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Tuesday, December 5, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages entitled “Adaptation of CBC/Radio-Canada’s Audiovisual Content for the International Market”.

This report is an opportunity for the Standing Committee on Official Languages to unanimously speak out against or condemn the CBC's use of a Paris-based recording studio rather than a Quebec-based studio to ensure that our friends in France do not have to listen to the Quebec accent. We think that is simply outrageous.

I have here the copies of the report, ready to be tabled.

* * *

[*English*]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-368, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (natural health products).

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce my private member's bill, which would amend the Food and Drugs Act. This bill would reverse the changes made by the NDP-Liberal govern-

ment in its omnibus budget bill, Bill C-47, earlier this year. It would return natural health products to the status quo, ensuring these products are not classified as therapeutic products, like synthetic drugs, and are therefore not subject to the same regulatory regime as other drugs.

Previously, natural health products were classified separately from pharmaceuticals due to the minimal risk they pose to their users. However, after the NDP-Liberal coalition passed Bill C-47, bureaucrats in Health Canada can now implement their self-care scheme, which, according to the Natural Health Products Protection Association, will reduce choice, increase costs for consumers and drive businesses, investment and product development out of Canada.

The existing regulations already keep Canadians safe. As such, I urge all members in this House to listen to their constituents and the overwhelming amount of correspondence they receive and vote for this bill.

After eight years, enough is enough. It is time to undo the damage done by Bill C-47, kick out the gatekeepers and save our supplements and vitamins.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-369, An Act respecting Christian Heritage Month.

She said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise to introduce this bill, which seeks to make December Christian heritage month.

[*English*]

Canada is a country that celebrates all faiths. We have Sikh Heritage Month, Hindu Heritage Month, Muslim history month, Jewish Heritage Month and so many more. It is only fair and right that we have a Christian heritage month, since there are 19.6 million Christians in Canada according to the last census.

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What better month to pick than December? It starts with the season of Advent, the lighting of the hope candle, the lighting of the love candle and the lighting of the peace candle and joy candle, and culminates in the lighting of the Christ candle as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas, the saviour of the world.

We heard the Bloc speak last week about the importance of Christmas in Quebec. We heard the Prime Minister talk about the importance of Christmas to all Canadians. I hope all my colleagues will join me in supporting this private member's bill to make December Christian heritage month.

Merry Christmas.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I move that the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, presented on Thursday, November 9, be concurred in.

I have been working on this file, the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan, since September. I had the pleasure of asking my first question on the subject back in September, during our first week back in the House after Parliament resumed. Since then, a lot has happened, and there are new developments every week. I can assure members that the Bloc Québécois will not back down on this terrible injustice.

Today, I am here to try to shed some light on what really happened and demand that a terrible injustice be corrected. For those of you who have absolutely no idea what we are talking about here, I will give a brief overview.

The government held a public art competition to select a design concept for the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan. There was a bidding process. The government put together a jury of experts to select the winning team. The jury, composed of experts with international experience, spent hundreds of hours evaluating the proposals and unanimously decided that the winning team was the one made up of architectural firm Daoust Lestage Lizotte Stecker, artist Luca Fortin and strategic advisor Louise Arbour. Obviously, this team is from Quebec.

To everyone's great surprise, the government ended up ignoring the jury's decision and giving the contract to a different team, one from Alberta and Ontario. This is a small \$3-million contract. Let us travel back in time to take a close look at exactly what happened, when it happened and how it happened.

Our combat mission in Afghanistan lasted from 2001 to 2014. It involved Canadian Armed Forces, obviously, as well as police, public servants and civilians.

In August 2019, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism launched the first step of a call for tenders. In August 2020, the five teams of finalists

who would prepare design concepts for the monument were revealed.

Now, let us skip forward a bit to late May, early June. The government conducted an online survey, open to the public, to receive comments on the five projects, the five designs on the table. The government's news release said, "The jury will consider the survey responses in selecting the winning design. This winning design will be announced this autumn."

To this point, it appears everything was done by the book; nothing was amiss. The veterans, their families and Canadians were consulted before and during the competition. Veterans' wishes and concerns were included in the bidding rules so the jury would consider them in their free and informed decision. It was clear: The expert jury would be the one to choose the best project, and they would also take into account the survey results and the comments of a technical committee. The weight of the jury would be 70% and that of the technical committee 30%.

The survey consisted of a 90-second video with a number of images of each project. Again, to this point, nothing was amiss, and the government took steps in the survey design to ensure equality of voices. An email from the Department of Veterans Affairs dated November 17, 2021, concerning the survey states as follows: From the outset, the consultations regarding the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan were designed to be broad and not preferential. All voices and opinions are considered equal. It would be highly irregular for the survey process to give more weight to the voice of one group over another. Such preferential treatment was never discussed at any time while developing the project.

Let us skip forward again, to November 2021.

● (1010)

The departments of Canadian Heritage and Veterans Affairs Canada were informed of the jury's unanimous decision. The jury of experts decided that the Daoust team had won the competition. There was no question that the jury had reached a decision and the Daoust team was the winner. Once again, the jury was made up of seven members from across Canada, including four people who were directly or indirectly involved in Afghanistan.

The Daoust team and members of the jury were informed of the ultimate outcome just two hours before the press conference on June 19, 2023. Two hours before the press conference, the winning team found out that it was not the winner after all and that the winning monument was one submitted by another of the five finalist teams.

What happened between November 2021 and June 2023 to make the government decide to overturn the jury's decision?

Routine Proceedings

We know that in the winter of 2022, the Department of Canadian Heritage asked the Department of Justice for a legal opinion to assess the risks. The 400 pages of documents we have received in recent weeks do mention “risks”. In my view, that is the first admission of guilt. We also know that the government offered to compensate the Daoust team for what it calls a loss of income. The understanding is that that team won but was stripped of the prize and the right to create the monument. Because the firm will lose money for this process, which will no longer take place, that has been deemed a loss of revenue and the firm has been offered a sum of money. This is the government’s second admission of guilt.

Would the government have asked for a legal opinion and offered money to a team if it had acted legitimately? I think the answer is quite simple.

The competition rules state that “the Minister of Canadian Heritage, as minister responsible for commemorative monuments on federal lands...and the Minister of Veterans Affairs...will be jointly responsible for endorsing the jury’s selection of the winning design”. In the eyes of the law, they were responsible for endorsing the jury’s selection, not changing it, let alone cancelling it. Doing so goes against the government’s own process.

How does the Minister of Veterans Affairs justify this?

First they said they wanted to choose a design that better represented the views of veterans and their families. The most popular design among veterans who responded to an online poll was selected.

I commissioned a small analysis. Actually, it is not small. In any case, the bill was quite large. I commissioned an analysis by the polling firm that everyone knows, Léger, the biggest polling firm in Canada. I forwarded the poll that the government sent to roughly 10,000 people to the firm. It confirmed that all the results were compromised and that there was nothing usable in this pseudo-poll. There is no way to verify the identity of the people who responded to the poll. We do not even know if a single woman responded to the poll.

As I was saying earlier, we received emails from the government over the past two weeks. The Department of Veterans Affairs knows full well that it cannot rely on online surveys. It said so itself in black and white. Here is an excerpt:

The survey was designed to collect aggregate data, not segmented results....The demographic data cannot be clearly broken down. Some respondents identified as belonging to several categories, for example, a soldier, a family member and a member of the public.

This clearly shows that the survey does not in any way represent what veterans really think. It does not represent much of anything really, contrary to what the current Minister of Veterans Affairs has said several times.

● (1015)

That is one of the many reasons why the Daoust team was chosen. “The Daoust team’s proposal best reflects...the fact that the sacrifices made by the Canadians...who participated in the mission were not in vain, especially [as concerns] the education of women and girls in Afghanistan.” For Canada, this was not a war mission, in principle. We went to support and help the Afghan people.

The reasons given by the government to justify pushing the Daoust team aside and choosing the Stimson team just do not hold water. What is the reason behind it? How come the government pulled out of a hat that the winner would not be the Daoust team but rather the Stimson team? I think we all agree; it is not hard to grasp that the decision came from high up and there was interference. At the moment, there is no other credible explanation.

First, when I questioned the Minister of Veterans Affairs to find out if the decision had come from her department or from the Prime Minister’s Office, she replied, “The decision...comes from our government.” She was not sure whether the Prime Minister’s Office had intervened. She told me she would ask the question, which is not very reassuring.

Then, I asked her the question a second time at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and the answer had changed. She informed me that the recommendation to choose the Stimson team and push the Daoust team aside had come from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Deciding to take the blame was something she chose to do.

Second, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Ms. St-Onge, tried to downplay the role of her department, saying that it was the Department of Veterans Affairs that was in charge of the project. We all know, however, that the project was jointly put together by the departments of Veterans Affairs and Canadian Heritage.

Then we learned in a document obtained through the Access to Information Act that the Department of Veterans Affairs needed the Minister of Canadian Heritage’s signature to be able to push the Daoust team aside. Both ministers have been passing the hot potato back and forth and continue to do so. This document signed by the Minister of Canadian Heritage is dated May 2023. This is a process that ran from November 2021 to May 2023.

Why were the jury and the Daoust team notified only two hours before the official announcement? Obviously, it was to ensure they could not react. They were faced with a *fait accompli*.

It will come as no surprise that I do not have enough answers for my liking in this file. Because I did not have enough answers, I suggested that we invite witnesses who are all public art experts to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

First, we heard from Jean-Pierre Chupin, a university architect and holder of the Canada Research Chair in Architecture, Competitions and Mediations of Excellence at the Université de Montréal. He confirmed that it would be a first in Canadian history to overturn the jury’s choice and select another team. This has never happened before. Then he referred to 500 competitions he has documented. He said the following:

All the studies show that, in judging the complexity of...projects, such as public buildings and monuments, a popular vote will never be as reliable, fair or transparent a procedure as a well-organized competition procedure. A competition jury is analogous to a court jury. It represents the diverse range of public interests and works in a rigorous manner.

Routine Proceedings

● (1020)

Let me quote another witness, François Le Moine, a lawyer specializing in art and heritage law and president of the Association littéraire et artistique internationale Canada. Mr. Le Moine is an authority on copyright and all things relating to art and heritage buildings. He said, “Under the rules of this competition, the government simply did not have the necessary leeway to award the contract to a team that had not been selected. It is the jury that makes the decision, not a minister”, and not a prime minister. If the withdrawal from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021 did indeed change the equation, as the Minister of Veterans Affairs claimed, then there was only one option: cancel the competition. This is clear from the decision tree the government provided. It could either approve the jury's choice, or it could rerun the competition. In the documents issued to bidders, no third option is possible.

The lawyer, Mr. Le Moine, continued, “the only solution available to the government was to cancel the competition and organize another”. The government should have cancelled and started over. However, this was never discussed. At any rate, in the 400 pages of documents we received, there is no mention of cancelling the competition. According to Mr. Le Moine, “[w]hat is at stake is much more than just the matter of public art; rather, it is the integrity of [the public contracting process and the accountability of our leaders]. A political system based on the rule of law requires both the governed and the governing to follow the established rules”. Let me go over that again. The government initially established perfectly credible and valid rules that complied with the appropriate procedure for a public call to create a work of art on this scale.

After hearing these experts testify, I moved a motion at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs asking that all documents exchanged between the departments and the Prime Minister's Office be disclosed. We received the 400 pages I mentioned earlier. Surprise, surprise, dozens and dozens of pages were redacted. However, there is one interesting point they may have forgotten to redact. The emails show that the Prime Minister's Office asked for a meeting between four parties about the Afghanistan monument, the four being the Privy Council Office, Veterans Affairs Canada, Canadian Heritage and the PMO. Then, in June 2022, after those four met, the PMO asked the public servants responsible if things were moving along. If anyone does not know what PMO means, it stands for Prime Minister's Office.

Here is what the two ministers refused to tell us when we had them come to the committee. The Prime Minister's Office was involved. We have written proof in two of the documents we received. The Prime Minister intervened in the process. He held a meeting about the monument and then pressured both departments for information about how things were progressing. Why did the ministers try to hide the PMO's interference? Was it because the decision to reject the Daoust team and give the contract to the Stimson team was made by the Prime Minister's Office? That is what the documents suggest, those that are not redacted, anyway. Many questions remain unanswered, but the big one for me is this: Why did the Prime Minister's Office decide to intervene in this competition?

Why did the government lie to us by saying that it chose to give more weight to the survey because of the situation in Afghanistan when—

● (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member's time is up. I would also remind him that, in the House of Commons, he must not say that someone lied.

I am sure the hon. member has a lot more to say. He may do so during questions and comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the most important thing to recognize right away is the sacrifice of many in support of our allied forces and having a monument.

Could the member provide his thoughts and maybe comments in recognition of those lives that were lost and those people who actually served? If the member does not mind, could he also provide his thoughts on how the committee had the minister, I understand, attend the committee and the degree to which an explanation or answer to the member's question was provided?

● (1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, I really like my colleague's question. Let me explain why. It is because Canada went to Afghanistan to fight for democracy, yet this competition has been nothing but undemocratic.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech. I sit on the committee as well. I share many of the concerns that he has raised here today.

In particular, there are two things. First of all, this is such an important monument for those who served in Afghanistan, and it is being delayed by the bungling of the government and, most important, the fact that the PMO has gotten involved and interfered in this situation. The member indicated that in his speech.

What are his thoughts and feelings around the fact that the PMO interfered and is, therefore, delaying the building of this monument? Could he indicate why the PMO interfered in this matter inappropriately?

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, things have indeed been delayed. It has been a long process. Based on the description I tried to give, it is clear that it could have been shorter. At some point, the decision-making process broke down. I am almost positive that the two ministers and the two departments wanted the Daoust team to erect the monument. A breakdown happened and time was being wasted, so the Prime Minister's Office unilaterally stepped in and made a decision. Nothing of the kind has ever happened before in the course of public art competitions in Canada. It will cause major fallout not only for this government's credibility, but also for everyone who might be interested in submitting a public artwork proposal someday.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this to the House today. He and I sit in committee together and share similar concerns with respect to these issues. My question specifically is around the fact that this is not the first time we have seen the department be very unclear in the process of communicating information. The department officials are saying they reached out to veterans, but everything was done in a way that was not measurable in order to make sure that those were in fact the veterans and those were in fact the family members. Could the member talk about methods that this department might use to actually talk to those veterans and, specifically for this, to the Afghan veterans and their loved ones?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, in this case, departmental officials did try to consult. However, what they call a survey was not really a survey. Leger has been very clear on that point. It is completely unusable, which is truly appalling. It would have been nice to actually hear from veterans or people who participated in that mission. I think that what is needed in the future is to simply follow the rules. If the rules call for a survey, it should be done in a scientific manner and not be such a frivolous thing.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, through you, I would like to ask a question of my colleague, who is doing a tremendous job getting to the truth on this file. An unimaginable blunder has happened here.

I know my colleague did not have enough time to finish his speech. I would like to know what message he would like to convey in order to conclude his speech.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, it is a terrible mistake. Some are even referring to the monument as the monument to shame. That really upsets me. It is a work that is dedicated to veterans, to people who worked in Afghanistan.

There is only one solution, and that is for the government to go back on its decision and give the contract to the Daoust team. That is the only way out and it should be done as soon as possible.

The art world in Europe and the United States is talking about Canada. We are getting calls. No one can understand how such a blunder could have happened in a democratic country like ours.

