even when people are freed in swaps, this has incentivized future hostage-taking. Moreover, it sends a message to brutal forces around the world that they can take our people and get away with it.

We will ensure that these bad actors are isolated from participating in the global economy and that justice is brought upon them. In this legislation, victims and their families will be at the forefront of the government's efforts. Families struggling with mental health issues will get access to the quality services and support they deserve. Those who have been left in the dark on the status of their loved ones will finally receive timely updates from Ottawa.

In terms of my third point, tools are needed to enhance co-operation with third parties to secure the release of Canadian hostages. By granting the minister the ability to communicate and collaborate with foreign states, this legislation would enhance our ability to bring our people home. Whether a person is a citizen, a permanent resident or refugee, we will fight tooth and nail for them.

Private Members' Business

In terms of those abroad offering valuable information on the status and location of hostages, we will protect them, stand with them and make sure that we fight for them and their repatriation. Bill C-353 would give the government the discretion to do just that; it would keep those who assist us safe by granting the minister the ability to consider immigration status for them and their families.

• (1425)

To close, we have a responsibility to protect and defend our innocent civilians from the evil that roams this earth. This common-sense legislation is long overdue. We need to be providing hostages and their families the support they need and the justice they seek. We need to target the authoritarians and brutal regimes who think they can hold Canadians captive with zero consequence.

I am proud to stand with the hon. member for Thornhill. To my colleagues across this chamber, this need not be a partisan under-

taking. Let us make it a parliamentary one by supporting this bill today.

• (1430)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:30 p.m., the motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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Ms. Lantsman	19351
Bill C-353. Second reading	19351
Mr. Drouin	19353
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