• (1035)

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I apologize for not being in the House in time to hear the whole speech of my colleague; however, I sit next to him in committee and am very aware of the circumstances here.

I would ask the member what he sees as the ripple effect of this decision by the government with respect to impacting future procurement opportunities.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, there are two things to consider. I am repeating myself, but this is about the government's credibility.

It brought in a process that was entirely appropriate, but it is absolutely not respecting it. How can we trust what the government proposes? In this case we are talking about public art.

This government is like Teflon. It changes its mind whenever it feels like it, but nothing sticks to it. It travels abroad, gets a slap on the wrist and just does it again. That is the first thing.

The other really important thing is Canada's credibility abroad when it comes to artists. Canada's arts community has mobilized around this issue. The Daoust team has collected thousands of signatures from people who are offended by the situation. This kind of thing is not done. The government is disrespecting public art. It is disrespecting architects. It is disrespecting designers.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, our veterans fought not only for democracy, but also for justice, equity and equality for everyone. They fought so that rules that are not always followed would be followed, both in Canada and abroad.

Does the situation described in the report and in my colleague's speech correspond with the values that our veterans defended and still defend today?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, in answer to my colleague's question, I would say, obviously not.

Like everyone, the soldiers and other people who were involved in the mission in Afghanistan share the values of equity, respect and solidarity. There is none of that in the government's decision.

I would like to add something. I have gotten a lot of calls, and I am sure my committee colleagues likely have as well. Veterans are calling us and telling us that, on top of all this, they are being used. They are being used with this bogus survey. It is as though the government wants to make them say that this is the monument that they want, regardless of which monument we are talking about. I am not even criticizing the monument.

A decision was made by experts. The government is not an expert in public art and neither am I, but this jury was made up of experts in public art.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will just pick up on the member's concluding thoughts in terms of the government's not necessarily being an expert. I think it is safe to say that is, in fact, the situation. The government is very much consulting with Canadians on the whole issue of the monument and its conceptual design. It is important to recognize that we are talking not about hundreds of people but thousands of people who provided input. The ones we need to be very sensitive to are, in fact, the veterans and family members of the veterans. I believe that the decision that was made was weighted in their favour. I think that is an important aspect to recognize.

Before I go into more of the details, I would like to put things into proper perspective. It would be wrong for me not to recognize that I do not necessarily agree with the timing of the debate itself and the decision of the Bloc to use a concurrence motion in order to raise the issue, given that there are only days left in the session and there is so much that still needs to be done under the government agenda. For example, many members who would have come to the House today would have been thinking about the affordability legislation, Bill C-56, I think, that was supposed to be debated at this point in time. I know that members, at least on the government benches, very much want to hear debates and discussions on those issues, because they are the ones Canadians are facing today. Canadians are looking to the government and responsible opposition parties to recognize the issues of affordability. The legislation that we were supposed to be debating today, I would suggest, should have been allowed to continue to debate.

I am a little bit disappointed and somewhat surprised that the Bloc used this particular opportunity to raise this specific issue, when the Bloc does have other opportunities to do it. Even given the discretion that is often used with respect to relevance to legislation, the member could have raised the issue he is raising right now in the fall economic statement, not to mention even during this legislation. He probably could have found a way to raise it, to suggest a take-note debate or to wait until there is an opposition day opportunity. In other words, I would suggest that there would have been other ways. However, that is not to underestimate the importance of the issue.

I will give a bit of a background. Prior to getting involved in politics, I served in the Canadian Forces. I had the privilege to march side by side with World War II veterans. I had the opportunity of visiting the legions with many veterans, especially when I was a member of the Canadian Forces, serving in Alberta and doing my training in Ontario and a portion of it in Nova Scotia. I gained a very genuine appreciation of the horrors of war when I saw people at the legions who had the odd drink, if I can put it that way, and would, in tears, try to get through Remembrance Day. There have been many different awkward moments when discussions have become very emotional. Even though the actions of the war were decades prior, to talk about it and relive it would bring tears, along with a wide spectrum of emotions. It was not necessarily from those who fought on the front lines; I could see it at times even with family members.

● (1040)

I appreciated every opportunity I had, especially while I was in the military, to have those talks and express my gratitude and appreciation to those who returned from war abroad. I understand and value the importance of war monuments. It is important that we never ever forget. Like members across the way, on November 11, I too participate in recognizing the sacrifices that have been made in order for us to be here.

I recall an occasion when veterans were present in the Manitoba legislature. I remember very distinctly being in a chamber of democracy where I could turn my chair around and touch the knees of war veterans. That is profound, much like when veterans sit in the gallery of this chamber. It is very touching because it speaks volumes about the sacrifices that have been made so we can do the things we do and can have a society based on freedom and liberty, and that operates on the rule of law. We have been blessed by the many men and women who have served our country and served in the allied forces, who have ensured that we have the benefits today as a direct result of their efforts and sacrifices. It is important we recognize that. It is one of the reasons I find it difficult to say we could have had this debate at another time. I still believe, having said what I have said, that we could have, because of where we are in the session.

There is a lot more we could be doing and saying in dealing with our veterans. As a member of Parliament, I have been aware of many issues in the veterans file. When Liberals were in opposition, we opposed, for example, the number of veterans offices being shut down across the country. Many members at the time raised questions on the issue and challenged the government of the day as to why it would close down offices. There have been concerns with regard to how services are provided to our veterans in a very real and tangible way.

Over the last number of years, a great deal of attention has been focused on Canadian veterans, whether it was the reopening of veterans offices that were shut down by the previous government or the reinvesting and topping off of hundreds of millions of dollars to support veterans. We do that in different ways, whether through direct financial compensation in overall budget increases or through the services provided.

● (1045)

We also recognize, as previous governments have, that we need to do what we can to support veterans when they come home, particularly veterans who have experienced the horrors of war. We need to support those who have returned because of the impact that has on them. I think of Lieutenant-General Dallaire, a former senator, who highlighted many things for Canadians—

● (1050)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles on a point of order.

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Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, he has 20 minutes in the House. He is not talking about the subject of the debate, namely, the commemorative monument. Can he at least tell us a little about his position? Is he okay with the survey? Is he okay with the position of the two ministers? Should his government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a question for the questions and comments period.

As the hon. member knows very well, there is some flexibility during speeches. I would like to remind all members that while they are making their speeches, even though there is some flexibility, they must also speak to the matter that is before the House, in this case, the motion to concur in the report.

I am sure the hon. parliamentary secretary will refer to the motion in his speech. I invite him to continue.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, at the beginning of my comments, I made reference to monuments and said I was going to be giving some background as to the importance of monuments. I am going to be talking about monuments.

Even in the question I asked the member, I highlighted that, when we talked about monuments, what we are talking about, I believe, is something that is well worth the expenditures that the government is making toward it, and I was providing the background information as to why it is so important that we support our veterans. I do not understand why the member from the Bloc would not recognize the relevance to everything that I have said. It is a bit offensive that the member would not recognize that.

At the end of the day, as a government, we need to appreciate and value the sacrifices of many that have enabled us to have the privileges that we have today. I have been listing that off. If I circle back to the very beginning of my comments, it is in regard to monuments. Monuments take place in many ways. The member makes reference in the report to the Afghanistan monument. There is no doubt that we are going to have a monument.

As I said earlier in my comments, it is important that we take into consideration the fact that thousands of people were consulted on this. The people we have to listen to the most are veterans and their family members. I then explained why it is important that we listen to them. That is what has taken place.

The member raised a question earlier this month and received a response from the minister. Back on December 4, he posed a question and the minister responded:

The creation of a national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan will at last recognize the commitment of the Canadians who served in that mission.

The Department of Veterans Affairs conducted a survey or questionnaire. More than 12,000 Canadians, most of whom were veterans, responded to the survey.

The Stimson concept was chosen because we were told that it better reflected the sacrifice, bravery and loss of our veterans.

The member was told that. He chooses not to believe it. Now, I am attempting to explain why it is so important that we listen to what the minister explained to the member across the way. He might disagree with the minister. Ultimately that would be a dispute between the member and the minister.

I am providing more background about how important it is that we recognize and listen to what veterans are saying. That is what my entire speech has been about. I might sound a bit offended because, as I said, I like to think that I have listened to many veterans over the years. I am now giving a clear indication as to what I believe the veterans of today want. That is why the opposition does not have a clue.

The member for Abbotsford—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I would remind members that, if they want to make comments or have questions, they are to wait until the appropriate time. There should be no heckling while another member has the floor.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member for Abbotsford said that I do not have any clue as to what veterans want. Let me remind him that, when he was in Stephen Harper's government, sitting at the cabinet table, he shut down nine veterans offices across Canada, yet he says that I do not have a clue. I would suggest to him that members of the Conservative caucus do not have a clue as to what veterans want. This is a government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. There are still some individuals who seem to want to contribute to the discussion. I would ask them to please wait. There will be an opportunity for questions and comments.

Rising on a point of order, the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is entitled to attack political parties, but when he attacks all members in the House, including those within my party who are actually Afghanistan veterans, I take that personally.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This is a point of debate and not a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I did not participate in Afghanistan, but we have members on the Liberal government side who have participated, including the former minister of defence, who reinstated the veterans offices that were closed down by the member for Abbotsford in the Stephen Harper government. At the time I opposed—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. There are a couple of members who have been repeatedly interrupting the hon. parliamentary secretary. I will ask them to please wait until it is time for questions and comments, which is the appropriate time to contribute to the discussion.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as my time is running out, I will try to keep this as brief as I can.

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It is important to recognize that monuments play a very important role for our entire society. Recognizing that, it takes time to do the consultations and to work with people to ensure we get the right monument, which is what we are seeing with respect to Afghanistan. I believe that, once it is complete, all of us will be proud of that monument.

I support the government's initiatives we have taken to date to support our veterans. As someone who served in the Canadian Forces for over three years and marched alongside World War II veterans and others, I always take the time to have a personal experience of reflection on November 11.

A couple of years ago, I was in the city of Manila with Mayor Honey visiting a special monument honouring Canadian soldiers who were part of the allied forces. They were not technically Canadian soldiers, but rather Canadians who participated in the allied forces. Whether it is there, in my home city of Winnipeg at the Brookside Cemetery, at the armouries, in the churches or here in Ottawa with the Peace Tower and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, there are many monuments scattered throughout. I am a big fan of being able to take the time to reflect and value, through those monuments, the sacrifices that have taken place. They justify those monuments being put into place, and I support us as a government, or any government, in recognizing the contributions of veterans. That is why I believe the monument being proposed and constructed for the people who served in Afghanistan is the appropriate one. Ultimately, I look forward to its completion and dedication.

• (1100)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, when it comes to veterans affairs and recognizing the ultimate sacrifice that many of our veterans and Canadian Forces personnel have made, particularly in Afghanistan, when we left 158 Canadian Armed Forces members behind, it should be non-partisan.

This process about recognizing the incredible contribution that these veterans have made to our country and to freedom in Afghanistan should be non-partisan.

However, the government took eight years to come up with this so-called design. Again, I am not criticizing the design that was selected. I am criticizing how the government messed up the process and interfered in it. This motion is all about veterans being penalized once again and not being respected.

In the member's view, does he not think it should be proper to make this as non-political as possible and to recognize the incredible contributions that our veterans have made?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it would be a wonderful thing to see it being done in an apolitical fashion. The problem I have is that the member is pointing to the government, saying the government is messing up. That is just not the case.

Opposition parties, and I will not say which one, also play a role. If one has not noticed, over the last number of years, it has been a minority government. Where is the official opposition on this file?

The member gives the impression that he supports the one that the government has accepted, but he did not give a clear indication

on whether he supports it or not. He served himself, and I appreciate and value his contributions to Afghanistan on behalf of Canadians, but he never did give his personal opinion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have trouble believing that our Liberal colleague endorses non-compliance with the law. The process was clear; the government established it. We have nothing to say about the process, which was fine.

However, the government did not respect the rules. On a whim, it decided to grant the contract to a team that had not won. The government fancied itself a jury of artists.

That is what my colleague is endorsing. He is endorsing a survey that was completely demolished by the biggest polling company in Canada. My colleague is endorsing the fact that the government made a political decision that goes against everything that may exist in the field of art. Once again he is using the promotion of veterans as a pretext. I find that sad.

• (1105)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what I am supporting is the statement minister made, and she has made this statement to the member across the way, that the Department of Veterans Affairs conducted a survey, or a questionnaire, to which more than 12,000 Canadians, most of whom were veterans, responded. She said that the Stimson concept was chosen because they were told it better reflected the sacrifice, bravery and loss of our veterans. That is the reason why the decision was made.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do agree with my friend from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound that this should be a non-partisan issue. With regard to the people who sacrificed their lives for us in Afghanistan, we know that not only did we lose them there, we lost them when they came home. This really matters.

When the minister was at the committee, I asked her how they verified that the people who answered the surveys were veterans and what the process was for doing that. I trust veterans, but perception matters. We hope that it was the veterans and their families that made these voices and opinions heard, but there is no way of knowing that.

I think that is why this concern is here, and it is very real. I am wondering if he could respond to that, knowing that the minister said they did not have a process on whether people who answered the survey were veterans.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have confidence in Canada's civil servants to ensure that there is a process that is reflective of being fair and transparent. I believe the information that was gathered is in fact accurate.

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There has been no indication, whatsoever, from any political party, that there was some major fault in that consultation and the feedback received from Canadians. I suspect that what we will find, out of those thousands of people who participated, most of who were veterans or family members of veterans, is a true reflection of what we will see as a monument.

Unless there is evidence to demonstrate that there was something wrong with what the civil servants or whoever conducted the questionnaire, or survey, did, I would suggest we accept it as we have done on many other policy points.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member about two things.

First, if the Liberal government truly believes the words that he is saying, that it cares so much about trying to ensure veterans are honoured and appreciated, why did it take it eight years just to announce a design of a monument?

Most particularly, when the jury made a decision in November 2021, it took from then until June 2023 to announce it. In between, there is all sorts of evidence of the Prime Minister's office interfering in the process to change the decision. No one knows why the government wanted to change that decision.

Maybe the member could shed some light for us today on exactly why the government spent eight years on this, with a year and a half of the Prime Minister interfering and showing such disrespect for our veterans? Why did the PMO interfere and show so much disrespect for our veterans?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member's colleague says that we should try to de-politicize this. I do not believe this being extended, or taking eight years as the member puts it, is the complete fact of the matter. At the end of the day, a great deal of discussion took place. It did not happen immediately afterward and then there was a consultation process.

I could level some sort of criticism on many Canadian Armed Forces projects that Stephen Harper never got off the ground over 10 years. A classic one would be the F-35. It took the Liberal government to actually get that one off the ground. The previous Conservative government spent over a decade trying to figure out that it needed to get a replacement.

• (1110)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Members know full well that if they have had a chance to ask a question, they should listen to the answer. It may not be what they are looking for, however, if they have other follow-up questions or comments, they should wait until the appropriate time.

There is time for a brief question, the hon. member of Beauport—Limoilou.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, my colleague spoke of the fact that the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles could have brought up the discussion on the report at another time to receive answers in another way. When I look at routine proceedings, however, there is a category for tabling reports from committees.

Even here in the House, do we have to stop respecting the rules of the House because the government decides to do so? Do we need a survey on that as well?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member has to answer to her constituents as to why the Bloc decides at times to coalesce with the Conservative Party in preventing government legislation from passing.

We are supposed to be talking about the affordability legislation today. The Bloc wants to minimize the number of hours spent debating that issue. There are other ways this could have been brought up and addressed.

We will have to agree to disagree. I am on the side of supporting the issues that Canadians want us to be talking about and the legislation they want to see us passing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, let me inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*English*]

The current Prime Minister has infamously said “they're asking for more than we can give” when referring to our veterans. This has been a source of great consternation for veterans ever since that time. The government has shown that disrespect in so many other ways, but that comment sums up exactly how the Prime Minister feels about our veterans, their sacrifices and their service.

The issue we are talking about today is just another example of that absolute disrespect from the government and from the Prime Minister to our veterans and to the families of those who have served.

Let us think about the delays with this monument. The government took eight years just to announce a design for a monument to those who served in Afghanistan. Not only did it take eight years to do that, but it bungled it so badly that now nobody knows when this thing will ever be built.

A design firm was chosen to build this monument by the jury the government selected and with the process the government set-up. That was decided in November of 2021. In the next year and a half, up to June of 2023, the government spent all of that time trying to figure out how to disregard the decision of that jury. No one knows why it wants to do that. Is this another typical act of the Liberals trying to find a way to award to their friends or is this something else? No one knows.

What we do know is that the Prime Minister's Office interfered in that process in that year and a half. There is all sorts of evidence that this occurred. Nobody in the government will answer to that. The Liberals will not explain the reasons for this. They claim there was this survey and that they heard from veterans. It has been already indicated in the House that there is no way to verify it was actually veterans they were hearing from.

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Most important, in the original talking points of the government about this, when it was planning to announce it back in 2021, it said why it was important to follow the jury's decision above that of this survey. Now it is using this survey as the reason for it, so everyone knows that is not the truth. That is not reason it is not proceeding with the monument originally chosen by the jury. No one knows why, but we do know the Prime Minister's Office interfered and, therefore, has disrespected all those who served our country during the Afghanistan mission.

The government has disrespected and dishonoured the memory of the 158 Canadians who laid down their lives. It has disrespected the families of the fallen and all those who serve our country by delaying this monument for that period of time, by putting this cloud over it and by leaving us in a situation where no one knows when the heck this thing will ever be built. Those who served our country in Afghanistan deserve that monument, they deserve it now and they deserve better than what they are getting from the government.

I will speak again to the timeline. The government spent the period of time from when it was elected in 2015 until November of 2021 to have this process set-up arrive at a decision. That process arrived at a decision in November of 2021. In the next year and a half, with all sorts of interference from the Prime Minister's Office, the government fumbled around and tripped over itself to try to figure out a way to change the decision of that jury.

• (1115)

As was mentioned by the Bloc member who brought forward the concurrence motion today, this is something that has never been done before. Not only has it never been done before in Canada, but there is no precedent anywhere in the world for this sort of thing, for when these types of jury processes are set up. This is the first time, that anyone can speak to, that this jury process has ever been disregarded like this, and nobody knows why, except for the Prime Minister and probably a few other people.

Obviously we cannot refer to the presence or absence of members in the House, but there is one person who could have stood up when the Liberal member got up to give a speech today, and that is the former minister of veterans affairs, the current Minister of Agriculture. I cannot refer to whether or not he was present, but he could have stood up and he could have clarified the situation.

I am sure he was told what to do by the Prime Minister's Office. He could have told us why the Prime Minister's Office told him that he needed to disregard the jury process and mire this project in such controversy that now no one knows when the heck it will ever be built. He could have stood up and clarified that for us, but, no; instead, the Liberal parliamentary secretary who always stands up stood up and spouted out a bunch of drivel. He did not speak to what happened and why it happened. He gave us the typical talking point that we have heard and the justification that we all know is false and we all know is not the truth. That is all we got from that member.

We could have had clarification on what exactly happened. Maybe there was a good reason, but if there were, we would think that in the last two years somebody from the government would have provided that justification.

We can only assume that the Liberals' reasons are not something they want to divulge to Canadians, which would mean that there is something fishy going on here, and that is at the expense of our veterans. That is at the expense of the 158 Canadians who gave their lives in Afghanistan. That is at the expense of their families who mourn them and grieve. Let us imagine what they must feel like to be witnessing what the government is doing.

The least that anyone who serves this country could expect to have is a monument to the mission that they served in, a monument to the lives that were given in service to this country. That is the very least that anyone could expect, and the government is not even willing to provide that without involving some kind of political interference and delaying this project for who knows how long. The Liberals cannot even answer as to when the monument will be built because of the controversy that has now been created.

One would have hoped that today might be the day when the government realized the error of its ways. The government members were given the opportunity today, through this motion, to stand up and clarify the situation. The former minister of veterans affairs could have stood up in his place and told us what happened. Maybe even better, he have stood up and told us that the Liberals were wrong, that they will do better, that they will do right by our veterans, that they will do right by those 158 Canadians who gave their lives, that they will do right by their families who were left behind to mourn them. Did we get any of that? No, we certainly did not, far from it, in fact. What we got instead was more disrespect for those veterans, more disrespect for the families and more disrespect for those who serve this country.

It is shameful. It is absolutely shameful. This monument has been delayed now for eight years by the government, and who knows how much longer it will be delayed. All that is for what? No one knows, except for the Prime Minister's Office, why the Liberals interfered in this process. Why did they delay this? Why did they disrespect our veterans who served this country? Why did they disrespect those who gave their lives for this country? Why did they disrespect the families of those who have fallen? No one knows, but I wish the Liberal government would just stand up and say, "We were wrong. We should not have disrespected our veterans in this way, and we are going to fix it." I really hope that, maybe at some point in this debate, that will still happen, because that is what our veterans deserve, that and nothing less.

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• (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me tell members something about disrespectful and shameful. In 2014, the Conservative Party of Canada, when in government, announced through a press release that there was a site for the monument. It came out in the form of a press release. The Conservatives did not consult one veteran. Contrast that to what we have done. Well over 10,000 people, most of them veterans or family members of veterans, were consulted, which ultimately led to the monument that has been selected.

I will compare our record to Harper's record any time. The one party that consistently hits down our veterans is the party across the way. The member is the one who should be feeling ashamed of himself.

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, that member stands up and says he is proud of the Liberals' record. He is proud of a government that says to veterans, "You are asking for more than we can give." He is proud of a government that spent eight years just to announce a design, and it bungled it so badly and there was so much interference from the PMO that now it is mired in controversy and will probably end up in court.

Veterans in this country are left wondering when they will have the monument they deserve. The families of the 158 fallen are left wondering when they will have the monument that their loved ones deserve. The member is proud of that. I will tell him that he should be absolutely ashamed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I still do not understand why the Liberal Party continues to employ this communication strategy. They are referring to a survey that is completely bogus. Are the Liberals telling us that Leger is not credible? I do not understand.

I simply wanted to have my colleague's opinion on the following issue. We asked the former veterans affairs minister and the former heritage minister to appear. We learned at our last committee meeting that they refused to appear. How does my colleague react to that refusal?

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. We know that the minister of veterans affairs and the minister of Canadian heritage at the time would have some knowledge of what exactly occurred. Now, we know that the Prime Minister's Office interfered. The Prime Minister's Office likely directed them on what they were supposed to do, but they could have come to committee and clarified that for us. If there was a good reason for why they needed to change the design of the monument, why that year and a half of extra delay needed to occur and why they needed to leave this mired in controversy, one would have thought that the ministers would have gladly come to committee and clarified what that good reason was. However, they will not even admit who made the decision, let alone come and clarify their reasons for it.

Once again, it is more disrespect to our veterans, more disrespect to the 158 Canadians who gave their lives in Afghanistan and more disrespect to the families who mourn them. That is shameful.

• (1125)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have some concerns about this. We know very clearly, based on the testimony from the minister herself, that this was never verified and that it was actually veterans answering those calls.

I am wondering if the member could talk about how we need to talk to veterans a little more inclusively and maybe reflect on the fact that, during the Conservatives' time in government, we heard very similar concerns that veterans were being disrespected and were not being listened to.

What does the member think should be different, and why should veterans believe the Conservatives when they have repeatedly betrayed veterans as well?

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, what we are talking about here today is a situation where a Prime Minister, who has told veterans that they were asking for more than the government can give, delayed a monument for eight years.

I absolutely agree with the member that it is critically important that we listen to our veterans. I have served as our party's critic for veterans affairs, and that is exactly what I have done. I have listened to veterans, and I am hearing what they need, but they are not receiving it from this current Liberal government. A Conservative government will bring that home for our veterans.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise once again this morning to speak to a situation that, sadly, happens all too often in this country.

For the past eight years of this government, we have witnessed a total lack of respect for the institution of government in its broad sense, as represented by the House of Commons and the various departments of the Government of Canada. Today, we are referring more specifically to the case of the monument commemorating Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

Considering the purely political decision made in this matter, if it continues unchanged, we will end up with a monument built who knows when, to honour Canada's mission in Afghanistan, the 158 soldiers who lost their lives and the civilians who contributed to the war effort. It will be a monument to the decline of our nation's Canadian Forces, veterans and civil society.

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From the outset on this issue, everyone on the Liberal side has been referring to a so-called survey that has been completely debunked by Leger. I plan to share what those folks think a little later. Veterans are being used to justify a purely political decision. The elephant in the room is why this decision was made in the first place, given that the process in place was truly professional. There were judges, a jury made up of professionals, who took the veterans' comments into consideration. Even though the survey was useless, they still took into account the information that was gathered by this bogus survey. Then, at the end of the process, a purely political decision was made. The government cannot justify its decision, except to keep referring to this bogus survey.

Something happened at the Prime Minister's Office. Something happened with the former veterans affairs minister for the decision to be made to toss everything the jury did and to accept the other proposal by Stimson. What happened? Why was this decision made?

This is the first time in the history of Canada that a professional process put in place by the government, with very specific rules, was rejected out of hand. Even more insulting, the very day the winner was to be unveiled, Daoust was informed that it had won, but the government decided to go with the other team. Is there anything more insulting than that? What is more, the decision was made a year and a half earlier. Something happened at the Prime Minister's Office with Veterans Affairs. Today, we still do not know what happened.

It gets even more shocking. The issue was raised by my Bloc colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, and I thank him for that. The winning team included a company from Quebec and artist Luca Fortin from the Quebec City area, my region. They are Quebeckers.

The most insulting thing is that the former heritage minister, from Montreal, and the new Minister of Canadian Heritage, from Quebec, did not do their job. They passed the buck. The former minister of Canadian heritage authorized the change without question. Apparently he thought it was okay. At the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I myself put questions to the new Minister of Canadian Heritage. She was not familiar with the file and she denied all responsibility, even though the Department of Canadian Heritage is responsible for managing the heritage aspect of Canadian monuments.

It is a complete breach of ministerial responsibility. Two ministers completely ignored the professional process that was put in place to ensure that the choice would be based on the criteria of a jury fit to make that decision.

Everyone knows former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour. She herself was concerned. She even gave radio interviews to comment on this issue, saying that it made no sense, that this is just not how it is done and that it was purely political. As for us, we did everything we could, repeating it over and over again.

• (1130)

As I said at the outset, this is a purely political issue that proves yet again how little respect the Liberal government has for institutions. The Liberal government likes doing things its way and bend-

ing the rules. Bending the rules kind of comes naturally to the Liberals. They set up a process, then end up doing whatever they want.

Using veterans to justify one's decision is insulting. I know for a fact that many people in both the veteran and enlisted communities are fed up with a government that does not respect institutions. Respect is the number one thing people in the military and veterans want, and that starts with respect for the decisions that were made, which should not be based on frivolities. The worst thing one can do when it comes to our armed forces is show them that the higher-ups who make these decisions change their minds or base their decisions on who knows what, and then the repercussions are felt all the way down to the bottom. People lose faith. Soldiers and veterans have no faith whatsoever in this government.

If the government does not change its decision, then this monument will stand as a symbol of these eight years of Liberal governance. Rather than honouring our involvement in Afghanistan and being a source of pride for all those who participated in those missions, like my colleague who did one or two missions there and the other 40,000 Canadians who served, this monument will serve as a reminder of the Liberal government's approach over the past eight years. Unfortunately, that is what this monument is going to represent, and that should not be the case.

The battle that we are waging today is not necessarily about whether we personally prefer the Daoust team's monument, the Stimson team's monument or one of the other two monuments that were proposed. It is not about that. It is about respecting what was done as part of a clear government process, with specific rules. What we are seeing today is an insult to those government processes. When I talk about the concept of an institution, I am talking about an organization that has principles and rules that should be followed. What we are seeing right now is a lack of respect for the institution, a lack of respect for the rules and a purely political decision based on who knows what, other than a pseudo-survey.

Speaking of which, let me quote what Leger had to say about that survey:

All of these methodological errors show that this online consultation is unscientific and does not in any way represent the opinions of Canadian Armed Forces members, the families of Canadian Armed Forces members or the Canadian public. The results of this online consultation cannot be generalized to the Canadian population and should not be taken into account when objectively selecting a design for the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

That was the analysis from Jean-Marc Léger of the Leger firm, Canada's best-known polling firm. If the government sticks to its position, and if this pseudo-survey that Leger completely demolished was really the key factor behind the political decision to set aside the jury's choice in favour of the Stimson proposal, we can really see how the government approaches all decisions affecting Canadians. We can also see that it has totally lost its way. The government has forgotten the most important thing, namely, respect for the institution, respect for our troops and respect for the Canadian Forces, and I mean real respect, not Liberal baloney.

Routine Proceedings

• (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2014, the Conservative Party demonstrated no respect for veterans when they, in a press release, made an announcement about the land allocation for the site.

We are being criticized for the number of years. The Conservatives noted eight years. The Korean War monument took 40 years. That is four decades. The Liberals ultimately did get it put into place, but it took four decades.

The Conservatives have no idea what they are talking about. If we were to base this on their history, I would give them a raspberry when it comes to dealing with our veterans, because they clearly demonstrated, while they were in government, a true lack of respect for veterans. They say we are not doing the job when in fact we re-opened the office and have invested hundreds of millions of additional dollars. We get the job done when it comes to war monuments. That has been clearly demonstrated in the past.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I enjoy seeing my colleague try to shift the blame off the Liberals while painting the Conservatives as people who do not care about veterans. I would remind my colleague that a Conservative government was at the helm during the war effort in Afghanistan, ready to provide the equipment that our troops needed on the ground. We made sure that things changed, because the mission got off to a bad start. Thanks to the efforts of the Conservative government of the day, we were able to make our soldiers on the ground proud and supply them with the equipment they needed in time to fulfill their combat role.

Now, the Liberals are in power, and they are responsible for showing respect to these people who gave their all, with our support, during the war effort. Now it is the Liberals' turn to show them respect.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I sincerely congratulate my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles on his speech. He made some points I did not bring up in my speech. It was very interesting. I see the Liberals are still trying to defend the indefensible.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on this. What we have here is a monumental gaffe, no pun intended. The Liberal government is turning this monument into a monument to shame, to controversy. I am not the one saying that.

Would my colleague agree that it is not too late for the government to reverse course and give the Daoust team the contract?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I do indeed believe that we are at a crucial point in the process. It is not too late. There is still time to change things. All the government has to do is swallow its pride and say it thought it was doing the right thing, but, as it turns out, the poll results were not really what it thought they were. There are so many ways the government could backtrack. I am pretty sure that has happened in politics before.

This monument will be there for decades, for centuries. This is an extremely important decision. A mistake was made, but the government can reverse course and say it has changed its mind. If the government does that, we will support it.

• (1140)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what he, as a veteran, thinks about the lack of respect the Liberal government showed when the Prime Minister's Office interfered in this matter.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and I thank him for his work as our party's shadow minister for veterans affairs.

The fact that the government used veterans is what bothers me the most in all this. By citing a bad survey, a pseudo-survey, to claim that this was the veterans' choice, it was using veterans for its own political ends.

As my colleague who did a tour in Afghanistan mentioned earlier in the debate, this should not be a political issue. This mission is a mission that Canada engaged in. We should all be proud to have a monument that represents Canada's war effort in Afghanistan, instead of getting caught up in a debate over purely political decisions and breaches of process. This is an insult to veterans.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for London—Fanshawe.

I feel it is absolutely critical to start this speech by recognizing Afghan veterans for their tremendous service. It is a very hard process to go through. I think it is also important to recognize their families, because the truth is that when it comes to the military, it is not only the members who serve but also their families. I just want to recognize them and thank them for their service today.

As the member of Parliament who represents the 19 Wing in Comox, I also want to take an opportunity to thank its members for their tremendous service. They have done a lot of incredible things for our region for many years. When they are needed, they show up to work.

I remember spending time with some of the search and rescue service members, and I talked to one woman in particular about her ability to deal with situations like jumping into the water and how she does that when it seems so terrifying to me. She said they train so that when they are called, they just do the work that needs to be done. That outlines the reality that people who serve this country work hard, practise hard and prepare themselves to do things that the majority of us could never imagine doing.

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Here we are having this discussion today about a monument and the process that unfolded to have that monument. I know that so many have been waiting for this monument. People want a place in this country where they can go to acknowledge history, acknowledge their service, acknowledge those who never came home and acknowledge the loved ones who were left behind.

What is very clear is that the process has been unclear. We heard from the minister that there was not a clear awareness or understanding of how to connect to veterans directly. Of all the situations, that is the one that concerns me the most. We need the voices of veterans who served in Afghanistan and their loved ones' voices to be clear.

We keep hearing from the government that this is what it is doing and this is about focusing on the people who served. However, as we know, the process that unfolded was not clear. We know there was no verification process to ensure that the people who were giving their opinions were in fact veterans and their loved ones. This provides the perception that it was not done correctly, and that is very concerning to me.

I think when we look at how processes unfold, it is important that a connection is made with veterans. As we have heard again and again from veterans, this is something the department is not doing effectively. For example, when rehabilitation services for veterans moved to the PCVRS, many veterans did not know that was happening. They saw changes to their services and they did not understand why. The intake process was long and they were often re-traumatized by having to share their stories again. We heard from folks who were providing rehabilitation services, in some cases for 40 years, who were excluded from the process.

Again, it was not clear, and part of the problem was that the method was not explained to service people, to veterans and to their families, which is very concerning. This is not how it should be for veterans. They should be getting the services they need.

What I have talked about repeatedly at the veterans affairs committee is that we need to see veteran-centric services. We hear about things like sanctuary trauma, and I think that is something we need to be taking seriously. The veterans who are trying to access supports and services from Veterans Affairs feel like they are being re-traumatized instead of being provided with the services they desperately need. Those things need to be addressed, and a lot of the training that people are doing at Veterans Affairs, good people trying hard to do the work, is not as effective as it could be in making sure there is an understanding of what people need, what veterans need and what their families need when they call.

• (1145)

We talked to the minister several times in our committee, and one thing I brought up to the minister, over the last four years that I have served in that role, was that there was no direct contact with letters, phone calls and follow-ups.

If this were a department that, I would hope, focused on service delivery, then those things would be happening. If that were the case, then we would not be having this debate right now. There would be a clear process that would show that Afghan veterans and their loved ones had given the feedback and that a decision had

been made that respected their rights, but we do not have that information.

We know Leger came out, very clearly, and said this is not a method that is clear and that it is not consistent. It becomes this thing where we are going back and forth, and the ones who are really hurting through this process are the members who served and their loved ones. That concerns me greatly.

Here we are, again, looking at this reality. We know, in the last Conservative government, that veterans really struggled. They were really frustrated. Their offices were shut down, and access to services became a bigger and bigger concern. I heard, then, about sanctuary trauma. I heard from veterans that they were frustrated. They kept trying to get support, and they could not. It just seems that what we are hearing in the House today is the Liberals and Conservatives fighting about who was worse, and we are not talking about what needs to change for veterans so that debate does not continue to happen.

This brings me back to what I keep hearing in my office from survivors of veterans. They are mostly women who are mostly in their late seventies to early nineties. They are calling my office and talking to me about the survivors benefit. They are asking me about the announcement the Liberal government made in 2019 of \$150 million that it would give out to those, mostly women, who were rejected for survivors benefits because they married their spouses after age 60. Even though they cared for them, in some cases for 20 to 30 years, they got absolutely nothing when their partners passed away.

That \$150 million was allocated and was supposed to get out the door to start supporting those women in order to respect the veterans who served our country and to respect the women who cared for them as they aged. We still have not seen a single cent of that go out to those survivors. That was four years ago, and I am still getting phone calls from those ladies who are struggling every day to make ends meet. They are seniors. They are going to their MPs and asking for help. They are asking when that money is coming out the door, and they do not know.

What do I hear from Veterans Affairs? I hear that it has not figured out the process. Those women, who cared for senior veterans and helped them to the very end of their lives, are getting zero dollars, even though they sacrificed in support of the sacrifice their partners made.

The challenge is that here we are again, and we see, again and again, the repeat of unclear process and not very good communication with veterans and their families. We see a department that may have good intentions but somehow is missing the mark, and we need to see better. We see sanctuary trauma, where veterans are coming forward talking about being traumatized while trying to access a service they need.

It also reminds me that, right now in committee, we are doing the largest study that committee has ever done, and it is the first study it has ever done on women veterans. What we are hearing from women veterans is horrifying, and it repeats this pattern of their being left out, of not being able to access the services they need and of not being acknowledged as having health and mental health challenges while they served. When they get to Veterans Affairs, they have to prove the things they went through. There is no acceptance of the fact that when the military, the army, the air force and the navy, opened up, they did not have the processes in place to support women. We need to do better by veterans. They definitely deserve it because they served us so well.

• (1150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the question of concern raised by the member when I gave my remarks. I am interested in her thoughts as to how one could do verification when the government, because it applies not only to Veterans Affairs but also to other areas of government, looks to get feedback from Canadians on a wide variety of topics. Here, we are talking about the important Afghanistan war monument.

There was a survey, a questionnaire, that went out. Most of the 12,000 responses were from veterans and their families. Does she have some thoughts as to how the government can validate those types of questionnaires or surveys that go out, not only for this department, but also for other departments?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, the reality is that I am not a pollster, but I am pretty darn sure that people who do that work would know exactly how to do it.

It is important, and it is respectful to veterans to make sure there is no perception that this might not be the case. That is my concern. I hope those 12,000 folks who came forward and shared their thoughts and opinions are veterans. The government keeps telling us they are veterans, but there is actually no way to measure whether they are veterans or not. That is what is leading us down this path.

My advice would simply be this: Please be thoughtful in the process. Ask experts to help when needed, and let us respect veterans as decisions are made.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the conversation that we are having today in the House.

We know our veterans want to be supported and want to be valued. They respect protocol and good governance. They respect order. Valour and honour are really important to them.

Here we have a circumstance where the government has usurped the role of the existing procurement process and has used a survey or a questionnaire that, as has been mentioned, cannot be verified. It is deeply disturbing to our veterans to consider that there are, possibly, individuals who have responded as veterans and are not veterans. That is very inappropriate in their world.

Can the member confirm that these two things, usurping the role of that procurement process and using, as an excuse, a question-

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naire that has no validity, are what undermines the trust and confidence in the government by our veterans on this case? Should the government reverse this poor decision?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member. We have spent many years together on committee and have served veterans in our roles. I deeply respect her commitment to veterans.

I cannot say what the outcome should be. What I do agree with is that it should be veteran-centric, so we need to go back. Obviously, this is unfortunate. Afghan veterans have been waiting for this to happen, and they have not seen it happen because of so many mistakes.

I hope the government would roll back and do this right, and make sure veterans are acknowledged for the important work they have done on this monument.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to listen to my colleague. I have a lot of respect for her.

My question is quite simple. According to Leger's conclusions, there is nothing usable in the survey that the government conducted. It is nothing but hot air. Does my colleague believe those conclusions?

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I have worked with the member for many years on the committee, and I respect him deeply.

I think Leger was very clear. It is unfortunate that the government did not do its homework to make sure there was a verification process and to make sure the people who gave the input were serving members, veterans who served or their families.

Here we are, in a place where there is more chaos when there should be something we are all proud of in this country.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too am honoured to stand in this place and represent the folks of London—Fanshawe and to talk about the 13th report of the veterans affairs committee.

That committee denounced the government's about-face and lack of respect for the rules when it decided not to award the design of the commemorative monument to a team linking the artist Luca Fortin and the architectural firm Daoust Lestage Lizotte Stecker, which won a competition conducted by the team of experts set up by the Liberal government itself.

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I find it not surprising, but certainly concerning, that something the government did to try to honour veterans of the Afghanistan war is now backfiring so much and doing so much damage.

This process to build such an important monument that would honour the 40,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces was so important. There were 158 Canadians who died while serving in Afghanistan. That was an important process that needed to be followed, and that process was ignored.

I simply do not understand why, after going through so much of that process over eight years and after having that jury determine the winner and artist of the monument design, the government would do such an about-face.

Again, this is about honouring veterans and our communities. I said this before: The honour I have to serve people in London—Fanshawe is incredible. London, as a community, holds that commemoration and that honouring of what veterans have done for our communities so highly.

When we talk about these monuments, in London, we have the Holy Roller, which is an 80-year-old tank from the Second World War. It is a Sherman tank that actually needed a lot of repair. It took several years, and it took a lot of effort.

The community came together and worked on that restoration. When it was revealed again, when they took it back to our downtown in Victoria Park, hundreds of people came out. Hundreds of people see that monument constantly when they go through Victoria Park, and they have that connection to what that sacrifice means and to what soldiers throughout Canadians' war history have given and have fought for. That is really important.

I think about all the incredible veterans I have come to know over my term of service, so far. They are truly remarkable.

In London—Fanshawe, we have Parkwood Institute, which is a veterans hospital. Throughout COVID, I was not able to visit like I wanted to, but the doors finally reopened, and we were able to go back. I actually got to go back for Remembrance Day this year. The ceremonies we partake in, where I have the honour to lay a wreath, are part of that commemoration.

I think about incredible veterans I have met in my career, like Pete Schussler, whom I spoke about in the House. Pete died recently. Pete was a retired chief warrant officer. He served in World War II. He served in England, France, Belgium and Holland.

He re-enlisted after 1948 and served again with the Corps of Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He served in Korea. He was a peacekeeper in the Middle East. He served with NATO in Germany. He received 16 honours and awards. He received the Order of Military Merit. He was knighted with the National Order of the Legion of Honor because he helped liberate France.

Another incredible veteran in my community is George Beardshaw. George actually just celebrated his 100th birthday. He was a member of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. He was a Second World War veteran. He was also awarded France's highest honour, the Legion of Honor. He was made a knight.

They are veterans in my community, whom I am so honoured to know, and they also need to be commemorated and need to be treated with the respect they ultimately deserve.

• (1200)

Speaking of respect, my colleague, the member for North Island—Powell River, went into a great deal of detail about the survivors benefit that the government was supposed to provide to honour the family members of veterans. I come from a long line of members of Parliament, and my mother introduced a similar bill to Bill C-221, which the member for North Island—Powell River introduced, regarding the removal of the gold-digger clause.

Right now, spouses who marry veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces or the RCMP who are over the age of 60 are ineligible to receive the survivor pension. That leaves survivors with nothing; these are mainly women who have supported veterans for a huge part of their lives. They live in poverty. They struggle to get by. Do they not deserve the same respect that we are talking about here?

I am proud to support Bill C-221, and I cannot understand why numerous governments, both Conservative and Liberal, have denied survivors, who are mainly women, these benefits. However, they continue to do so. That again speaks to a disrespect for our veterans. It is perplexing to me that the government would go out of its way to set up this competition, have a jury select a specific artist, then interfere in that process, do a complete 180° and choose somebody else.

I have a quote by a Université de Montréal professor, Dr. Chupin, who is the Canada research chair in architecture, competitions and mediations of excellence. He told the veterans committee that the uproar over the planned monument represents “a turning point in the history of competitions in Canada” and that there is no precedent for the government interference that took place to overrule the jury, when the government set up the process itself. It does not make any sense to me.

I will also note that another person who is part of this outrage is former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour. I had the incredible honour of working as the NDP's defence critic while Louise Arbour was ruling on sexual misconduct in the military. She is probably very familiar with such disappointment, I guess one could say, in the government.

At this time, we have a recruitment and retention crisis within our military; the incredible women and men who spend their entire lives and build careers defending our country see how we are now treating our veterans. With this breakdown in process, I can see why they continue to lose hope in wanting to volunteer and go into service in the first place, not to mention the sexual misconduct crisis that is raging.

This is an opportunity for the House and the government to change their minds, honour veterans and follow through on the commemoration through this memorial. I certainly hope the government does so.

• (1205)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to highlight a project that happened in Nova Scotia in my riding of Cumberland—Colchester. Military veterans, with great input from those who served in Afghanistan, were able to construct a memorial that is very befitting to honour those 158 Canadians who died in service to our great country. It was constructed in one year, at a cost of over \$37,000. There are three Silver Cross families in my riding: the Mellish family, the Reid family and the Tedford family. We see them often. It is incredible that their loved ones are honoured on this memorial.

I would also like to highlight, very sadly, that during the unveiling of this monument, there were no members from the Liberal Party there at all. This is an affront to veterans. That the current Liberal government messed up the process is also an affront to veterans, but projects such as this can get done with the will of great veterans who served this country.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's trying to stand up for things that are happening in his community. I have certainly done that, and I have worked very hard to try to find supports for other institutions that are commemorating veterans in our community. I have the 427 Wing, which was actually just awarded the Veterans Ombudsman Commendation for service to its community. I have the Victory Legion in London; it and all legions across the country do incredible work. They need supports from the federal government in terms of their places and infrastructure. The government can do a lot to support the institutions that help veterans in our communities.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this monument was the result of a process that involved a jury, which chose a monument design by Daoust. At the same time, the Department of Veterans Affairs launched a massive consultation that included numerous veterans groups; the overwhelming preference was for another project, put forward by Stimson.

I really appreciated, during her speech, how the member cast light on the wonderful contributions of veterans in her community. What would those veterans say if the government had ignored their wishes and gone ahead with the jury selection?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I understand that this has been called into question. The department could not be sure of who was part of that survey or ensure that veterans' groups were in fact polled in the way the member is suggesting. The fact, again, that the government set up an expert jury who had done that consultation as well and rejected the findings of that expert jury is extremely questionable.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have two quick questions for my colleague.

First, does she believe that the Prime Minister's Office is in a better position to evaluate works of art?

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Second, is there not a very simple solution for getting out of the whole mess surrounding this monument that does not exist yet, but is already being called a monument to controversy? Could the government not simply respect the jury's choice?

That is all.

• (1210)

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, again, I thank the hon. member for his work on this file. We had the opportunity to travel together to Dieppe, and that was a beautiful commemoration.

Yes, for the government to set up an expert jury, for the expert jury to have done the work and then for the government to override it is beyond understanding. Ultimately, the government could go back to the findings of that expert jury and respect its wishes.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[English]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we would request a recorded vote, please.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until later this day, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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PETITIONS

GOVERNOR GENERAL

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present petition e-4648, signed by 9,202 people from across Canada. This petition essentially calls for a reduction in the Governor General's expenses and salary and suggests various ways to accomplish that.

[English]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

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The first is with respect to climate change. The most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that we are feeling the impacts in Canada today with the increase in floods, wildfires and extreme temperatures.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to move forward immediately with bold emissions caps for the oil and gas sector that are comprehensive in scope and realistic in achieving the necessary targets for Canada to reduce its emissions by 2030.

FOOD SECURITY

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a petition that comes from community members in the Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox and Addington region, in particular, Frontenac Secondary School.

The petitioners are calling to the attention of the government that school food programs are recognized around the world as essential to the health, well-being and education of students. They note that data from Statistics Canada for 2022 indicates that one in four children in Canada lives in a food-insecure household and that Canada is the only G7 country that does not have a national school food program.

They are calling on the Government of Canada, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to prioritize funding for a national school food program through budget 2024 and for its implementation in schools by the fall of 2024.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1803, 1808, 1814 to 1820, 1823, 1828, 1829, 1832 to 1835, and 1842 to 1845.

[Text]

Question No. 1803—**Mr. Richard Cannings:**

With regard to the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) ability to assist with wildfire and emergency response management: (a) what evaluations and assessments of Canadian units and assets have been conducted to determine the CAF's capability for wildfire and emergency response; (b) what were the findings of any evaluations or assessments in (a); (c) what are the details regarding assets and units that are currently able to respond to and assist with wildfire and emergency response, including the (i) asset type, (ii) asset's use in wildfire management and emergency response, (iii) estimated life cycle of the asset; and (d) what is the total number of CAF members currently trained to assist with wildfires, broken down by unit and training level as defined by the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's approach to emergency management is a whole-of-government effort. Provincial and territorial authorities, Indigenous governments, and municipalities are the first to respond when a major natural disaster occurs. They may submit a Request for Federal Assistance, or RFA, to Public Safety Canada, which can ultimately result in the employment of the Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF, when appropriate and as a force of last resort.

With regard to (a) and (b), to ensure readiness and seamless coordination with federal partners, the CAF as well as the broader De-

fence team, regularly participates in whole-of-government readiness exercises. As with any operation, domestic or international, the CAF also conducts their own lessons learned exercises to help inform their future planning.

Further, and as part of the planning and force generation process, the CAF constantly assesses its assets, resources, and capabilities in order to remain flexible to respond to new priorities and emerging situations. While the CAF have not conducted a specific assessment or evaluation of units and assets regarding wildfire and emergence response, the proposed resources and people allocated towards domestic response are factored into broader planning and examination of the CAF footprint in both a domestic and international context.

With regard to (c) and (d), CAF domestic response deployments fall under Operation Lentus. Operation Lentus follows an established plan of action and can be adapted to multiple situations, such as forest fires, floods, ice storms, or hurricanes. Based on the RFA, the CAF determines how many people to send, and assets to deploy.

All CAF members can be deployed for domestic response under Operation Lentus; however, they must first achieve the requisite trade competencies. Common tasks for members deployed on Operation Lentus include filling, distributing, and placing sandbags, mopping up fires, evacuating people, transporting people, delivering aid to remote communities, helping law enforcement and provincial authorities to get information to the public, checking on residents, and assessing infrastructure.

While the CAF does not have dedicated firefighting assets, it can repurpose capabilities for domestic response. A historical overview of Operation Lentus, including assets deployed, can be found on the National Defence website. In recent years, CAF deployments have ranged anywhere from 60 to 2,600 members, and included the use of military vehicles, aircraft, and a variety of other equipment and capabilities. For example, in August 2023, to help combat wildfires in Northwest Territories, CAF air assets were used for movement of personnel and equipment; evacuation and logistic support; and as firefighting resources. CAF air assets deployed included two CC-130J Hercules, one CC-138 Twin Otter and three CH-146 Griffon.

Ultimately, the CAF will continue to help provincial and local authorities when called upon to ensure the safety of Canadians.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1808—Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:**

With regard to the initiative in Bill C-56, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Competition Act, that would implement a temporary enhancement to the GST New Residential Rental Property Rebate in respect of new purpose-built rental housing: (a) what are the details of the opinions and studies, including the (i) date, (ii) summary of the studies, (iii) source of the documents (internal or external to the department), (iv) name of the department or organization that provided the opinion, that led the Minister of Finance and deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers at the Department of Finance to say that removing the GST would lower the cost of housing; (b) what are the details of the studies and opinions, including the (i) date, (ii) summary of the studies, (iii) source of the documents (internal or external to the department), (iv) name of the department or organization that provided the opinion, that were received by deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers that support implementing the removal of GST for building rental housing; and (c) what are the details of the opinions and studies in (a) and (b), including the (i) date, (ii) summary of the studies, (iii) source of the documents (internal or external to the department), (iv) name of the department or organization that provided the opinion, that were sent to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities and his office?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C 56, the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act, would enhance the goods and services tax, or GST, rental rebate on new rental housing, to incentivize the construction of more apartment buildings, student housing, and senior residences. This enhancement increases the GST rental rebate from 36% to 100% and removes the existing GST rental rebate phase out thresholds for new purpose built rental housing projects.

The measure also removes a restriction in the existing GST rules to ensure that public service bodies such as hospitals, charities, and qualifying nonprofit organizations that build or purchase purpose built rental housing are permitted to claim the 100% GST rental rebate.

The enhanced GST rental rebate would apply to projects that begin construction on or after September 14, 2023, and on or before December 31, 2030, and complete construction by December 31, 2035.

In processing parliamentary returns, the Department of Finance applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and certain information has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes cabinet confidence.

Question No. 1814—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) new registration requirements for online streaming services and content creators: (a) what is the purpose of the registry; (b) for each type of service or creator required to register, what is the CRTC's rationale for including it in the registry; (c) how did the CRTC come up with the \$10 million threshold amount; (d) why did the CRTC create the registry; (e) on what date did the CRTC first notify the Minister of Canadian Heritage that it was going to create the registry; (f) what are the penalties for content creators who meet the threshold for mandatory registration, but do not register; (g) how many entities does the CRTC project will register as part of the registry, broken down by type of entity; (h) what guarantees, if any, will the CRTC provide to ensure that this registry will not expand or become more intrusive at any point in the future; and (i) what privacy protections are in place to ensure that any information provided to the CRTC through the registry is not misused?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Broadcasting Act requires the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, to regulate online broadcasting entities. As a first step, the CRTC created the registry to obtain some basic contact information about certain larger services operating in Canada, which will further the CRTC's under-

standing of the Canadian online broadcasting landscape and will allow it to communicate with companies if necessary. For additional details, refer to paragraphs 24 and 25 of Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2023-329.

With regard to (b), the registration requirement does not apply to creators. It applies only to large online services, like Netflix, Crave and Spotify, that earn more than \$10 million per year in Canada. This excludes creators, including users who upload content on social media services.

The rationale for including services in the registry is to provide the CRTC with basic information about these services and their broadcasting activities in Canada. For additional details, refer to Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2023-329.

With regard to (c), the CRTC rendered its decision following a public consultation where stakeholders and Canadians at large participated. The CRTC considered the evidence and determined that a monetary threshold was the clearest way to establish which online undertakings should register. Online services earning less than \$10 million per year in Canada will not have to register. For additional details, refer to paragraphs 46 to 115 of Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2023-329.

With regard to (d), the Broadcasting Act requires the CRTC to regulate online broadcasting entities. As a first step, the CRTC created the registry to obtain some basic contact information about certain larger services operating in Canada, which will further the CRTC's understanding of the Canadian online broadcasting landscape and will allow it to communicate with companies if necessary. For additional details, refer to paragraphs 24 and 25 of Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2023-329.

With regard to (e), the CRTC is a quasi-judicial tribunal that operates at arm's length. The CRTC's processes are entirely public. The CRTC did not notify the Minister of Canadian Heritage that it was going to create the registry before the issuance of Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2023-329.

With regard to (f), content creators are not required to register. The CRTC is focused on developing a regulatory relationship with those entities that have to register.

With regard to (g), large domestic and non-Canadian broadcasting entities will register their services. The CRTC estimates that approximately 50 to 100 services will need to register. These entities will provide some basic information on the types of services offered upon registration.

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With regard to (h), registration is a basic information gathering step. Any changes to the registration requirements would be based on a public process in which Canadians and industry stakeholders would be able to participate to share their views.

With regard to (i), the CRTC complies with the federal Privacy Act. Creators are not required to register or provide any information. The public registry of online services would only show basic information concerning these services, such as the company's name and mailing address.

Question No. 1815—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) new registration requirements for online streaming services and content creators: (a) what are the projected setup costs associated with the registry, in total, and broken down by item; (b) what are the anticipated annual costs associated with operating the registry, in total, and broken down by type of expense; and (c) what are the details of all contracts signed to date by the CRTC related to, or which provide any work associated with, the registry, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) description of the goods or services, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded (sole-sourced, competitive bid)?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, is a quasi-judicial tribunal that operates at arm's length. It regulates the broadcasting and telecommunications industries in the public interest. The CRTC makes decisions after broad public consultations and a thorough analysis of the evidence on the public record. Its broadcasting operations are funded through fees collected from the industry.

The CRTC is not registering content creators. Registering large online broadcasting services with revenues of at least \$10 million per year will not require new staff or new systems.

With regard to (a), the CRTC has existing staff, processes, and systems in place for registering broadcasting and telecommunications services that will also be used to register online broadcasting undertakings.

With regard to (b), there will be no incremental costs associated with operating the registry.

With regard to (c), there are no contracts in place regarding registration, nor are any planned.

Question No. 1816—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to the process for bonuses for executives at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Company (CMHC): (a) what is the specific process for determining whether and at what level a bonus is awarded to (i) the president and chief executive officer, (ii) other executives at CMHC; (b) which executives, including the president, require that their bonuses be approved by the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities; (c) what specific metrics were used to determine the level of the president of CMHC's bonus in each of the last three years; (d) for each metric in (c), what specific accomplishments were made by the president in order to justify each bonus; (e) what metrics were used to determine the bonus levels of other CMHC executives in each of the last three years; and (f) what specific accomplishments were made by CMHC executives to justify each bonus?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the process for bonuses for executives at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Company, or CMHC, in answer to (a), (b), (c), and (e), the Guidelines of the Performance Management Program for Chief Executive Officers of Crown Corporations, which are available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/programs/>

[apPOINTMENTS/governor-council-appointments/performance-management/crown-appointees.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/programs/apPOINTMENTS/governor-council-appointments/performance-management/crown-appointees.html), from the Privy Council Office, Senior Personnel Secretariat outlines the process for determining whether and at what level a performance-based compensation is payable.

In processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. Information with regard to (d) and (f) has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes personal information.

Question No. 1817—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and all departments and entities the minister is responsible for, broken down by year since January 1, 2016: (a) what was the total amount spent on consulting contracts related to housing; (b) what was the total amount spent on consulting contracts related to the (i) Rapid Housing Initiative, (ii) Housing Accelerator Fund, including the development and implementation; (c) what are the details of each contract in (b)(i) and (b)(ii), including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) value, (iv) description of the goods or services, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded (sole-sourced, competitive bid); (d) what are the details of all contracts in (a) worth over \$10,000, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) value, (iv) description of the goods or services, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded, (vi) type of consultant; and (e) did any of the consulting contracts in (a) or (b) result in the government receiving a report or recommendations, and, if so, what are the details of each, including the (i) vendor, (ii) date the reports or recommendations were received, (iii) title, (iv) summary of the contents, (v) website where the report is available online?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and all departments and entities the minister is responsible for, Infrastructure Canada has nothing to report, the Canada Infrastructure Bank has nothing to report, the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority has nothing to report, and Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated has nothing to report.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, undertook an extensive preliminary search in order to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response. CMHC concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

For contracts over \$10,000, CMHC complies with the Treasury Board's proactive disclosure policy, publishing these contracts on its website. They can be found at <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/about-cmhc/corporate-reporting/transparency/procurement>.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1818—Ms. Melissa Lantsman:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) seeking sensitive information about Canadian businesses from independent online service providers without particular suspicion of non-compliance or confirmed tax obligations: (a) did the CRA begin this practice following any directive from the Minister of National Revenue; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what was the directive and on what date was it issued; (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, why did the CRA decide to act in such a manner; (d) what specific data protections, if any, beyond routine CRA practices, are in place for the CRA in their request to access sensitive information about Canadian businesses from independent online service providers, to ensure data is maintained and secured against breaches; (e) how many privacy breaches occurred at the CRA during the last year in which statistics are available and how many (i) individuals, (ii) businesses, had their information involved in those breaches; (f) has the Minister of National Revenue provided any directives which permit the CRA to obtain over six years of personal information about Canadian businesses from independent online service providers, and, if so, on what date was the directive issued and what was the directive; (g) if the answer to (f) is negative, why is the CRA conducting such activities; and (h) what specific protections, if any, are in place to ensure the sensitive personal information of businesses, collected by the CRA from independent online service providers, is not used for other purposes?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above noted question, what follows is the response from the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, as of October 16, 2023, the date of the question.

It is important to note that while the CRA strives to provide as fulsome a response as possible, the confidentiality provisions of the acts it administers prevent the CRA from commenting or disclosing taxpayer information.

The CRA has a range of tools to ensure compliance with tax laws and to maintain the integrity of Canada's self-assessment tax system. One of the tools the CRA sometimes uses to address non-compliance and verify reported income is the unnamed persons requirement, UPR. This type of requirement is authorized by the courts and enables the CRA to obtain information from an individual or a company about third parties, whether unnamed person or persons. Additional information on the UPR is provided in the responses below.

With regard to part (a), the CRA did not receive any directive from the Minister of National Revenue to seek information about Canadian businesses from independent online service providers.

Part (b) is not applicable. Please see part (c).

With regard to part (c), as noted in the preamble to this response, the CRA uses various tools to ensure compliance with tax laws and maintain the integrity of Canada's self-assessment tax system.

The CRA only seeks information from third parties in order to verify tax compliance when there is a need for that information in support of the CRA's mandate. The UPR is one of the tools used to gather information in support of the CRA's efforts to verify income reported by taxpayers and to ensure they have satisfied their filing obligations under the acts administered by the CRA.

With regard to part (d), the CRA collects information where it is lawful and directly related to compliance activities. Information collected through the UPR process is managed and protected according to the CRA's standard practices to protect the privacy of personal information.

With regard to part (e), in its tracking system of privacy breaches, the CRA has no records that pertain to the CRA seeking sensi-

tive information about Canadian businesses from independent online service providers without particular suspicion of non-compliance or confirmed tax obligations.

With regard to part (f), the Minister of National Revenue has not issued any directive to obtain over six years of personal information about Canadian businesses from independent online service providers.

With regard to parts (g) and (h), a UPR is a legal document issued by the CRA under subsection 231.2(3) of the Income Tax Act, ITA, requiring a person to provide information regarding a third party person or third party persons who is or are not identified in the authorization. In order to issue a UPR, the CRA must seek judicial authorization from the Federal Court of Canada, FC. The FC will only authorize a UPR if that person or group is ascertainable and the UPR is being issued to verify compliance by the person or persons in the group who have tax obligations under the acts administered by the CRA.

Legislation, such as the Privacy Act and section 241 of the Income Tax Act, governs how information collected through the UPR process is managed. CRA policies and standard practices also protect the privacy of personal information. The CRA collects information when it is lawful and directly related to compliance activities.

In particular, when the CRA collects information through a UPR, the CRA will use the information in accordance with the FC order that authorizes the issuance of the UPR, and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the ITA. The CRA generally uses the information obtained through the UPRs to identify taxpayers who may have failed to comply with their obligations under the ITA and other acts administered by the CRA.

Question No. 1819—Mr. Mel Arnold:

With regard to the government's commitment in budget 2022 to provide \$28 million to train 1,000 new community-based firefighters: (a) how many firefighters have been trained to date through the program; (b) how much of the \$28 million has been spent to date; and (c) what are the details of all expenditures to date?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to date, a total of 496 firefighters have been trained through the fighting and managing wildfires in a changing climate program's training fund, and \$5,535,637 of the \$28 million has been spent in the following cost categories, which are the expenditures: training, working groups and professional development costs and costs to develop training; salaries, benefits and stipends; materials supplies and equipment; travel expenditures; honoraria and ceremonial costs; conference fees; overhead costs or administrative expenses; and capital expenditures such as the purchase, installation, testing and commissioning of qualifying equipment, materials and products, including of equipment for managing wildfire risk.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1820—Mr. Jamie Schmale:**

With regard to litigation and other legal expenditures involving Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) or Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) since January 1, 2016, broken down by year: (a) what were the total expenditures on (i) outside lawyers or legal advice, (ii) in-house or CIRNAC departmental lawyers, (iii) in-house or ISC departmental lawyers, (iv) Department of Justice Canada lawyers; (b) how many lawyers are represented in each subsection of (a); (c) of the expenditures in (a), what are the number of cases and total expenditures, broken down by standing of the government (plaintiff, defendant, intervenor, etc.); and (d) what are the details of all cases involving government expenditures of over \$100,000, including, for each, the (i) case name, (ii) date of the initial court filing, (iii) current status of the case, including the result, if applicable, (iv) total expenditures to date?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, until recently, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, CIRNAC, and Indigenous Services Canada, ISC, were part of the same department. In 2019, the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada split to create the separate departments of CIRNAC and ISC. Consequently, in this reply, reports are combined for CIRNAC and ISC, as some litigation files have both ISC and CIRNAC as clients.

With regard to litigation and other legal expenditures involving CIRNAC or ISC since January 1, 2016, to the extent that the information requested is or may be protected by any legal privileges, including solicitor-client privilege, the federal Crown asserts those privileges. In this case, it has only waived solicitor-client privilege, and only to the extent of revealing total expenditures and the total number of claims as defined below.

Regarding litigation and other legal expenditures from January 1, 2016, to October 16, 2023, the combined total for CIRNAC and ISC is approximately \$349.6 million.

The above-mentioned legal costs or expenditures are with respect to legal services provided by the Department of Justice, as well as legal agent costs. To note, Department of Justice lawyers, notaries and paralegals are salaried public servants and therefore no legal fees are incurred for their services. These legal professionals work together as integrated teams across the national litigation sector and departmental legal services units to support the Minister of Justice and Attorney General in representing the Government of Canada in litigation. However, a “notional amount” can be provided to account for the legal services they provide, calculated by multiplying the total hours recorded in the responsive files for the relevant period by the legal services hourly rates approved by the Treasury Board of Canada. File-related legal disbursements and other legal expenditures are not included in the above calculation.

The total amount mentioned in this response is based on information contained in Department of Justice systems, as of October 16, 2023.

There have been approximately 4,903 legal claims involving ISC and/or CIRNAC from January 1, 2016, to October 16, 2023. Examples of legal claims include actions, class actions, judicial review applications, specific claims and coroner’s inquests. Some of these claims were commenced before 2016 and continued into the relevant time period.

The vast majority of these files, approximately 86%, have not been initiated by the Crown, and the Crown has acted as defendant or respondent in these files.

There are currently approximately 532 legal claims with expenditures over \$100,000 involving CIRNAC and/or ISC. The total internal legal cost on these legal claims is \$298.6 million, excluding disbursements and legal agent costs.

Question No. 1823—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to analyses conducted by the Department of Finance related to deficit financing or inflationary spending conducted since November 4, 2015: what are the details of all such analyses, including, for each, (i) who conducted the analysis, (ii) what was analyzed, (iii) what methodology was used, (iv) on what date did the analysis begin, (v) on what date was the analysis complete, (vi) what was the analysis’s findings?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance regularly conducts research on a wide range of economic policy areas. The Department of Finance does not routinely track the starting dates of analytical projects. The end date can also be fluid since analytical work might be substantially complete on one date but discussed internally, and potentially revised, for some time after that.

Some common methodological concepts used in these analyses include dynamic general equilibrium models with nominal price and wage rigidities, qualitative analysis, semi-structural macroeconomic forecasting models and more. Relevant topics could include, but are not limited to, simulation of the effects of fiscal policy on monetary policy decisions and inflation, analysis of inflation, and monetary policy impacts of government consumption spending under various assumptions about monetary policy reaction. This analysis informs advice to, and decisions made by, the Minister of Finance regarding fiscal and economic policy.

As always, it is important to note that monetary policy is solely the purview of the Bank of Canada and that this independence is critical to Canada’s economy.

The Department’s analysis can be seen in regular budget documents. As an example, see annex 1 of the recent 2023 fall economic statement at <https://www.budget.canada.ca/fes-eea/2023/report-rapport/anx1-en.html>. The forecasts and models described in this annex are informed by the analytical work of the Department of Finance, using inputs from the September 2023 private sector survey. See, for example, beginning on page 88, descriptions of different economic scenarios as modelled by the Department of Finance at <https://www.budget.canada.ca/fes-eea/2023/report-rapport/FES-EEA-2023-en.pdf>.

Question No. 1828—Mr. Alistair MacGregor:

With regard to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry’s comments on October 5, 2023, that “Starting soon, Canadians will be able to see rollouts of actions such as discounts across a basket of food products, price freezes and price matching campaigns to name a few”: (a) by what date can Canadians expect to see the rollouts mentioned; (b) what are the details of all actions referenced by the minister, broken down by (i) food products, (ii) price freezes, (iii) price matching campaigns; and (c) how does the minister distinguish between previous business practices and new actions as a result of the government’s consultations?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada believes that food affordability is a critical issue facing all Canadians and is taking a series of actions to promote the stabilization of grocery prices. As part of this effort, the government has called on companies throughout the food supply chain, both grocers and suppliers, to take meaningful actions to stabilize grocery prices. The nature and scope of these actions will be determined by the companies themselves in the context of a competitive marketplace.

In October 2023, each retailer identified a series of initial commitments aimed at supporting efforts to stabilize food prices in the near term. Individual grocery retailers are taking actions, as determined by them, to deliver on this commitment.

As part of the Government of Canada's efforts to support food price stabilization, five additional concrete measures were outlined: supporting consumers through additional investment in the contributions program for non-profit consumer and voluntary organizations, creating a grocery task force to monitor actions taken by food retailers and producers, creating a food price data hub to improve the availability and accessibility of food price data, continuing to work on implementing a grocery code of conduct, and introducing legislative amendments to the Competition Act to address affordability.

The Government of Canada will continue to work with stakeholders from the agri-food industry to stabilize food prices in Canada.

Question No. 1829—**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:**

With regard to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry's statement on October 5, 2023, that "I can tell you I've been looking at some flyers this morning, and you already see action in terms of different grocers adjusting ahead obviously of Thanksgiving": (a) to which flyers was the minister referring; and (b) what were the actions in the flyers in (a) which are directly related to government consultation with grocery retailers, broken down by (i) discounts on food products, (ii) price freezes, (iii) price matching campaigns?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada believes that food affordability is a critical issue facing all Canadians and is taking a series of actions to promote the stabilization of grocery prices. As part of this effort, the government has called on companies throughout the food supply chain, both grocers and suppliers, to take meaningful actions to stabilize grocery prices. The nature and scope of these actions will be determined by the companies themselves in the context of a competitive marketplace.

In October 2023, each retailer identified a series of initial commitments aimed at supporting efforts to stabilize food prices in the near term. Individual grocery retailers are taking actions, as determined by them, to deliver on this commitment.

The Government of Canada has also made clear that it will take additional action to restore the food price stability that Canadians expect, should initial commitments and actions bring relief to Canadians.

Question No. 1832—**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:**

With regard to the Department of Finance and inflation: (a) has the department undertaken any analysis on the impact that deficit spending has on inflation; (b) if the analysis in (a) has been done, (i) what were the results, (ii) when was it undertaken; and (c) if the analysis in (a) has not been undertaken, why?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance regularly conducts research on a wide range of economic policy areas. The Department of Finance does not routinely track the starting dates of analytical projects. The end date can also be fluid since analytical work might be substantially complete on one date but discussed internally, and potentially revised, for some time after that.

Some common methodological concepts used in these analyses include dynamic general equilibrium models with nominal price and wage rigidities, qualitative analysis, semi-structural macroeconomic forecasting models and more. Relevant topics could include, but are not limited to, simulation of the effects of fiscal policy on monetary policy decisions and inflation, analysis of inflation, and monetary policy impacts of government consumption spending under various assumptions about monetary policy reaction. This analysis informs advice to, and decisions made by, the Minister of Finance regarding fiscal and economic policy.

As always, it is important to note that monetary policy is solely the purview of the Bank of Canada and that this independence is critical to Canada's economy.

The department's analysis can be seen in regular budget documents. As an example, see annex 1 of the recent 2023 fall economic statement at <https://www.budget.canada.ca/fes-eea/2023/report-rapport/anx1-en.html>. The forecasts and models described in this annex are informed by the analytical work of the Department of Finance, using inputs from the September 2023 private sector survey. See, for example, beginning on page 88, descriptions of different economic scenarios as modelled by the Department of Finance at <https://www.budget.canada.ca/fes-eea/2023/report-rapport/FES-EEA-2023-en.pdf>.

Question No. 1833—**Ms. Lori Idlout:**

With regard to the Department Results Report of Indigenous Services Canada, broken down by fiscal year since 2015-16: (a) what indicators did the department use to measure progress to close infrastructure gaps in First Nations communities; (b) broken down by (i) province, (ii) territory, what were the results of each indicator used in (a); and (c) which indicators in (a) does the government believe it has failed to make progress on?

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as to part (a), with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the Minister of Northern Affairs, the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, and in partnership with first nations, Inuit and Métis communities, the Minister of Indigenous Services was mandated in December 2021 to “continue to make immediate and long-term investments to support ongoing work to close the infrastructure gap by 2030, with a particular focus on expediting investments in Indigenous housing, with over half of the funding available by the 2022 summer construction period”. Progress on mandate letter commitments are reported through the “Mandate Letter Tracker”, on Canada.ca at <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/8f6b5490-8684-4a0d-91a3-97ba28acc9cd>.

Infrastructure investments are a key element of the government's commitment to foster the growth of safe, healthy and prosperous indigenous communities and to support indigenous economic participation. The infrastructure needs of first nations communities are always evolving, whether due to changing population and demographics, adapting to climate change or changes in technology.

As required by the policy on results, since 2018-19, ISC has been reporting on indicators to measure progress toward the departmental result “Indigenous Peoples have reliable and sustainable infrastructure”, through the departmental results report. All departmental results reports are available on ISC's website at <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1523548227958/1523899047980>.

As to part (b), ISC reports national level results through the departmental results report.

As to part (c), the department has made progress toward its departmental result “Indigenous Peoples have reliable and sustainable infrastructure”. Since 2016 and as of June 30, 2023, \$9.92 billion, excluding operating expenses, of ISC-targeted infrastructure funding has been invested toward 9,457 projects, with 5,421 completed and 4,036 ongoing, that will benefit 613 communities serving approximately 474,000 people.

In addition to funding for physical infrastructure projects, these investments include more than \$563.7 million to support training and capacity-building opportunities. A total of 2,837 projects, which make up 30% of the total targeted infrastructure portfolio, are training and supporting services and initiatives. These supporting infrastructure and capacity development projects help communities to advance their efforts toward self-determination.

While significant investments have been made to date, the Government of Canada knows there is more work to do.

Question No. 1834—Ms. Lori Idlout:

With regard to the third round of funding of the Rapid Housing initiative and the territory of Nunavut: (a) how many proposals were received by the government for housing in Nunavut; (b) what are the details of all proposals received in (a), including the (i) location of the housing, (ii) number of units, (iii) funding requested, (iv) decision to approve or deny the funding; (c) for all proposals that were denied funding in (b), what was the reason for denial; (d) what is the total number of approved housing units, broken down by community; and (e) what is the expected date of completion for the housing units in (d)?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker,

with regard to the government's Rapid Housing Initiative, or RHI, round 3, and applications received, funded and unfunded in Nunavut,

To protect the confidentiality of our partners and proponents, information regarding applications or potential projects cannot be released publicly until we have a signed agreement with the proponent and a public announcement takes place.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, works with the proponent to determine the feasibility of a public announcement. Not all projects may be announced, this may be due to sensitivities based on project type and proponent requests, or the proponent may decide to announce their project independently.

CMHC aims to commit all funds before March 31, 2024. Projects located in Indigenous communities, in the North or in special access communities, have 24 months to deliver housing once an agreement is in place.

Question No. 1835—Ms. Lori Idlout:

With regard to government funding for the completion of the Arctic Bay Small Craft Harbour, since August 4, 2021: (a) what is the total amount of funding delivered to (i) Worley Canada Services Limited, (ii) Ikpiaryuk Services Limited, (iii) other firms, for the purpose of completing this project; (b) has the original contract for this harbour been completed or cancelled; (c) have the contracts related to this project been amended in any way and, if so, what are the details of all amendments, including the (i) date of the amendment, (ii) amended text; (d) what consultations has the government engaged in with the community of Arctic Bay concerning the completion of the project; and (e) what is the expected completion date of the Arctic Bay Small Craft Harbour?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to government funding for the completion of the Arctic Bay small craft harbour since August 4, 2021, details are as follows. With regard to part (a)(i), the contract for design and inspection services is with Worley Canada Services Ltd. and Ikpiaryuk Services Ltd., in joint venture. The total amount of funding delivered to the joint venture since August 4, 2021, is \$940,274.27.

With regard to part (a)(ii), there is no separate contract for Ikpiaryuk Services Ltd. as it is in a joint venture with Worley Canada Services Ltd., as listed above.

With regard to part (a)(iii), there are no other contracts on this project.

With regard to part (b), the original design and inspection contract has not been completed or cancelled.

With regard to part (c), the contract with Worley Canada Services Ltd. and Ikpiaryuk Services Ltd, in joint venture, has been amended four times since August 4, 2021. The details are as follows.

Routine Proceedings

Amendment six, on a supplemental archaeological assessment, occurred on December 30, 2021. The Government of Nunavut culture and heritage branch has requested a supplemental archaeological impact assessment, AIA. The original AIA was completed as part of a prior Fisheries and Oceans Canada, DFO, feasibility study. The project areas have expanded to include a larger quarry footprint. Additionally, there are areas that the contractor may propose to utilize that have not yet been captured in the historical AIA. This amendment will capture the expanded areas and will require that the archaeologist coordinate their review with the contractor to ensure that all areas will be assessed.

Amendment seven, on a revised class A estimate and community consultation support, occurred on June 28, 2022. The costs incurred related to preparing a revised class A estimate, risk assessment and recommended contingencies. The original construction solicitation has been cancelled as prices were excessively high in relation to the original estimate. The class A risk and contingency assessment would support DFO in acquiring additional funding.

Amendment eight, on an increase to honoraria disbursement allowance, occurred on June 28, 2022. The increase to the disbursement upset limit related to any additional honoraria payments that may be required. Honoraria payments will be issued per the original terms of payment contained in amendment 001.

Amendment nine, on the translation of drawings and specifications, occurred on September 6, 2022. Advisian-Ikpiaryuk has submitted a proposal to provide translation of the issued-for-tender drawings and specifications in order to meet the obligations of policy notification PN48R1.

With regard to part (d), since August 4, 2021, DFO has engaged with the community of Arctic Bay on three occasions.

On September 14, 2021, DFO held a community open house to review and present the final harbour design and discuss construction methodologies, haul routes and quarry works. The community open house attendees included community residents and representatives from the hamlet of Arctic Bay; the Ikajutit Hunters and Trappers Association; the Arctic Bay Nauttiqsuqtiit, or the guardians; the Qikiqtani Inuit Association; DFO; Transport Canada, TC; Public Services and Procurement Canada, PSPC; and consultant representatives from Worley Canada Services Ltd. and Ikpiaryuk Services Ltd, in joint venture.

On September 15, 2021, DFO held a meeting at the community hall to review the findings and information gathered at the public open house and to formally consult on any potential impacts to fish and fish habitat caused by the project as well as on navigation requirements and disposal-at-sea requirements. Meeting attendees included representatives from the hamlet of Arctic Bay; the Ikajutit Hunters and Trappers Association; the Arctic Bay Nauttiqsuqtiit, or the guardians; the Qikiqtani Inuit Association; DFO; TC; PSPC; and consultant representatives from Worley Canada Services Ltd. and Ikpiaryuk Services Ltd., in joint venture. Environment and Climate Change Canada representatives attended the meeting remotely.

On December 1, 2021, DFO held a final meeting prior to going to tender at the community hall in Arctic Bay. Worley Canada Ser-

vices Ltd. and Ikpiaryuk Services Ltd., in joint venture, provided a presentation, followed by open discussion to review the final harbour design, construction methodologies, haul routes, navigation aspects, impacts to fish and fish habitat, and quarry works. Community feedback from the open house was reviewed and presented. Meeting attendees included representatives from the hamlet of Arctic Bay; the Ikajutit Hunters and Trappers Association; the Arctic Bay Nauttiqsuqtiit, or the guardians; the Qikiqtani Inuit Association; and Worley Canada Services Ltd. and Ikpiaryuk Services Ltd., in joint venture. DFO and PSPC participated remotely due to winter storms preventing travel to the community.

With regard to part (e), at this time, the completion date is unknown.

Question No. 1842—**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:**

With regard to the government's ongoing Refocusing Government Spending initiative: (a) how much funding is being refocused; (b) what is the breakdown of funding being removed from initiatives through refocusing, including, for each, the (i) name of the initiative that is having funding removed, (ii) amount of funding being removed; and (c) what is the breakdown of new funding being redirected to initiatives through refocusing, including, for each, the (i) name of the initiative that is having new funding delivered, (ii) amount of new funding being delivered?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government is committed to responsibly managing Canadians' tax dollars by ensuring that operations and programs are effective, efficient, and directed toward priorities.

Budget 2023 announced spending reductions of \$15.4 billion over five years, from 2023-24 to 2027-28, and \$4.5 billion annually thereafter.

Savings from underutilized government spending will be shifted to priorities like health care and the clean economy.

These reductions fall into two categories: reductions of \$7.1 billion over five years and \$1.7 billion ongoing in spending on consulting, other professional services and travel; and reductions of \$7 billion over four years and \$2.4 billion ongoing in spending on operations and transfer payments. Comparable spending reductions will be applied to Enterprise Crown Corporations, which will account for an additional savings of \$1.3 billion over four years starting in 2024-25, and \$450 million ongoing.

Organizations have received information on savings targets.

TBS officials are conducting an analysis of savings proposals and are working with officials from other organizations to seek clarity where required. This will ensure that savings are sustainable and do not create future service delivery or program integrity pressures.

Routine Proceedings

Information on specific departmental reduction amounts will be publicly reported through the Estimates documents, starting with this year's Supplementary Estimates (B), which includes details about reductions for 2023-24. Organizations will report on their specific reduction plans and progress through the Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports.

Question No. 1843—Mr. Jacques Gourde:

With regard to the October 2, 2023, deadline set by the President of the Treasury Board for ministers to find \$15.4 billion in proposed spending cuts: (a) what is the detailed breakdown of the proposed spending cuts; and (b) which of the cuts in (a) will the government be proceeding with?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government is committed to responsibly managing Canadians' tax dollars by ensuring that operations and programs are effective, efficient, and directed toward priorities.

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Savings from underutilized government spending will be shifted to priorities like health care and the clean economy.

These reductions fall into two categories: reductions of \$7.1 billion over five years and \$1.7 billion ongoing in spending on consulting, other professional services and travel; and reductions of \$7 billion over four years and \$2.4 billion ongoing in spending on operations and transfer payments. Comparable spending reductions will be applied to Enterprise Crown Corporations, which will account for an additional savings of \$1.3 billion over four years starting in 2024-25, and \$450 million ongoing.

Organizations have received information on savings targets.

TBS officials are conducting an analysis of savings proposals and are working with officials from other organizations to seek clarity where required. This will ensure that savings are sustainable and do not create future service delivery or program integrity pressures.

Information on specific departmental reduction amounts will be publicly reported through the Estimates documents, starting with this year's Supplementary Estimates (B), which includes details about reductions for 2023-24. Organizations will report on their specific reduction plans and progress through the Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports.

Question No. 1844—Mr. John Williamson:

With regard to whistleblowers who exposed wrongdoing at Sustainable Development Technology Canada: what specific protections, beyond what is prescribed in the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, will the government be providing to these whistleblowers?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC, is a shared governance corporation at arm's length from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, or ISED. As such, employees at the organization are not subject to the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

SDTC has agreed to take the steps needed to enable a thorough review of the whistleblowers' allegations to be led by an indepen-

dent, third-party law firm that will report its findings directly to the Minister. As part of this, SDTC has agreed to allow current and former employees to freely speak to the law firm without violating any applicable settlement or non-disclosure agreements.

Question No. 1845—Mr. John Williamson:

With regard to the National Capital Commission (NCC), excluding projects on residential home properties or official residences: (a) what are the details of all construction or renovation projects completed by the NCC since January 1, 2018, including, for each, the (i) location, (ii) project description, (iii) date the project began, (iv) completion date, (v) initial budget, (vi) final cost of the project, (vii) reason the project went over budget, if applicable; and (b) what are the details of all construction or renovation projects which are ongoing, including, for each, the (i) location, (ii) project description, (iii) date the project began, (iv) original completion date, (v) current completion date, (vi) initial budget, (vii) current budget, (viii) reason the current budget is higher than initial budget, if applicable?

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the National Capital Commission, or NCC, concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual collection of information that is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

However, the budgets of the NCC's construction and renovation projects are available in the appendices about the Multi-Year Capital Program in the summaries of the NCC's Corporate Plan. These documents are available on the NCC's website at <https://ncc-ccn.gc.ca/about-us>.

* * *

• (1215)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, furthermore, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 1804 to 1807, 1809 to 1813, 1821, 1822, 1824 to 1827, 1830, 1831, 1836, 1837, 1839, 1841, 1846 and 1847 could be made orders for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1804—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to the Fighting and Managing Wildfires in a Changing Climate Program's training fund, since October 1, 2021: (a) how many community-based firefighters have been successfully trained by the federal government, broken down by (i) province or territory, (ii) year; and (b) in what jurisdictions have the trained community-based firefighters in (a) been used to fight and manage wildfires, broken down by (i) province or territory, (ii) year?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1805—Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to the Rental Construction Financing Initiative: (a) how much funding has been provided under the initiative since the creation of the program; (b) what are the details of all projects approved to date, including, for each, the (i) location, (ii) number of units, (iii) value of the project, (iv) amount of financing, (v) type of financing, (vi) financing recipient, if known, (vii) date of application, (viii) date of approval, (ix) date the financing was provided; and (c) of the projects in (b), how many units have been completed as of October 2023?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1806—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA): (a) what is the current backlog of air traffic complaints, including the number of complaints and the length of time before new complaints are adjudicated; (b) what is the government's plan to reduce the backlog; (c) does the government have a target date for when the backlog will be reduced to less than six months, and, if so, what is the target; (d) if the government does not have a target in (c), why not; and (e) what measures, if any, are in place to reduce the number of cases requiring a CTA ruling?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1807—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to government expenditures related to the Prime Minister's trip to New York in September 2023, to attend the United Nations General Assembly: (a) what are the expenditures incurred to date, in total and broken down by type of expense; (b) how many members were part of the Canadian delegation; (c) what are the names and titles of the delegation members; (d) what was the total amount spent on hotels in the New York City area during that visit; and (e) what are the details of the spending at each hotel, including the (i) total amount spent, (ii) name of the hotel, (iii) number of rooms rented each night, (iv) rate paid and the number of rooms at each rate?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1809—Mr. Stephen Ellis:

With regard to the government's Substance Use and Addictions Program, broken down annually for each of the last five years: (a) how much funding has been provided through the program; (b) how was the funding spent, broken down by type of expenditure; (c) what are the details of the funding recipients, including (i) which entities received funding through the program, including the name and location of each entity, (ii) how much funding each entity receive, (iii) what the funding was intended for; (d) what was the breakdown of the funding by province or territory and by municipal area, if known; and (e) what was the breakdown of the funding by type of substance?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1810—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada, to date: (a) how many purpose-built accessible and affordable housing units have been built or procured since November 1, 2019, to specifically address homelessness of former members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, broken down by year and by province or territory; (b) what are the median rents for the purpose built-housing units in (a), broken down by year and by municipality; (c) how many formerly homeless veterans received access to homes through the procurement of the purpose-built housing units in (a), broken down by year and by province or territory; (d) how were federal funds allocated to construct purpose-built affordable housing for veterans experiencing homelessness across Canada; and (e) is the government aware of how many veterans are currently experiencing homelessness in Canada, and, if so, what is the most recent count?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1811—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) mortgage insurance loans for non-profit housing providers, to date: (a) how many non-profit housing projects with mortgage guarantees from CMHC defaulted, broken down by year and by province or territory; (b) for each project that defaulted in (a), what was the reason for the default; (c) how many and what percentage of non-profit projects that defaulted were eventually foreclosed; (d) how many and what percentage of projects in default were also guaranteed by provincial or territorial governments; (e) what is the amount of administrative fees the CMHC charges to non-profits seeking to have CMHC mortgage insurance for their housing project, on av-

erage; and (f) what is the total amount of administrative fees the CMHC has collected from non-profits broken down by year and by province or territory?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1812—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to the government's Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI), to date: (a) how many applications through the Projects Stream has the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) (i) received, broken down by municipality and by year, (ii) rejected, broken down by municipality, by year, and by number of units per application, (iii) approved, broken down by municipality and by year, (iv) accepted and delivered all funding for, broken down by municipality, by year, and by number of units; (b) how many applications through the Cities Stream has the CMHC (i) received, broken down by municipality and by year, (ii) rejected, broken down by municipality, by year, and by number of units per application, (iii) approved, broken down by municipality and by year, and by number of units; (c) of the projects rejected, how many had either municipal, provincial, or territorial resources attached to the project (i) for the Projects Stream, (ii) for the Cities stream; (d) how much federal funding has been paid out by the program; (e) what are the median processing times for RHI applications, broken down by municipality and by year; and (f) what are the median rents for completed RHI-funded units, broken down by municipality and by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1813—Ms. Jenny Kwan:

With regard to compliance inspections undertaken by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) related to the Temporary Foreign Worker program and the findings of those inspections: (a) of the more than 2,100 inspections undertaken by ESDC in the last fiscal year, how many and what percentage were conducted (i) in-person, (ii) remotely, broken down by year and by province; (b) of those inspections conducted in-person in (a), (i) how many provided formal or informal notice to employers prior to the date of inspection, (ii) how many and what percentage were found to be in violation of compliance standards, (iii) what were the reasons cited for the violation of compliance (ranked in order of the most frequent) and the percentage for each distinct reason in relation to all found violations, (iv) within what timeframe did the employer address the violations; (c) of those inspections conducted remotely in (a), (i) how many and what percentage were found to be in violation of compliance standards, (ii) what were the reasons cited for the violation of compliance (ranked in order of the most frequent) and the percentage for each distinct reason in relation to all found violations; (d) were any of the employers found to be repeat offenders and, if so, how many employers were found to be in violation of compliance standards more than once and how often did these employers violate compliance standards; (e) how many and what percentage of employers found to be in violation of compliance standards received a follow-up inspection following the original finding of violations, and how many and what percentage of follow-up inspections found the employer to be in (i) compliance, (ii) violation; (f) among employers who were found to be in violation of compliance standards of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program, how many and what percentage (i) were required to provide adequate living accommodations for migrant workers, (ii) failed to meet the requirements to provide adequate living accommodations, (iii) employed foreign nationals holding closed work permits and (g) in those cases whereby it was decided that employers failed to provide foreign nationals with appropriate and agreed-upon wages, failed to provide foreign nationals with health insurance, charged foreign nationals excessive fees, failed to provide adequate living accommodations, failed to maintain a workplace free of abuse or reprisal, failed to meet expectations listed in the offer of employment, or failed to provide information on the foreign national's rights in Canada, what measures, if any, were taken to compensate affected foreign nationals?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1821—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to all memorandums, briefing notes, and other documents sent from or received by the Privy Council Office related to, or which mention in any way, the United States President Joe Biden's visit to Parliament on March 24, 2023: what are the details of each, including the (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipient, (iv) type of document, (v) title, (vi) summary of the contents, (vii) file number?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders***Question No. 1822—Mr. Jamie Schmale:**

With regard to all memorandums, briefing notes, and other documents sent from or received by Global Affairs Canada related to, or which mention in any way, United States President Joe Biden's visit to Parliament on March 24, 2023: what are the details of each, including the (i) date, (ii) sender, (iii) recipient, (iv) type of document, (v) title, (vi) summary of the contents, (vii) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1824—Mr. Stephen Ellis:

With regard to expenditures incurred by the government related to icebreaking services on the St. Lawrence Seaway: what were the total expenditures, broken down by year and month, for each of the last five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1825—Mr. Chris Warkentin:

With regard to the carbon tax or price on carbon, during the 2022-23 fiscal year: (a) what were the annual costs to administer the (i) collection of the carbon tax, (ii) rebate program; and (b) how many employees or full-time equivalents were assigned to work on the (i) collection of the carbon tax, (ii) rebate program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1826—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to Service Canada's national in-person service delivery network, broken down by each Service Canada Centre: (a) how many full-time employees (FTEs) were there on January 1, 2020; (b) how many FTEs were there on October 17, 2023; (c) which offices have changed their hours of service since January 1, 2020; and (d) for each office that has changed its hours of service, what (i) were the previous hours, (ii) are the new hours?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1827—Mr. Alistair MacGregor:

With regard to the food affordability crisis: (a) on what date will the government implement its proposed National School Food Policy; (b) what programs will be put in place by the government to implement its proposed commitment of \$1 billion over five years; (c) what are the government's plans to integrate Canada's Food Guide as a guiding principle for the Healthy Eating Strategy; and (d) what communications, via in-person meeting, virtual meetings, e-mails, or letters, have been received from provincial governments confirming their interest in partnering with the federal government on the establishment of a National School Food Program, broken down by (i) province, (ii) year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1830—Ms. Michelle Ferreri:

With regard to expenditures by any department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity involving ONWARD or Maryam Monsef, since January 1, 2022: what are the details of all expenditures, including, for each, (i) the date, (ii) the amount, (iii) a description of the goods or services provided, (iv) whether the contract was sole-sourced or competitively bid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1831—Mr. Luc Berthold:

With regard to events held at Rideau Hall since January 1, 2018: what are the details of each event, including the (i) date, (ii) purpose and description of the event, (iii) number of attendees, (iv) total costs or expenditures, (v) breakdown of the costs or expenditures?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1836—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to services provided on bases of the Canadian Armed Forces since December 1, 2015: (a) how many positions for civilian employees of the Department of National Defence have been eliminated, broken down by (i) province or territory, (ii) year; (b) how many positions for civilian employees of the Department of National Defence remain unfilled, broken down by (i) province or territory, (ii) year; and (c) how many contracts using federal funds, including renewed contracts, were issued to private companies without using an open tender process, broken down by (i) province or territory, (ii) year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1837—Ms. Marilyn Gladu:

With regard to the government's 2023 Housing Accelerator Fund that closed on August 18, 2023: what are the details of the \$4 billion dollar fund, including (i) which ridings received funding, (ii) what amount of funding each riding received?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1839—Ms. Marilyn Gladu:

With regard to Canada's international land border crossings: what was the average wait time at Canada's land border crossing bridges for 2019 and 2023, broken down by (i) bridge, (ii) week?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1841—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to the Canada Dental Benefit, broken down by year, for each of the next five years: (a) what are the funding allocations and projections for the program, broken down by department or agency receiving funding to administer the program; (b) how much funding is expected to be required to administer the program, whereas how much funding is provided in benefits; and (c) what are the projected rates of coverage under the program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1846—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to international conferences attended by the government, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity, since January 1, 2019: what are the details of all conferences attended by the government, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) name of the conference, (iv) number of government attendees, (v) amount spent on conference fees or tickets, (vi) amount spent on travel related to the conference?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1847—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to international conferences sponsored by the government, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity, since January 1, 2019: what are the details of all conferences sponsored by the government, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) name of the conference, (iv) financial amount of the sponsorship?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, finally, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND GROCERIES ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-56, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Competition Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There are three motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for report stage of Bill C-56. Motions Nos. 1 to 3 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

Government Orders

[Translation]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 3 to the House.

[English]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC) moved:

That Bill C-56 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

[Translation]

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC) moved:

That Bill C-56, in Clause 3, be amended

(a) by replacing lines 26 and 27 on page 3 with the following:

“10.1 (1) The Commissioner may conduct an inquiry into the state of competition”

(b) by replacing line 30 on page 3 to line 6 on page 4 with the following:

“(3) The Com-”

[English]

Hon. Karina Gould (for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry) moved:

That Bill C-56 be amended by adding after line 16 on page 8 the following:

Coordinating Amendment

12.1 If Bill C-59, introduced in the 1st session of the 44th Parliament and entitled the Fall Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2023, receives royal assent, then on the first day on which both subsection 247(2) of that Act and section 7.2 of that Act are in force, subsection 79(4.1) of the Competition Act is replaced by the following:

(4.1) If, as the result of an application by a person granted leave under section 103.1, the Tribunal finds that a person has engaged in or is engaging in a practice of anti-competitive acts that amounts to conduct that has had or is having the effect of preventing or lessening competition substantially in a market in which the person has a plausible competitive interest and it makes an order under subsection (1) or (2) against the person, it may also order the person against whom the order is made to pay an amount, not exceeding the value of the benefit derived from the conduct that is the subject of the order, to be distributed among the applicant and any other person affected by the conduct, in any manner that the Tribunal considers appropriate.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, “We who live in free market societies believe that growth, prosperity and, ultimately, human fulfilment, are created from the bottom up, not the government down.” That is a quote by the great Ronald Reagan.

After eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, it is abundantly clear that it is not worth the cost. Its economic mismanagement, malpractice and neglect on the economy has led to some of the most miserable outcomes for Canadians today. We have a Prime Minister who says that budgets will balance themselves and who does not think about monetary policy and the misery of Canadians. However, that same monetary policy has a cause and effect relationship to the misery of Canadians. It truly shows that the government has absolutely no idea what it is doing today. As a result of the cause and effect, Canadians today are more reliant on the government. Whether or not that is the intention of the NDP-Liberal government, at the end of the day, it is the pain and misery that Canadians are facing that is making what we used to think of as the Canadian dream fade away.

Whether someone's family has been here for generations or someone is working hard to become a Canadian citizen, more and more, it is clear that the same Canadian dream is gone. We see that

the government has spent more than every government before it, combined, did, which has led to 40-year highs in inflation and the most rapid interest rate hikes ever seen in Canadian history, while putting Canadians most at risk in the G7 of a mortgage default crisis. The Canadian dream is gone. Everything is up in this country: rents, mortgages, food prices, the debt and taxes. It is sad that the only thing that is truly down right now is the economy. That goes back to the cause and effect of the Liberal-NDP government, which does not think about monetary policy but is the cause of that monetary policy.

Everything feels like it is broken. Canadians who open their fridges and look at their bank accounts are seeing that the government is not only taking more but also leaving them with less and with worse outcomes than ever before. The misery is real. We travel across this country and hear that pain from everybody. When the government is taking more, it means it is taking more from somebody, from Canadians. Their paycheques are shrinking. Throw a job-killing carbon tax scam on top of that. It is not only making food prices go up; it is also taking more away from Canadians, with higher utility bills and higher costs when they fill up their gas tanks and just take care of everyday basic necessities. After eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, the most basic things have become a luxury: heating one's home, filling up with gas and even buying groceries these days. People are cutting back after eight years of the government.

There is a phenomenon that has begun in the middle class. A middle-class family with two income earners is now going to the food bank because they cannot afford to eat, to heat their home and to house themselves. That is the cause and effect of a Prime Minister who does not think about monetary policy.

Housing has doubled; there is double trouble everywhere. The government has doubled the cost of rent and mortgages because of all of its deficit spending and the debt of more than half a trillion dollars, which led to the interest rate hikes to tackle the inflation that was caused by the government. The other side of the equation is housing supply, which has also been affected by mismanagement and all of the government spending. Not only are people not able to get into homes because of low supply, but because of the high interest rates caused by the spending, homebuyers also cannot get into new homes they would like to buy. As well, builders are affected by not being able to build because of the high interest rates. That is why it is double trouble by the double-trouble Liberal-NDP government.

Government Orders

• (1220)

The cost of everything is up; it has exploded. The issue of housing is not being tackled. We are seeing a lot of photo ops. There is a huge fund that the government has put aside for photo ops, but there is nothing concrete to get things built. In fact, the CMHC warns that Canada will see a decline in the number of new homes being built this year. At a time when the government says we have a housing accelerator, it is too bad that everything it is doing is decelerating homes being built in this country. It is decelerating the economy as well. America's productivity, its GDP per capita and its economy itself, is booming. It grew 5.2%. Canada's contracted, and it will stay that way for a very long time. That means investment will not come in to help get homes built. Investment will not come in to create good jobs and more powerful paycheques for our Canadian people. It means that less and less productivity will be happening, which ultimately means that Canadians are getting poorer as the government is getting richer by taxing them more and more.

Anyone renewing their mortgage today knows the pain. It was just a few years ago that the Prime Minister and the finance minister said that Canadians should go out and borrow as much they want because rates would stay low for a very long time. That could have been true, but what people did not expect was for the Liberal-NDP government to dump billions and billions of dollars of fuel on the inflationary fire that the government started, which made interest rates go up because it increased inflation. All that inflationary spending is the misery that mortgage borrowers are seeing today. Rates are up, and now when they go to renew their mortgages, they are renewing at a minimum of double, and sometimes triple, the rate. There is a huge crisis looming if the government does not get its act together and balance the budget.

The dream of home ownership is dead. Nine out of 10 young people are saying the dream is gone and they will never be able to afford a home. Unless someone's parents are rich, or they owned a home, it is impossible for anyone else to own a home today, all because of the government's economic mismanagement. Rents are up, and more people are relying on renting, not being able to afford homes. The rental market is booming but also suffering. Anyone who is renting today has seen their rent doubled. That is after just eight years of the Prime Minister. It took just eight years for all of this misery to come to fruition.

What are the Liberals doing on housing? They have created billions of dollars of photo op funds that they keep re-announcing and recycling, and that is all they have. What they are not doing is taking any meaningful action on it. They have put billions of dollars toward programs, some that have 13 projects. It seems that there are members on the Liberal benches who have probably flipped more homes than they what they have gotten built under some of these programs.

It is time for a common-sense Conservative government. I encourage everyone watching today, and members on the other side, to watch our common-sense leader's common-sense documentary on the housing hell that Canadians are seeing today, and actual solutions for how to get it fixed. There is a common-sense Conservative bill tabled in the House, under our leader, called the "Building homes not bureaucracy" bill. On top of that, I would encourage everyone to take a look at our common-sense Conservative plan that

would bring home more powerful paycheques by lowering costs by axing the tax on gas, groceries and home heating. We are going to bring home more powerful paycheques by balancing the budget so we can bring down inflation. That would bring down interest rates and let people stay in their homes. We are going to bring more homes people can afford. Again, I would encourage everyone to watch the documentary. It deserves awards, and it might even get some. Maybe the Liberals could actually learn something and take something away from it.

We are going to bring home safer streets by making sure we focus on jail and not bail for repeat offenders. Instead of taking guns away from lawful gun owners such as hunters, sport shooters and our indigenous communities, we are going to use that money at the border to stop the flow of drugs, illegal guns and crime that are coming in. Most importantly, we are going to bring home freedom once again. Many people who came to this country, like myself, might have left countries where there was not much in the way of freedom of speech and freedom of expression. When they come here, they are asking why they left the country they came from. Under our common-sense Conservative leader, we are going to bring home freedom and make sure we bring home powerful paycheques.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, bringing home freedom is something I have heard a lot about from Donald Trump. If we look at the Conservative Party today, and what is taking place in its leadership office, I think of MA-GA politics. Here we have the Conservative right, which has consumed the leader's office, and one of their key words is "freedom".

Can the member explain what it means when the members of the Conservative Party talk about freedom? Can he contrast that to the war that is taking place in Ukraine today?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, the question shows how completely out of touch that Liberal member and all of his party are when they are telling me, an immigrant to this country, that I am a far right just because I am a Conservative.

We will bring freedom back from the grip that the Liberal government has put people under, where they are not able to afford the cost of groceries, or the cost of rent or mortgages, and where every single malpractice they have had on the economy has caused the misery and pain that we see in Canada today.

Of course, we are going to release those Canadian people who are working hard just to stay afloat and give them the freedom to make their own decisions and keep more in their pockets.

Government Orders

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the principle things Bill C-56 would do is that it would remove the GST off purpose-built rentals. That is a policy that is very much designed to incent the building of more market-based rental units.

One of the ways the government could incent the building of more units with affordability conditions would be to release land and tie affordability conditions to released land to ensure that, if there is going to be new units built, that a specific percentage, whether it is 15%, 20%, 30%, 40% or whatever it happens to be, of the new units built on that government land are either affordable or social housing. In the Leader of the Opposition's bill on housing, he has not attached any affordability conditions to the release of public land. I wonder why that is.

We have a measure here that is meant to incent the building of market rentals by removing the GST. We need accompanying measures for affordable and social housing, and it seems to me attaching conditions to land release is one of the best ways to do it.

• (1230)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, I would argue that every plan that our common-sense Conservative leader has come out for was about affordability. Our plan to build more homes and not bureaucracy not only tackles and gives a goal of 15% of increased permits, but also includes the other side of the equation. Liberal and NDP members have yet to meet their promise. Until they balance the budget, even if land is sold, builders cannot build because one of the biggest drawbacks they have is the high interest rates, which were caused by the Liberal-NDP member's non-stop deficits. They have made inflation and interest rates go up.

Until the budget gets balanced and we start having lower inflation and interest rates, builders will not build and people will not get into new homes. The Liberals need to get out of the way to do that for Canadians.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, the critic for finance has painted a really great picture. He has this lived experience, and he shares it wholesomely, as an immigrant who came to Canada for a better life.

There still seems to be some misunderstanding, especially from the Liberal-NDP side. They do not understand that, if one spends more than they make, one creates more debt. We actually have the lowest GDP growth per capita since the Great Depression, which means Canadians are getting poorer.

What is the basic thing happening on the Liberals' side showing how they are mismanaging Canadian taxpayers' money, which is causing this misery?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Peterborough—Kawartha is a great advocate.

Everything the government touches breaks. We have seen that in Canada. I would like to highlight the great people of Calgary Forest Lawn. I have one of the most diverse ridings. There are 108 languages spoken in my riding. In fact, there is a strip of land called International Avenue. It should literally be the Canadian dream where anyone who wanted to would be able to open a business on that strip of land.

However, today, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, it has become an absolute nightmare for newcomers in my riding because of high interest rates caused by those deficits, this job-killing carbon tax, and all the other spending the government has done to make life more expensive and unlivable for them. We need to get this country back on track.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always interesting listening to Conservative members talk about Canada's economy. It is as though there is a dark cloud covering the chamber when a Conservative wants to talk about the Canadian economy. Ultimately, they love using the word "broken" and saying that everything is broken.

I am here to say that there is a great deal of light, opportunities and hope for Canada, especially if we do a comparison with other countries in the world, those in the G7 or G20, on the major indicators. Whether it is interest rates, inflation rates or employment rates, we will find that Canada is always around the top three or four in those categories most of the time, including today. However, this does not mean that we sit back and not do anything because Canada, in comparison to many of those G20 countries, is doing well.

We have seen a Prime Minister and a government that has made a commitment to continue to work at building Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. We want an economy that works for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, which is why we brought forward Bill C-56, the affordable housing and groceries legislation. We know that it is important, as a government, to be there in tangible ways for Canadians, and we have demonstrated that from day one.

I have often made reference to one of the very first actions we took to support Canada's middle class, which was a tax break a number of years ago. That was the first real, substantial piece of legislation that we had brought forward. We took it from there, going through the pandemic and the many supports that we put into place to have the backs of Canadians, to get out of the pandemic and to build our economy. Because of the supports that we put in place during the pandemic, we have rebounded, in good part, out of the recovery. I would suggest that we are second to no other country in the world when we take a look at the million-plus jobs that have been created based on a population base of 40 million people.

When the Conservatives criss-cross the country, and their leader criss-crosses the country saying that Canada is broken, they are misleading Canadians. Yes, there are areas of concern, which is why we bring forward legislation like this. It is legislation that ultimately the Conservative Party does not even want to see passed and that they will filibuster, yet it is there to support Canadians in real and tangible ways.

Government Orders

Bill C-56 deals with the Competition Bureau by giving it more power. I would think that members would want to see that. For example, when we talk about grocery prices, what Canada needs more than anything else is competition. One of the biggest arguments against buyouts of large corporations is the efficiency rule where a corporation will say that, for efficiency purposes, it wants to consume another business, which shrinks the competition. A tangible example of this is when Loblaw bought up Shoppers, which was back when Stephen Harper was the then prime minister. The leader of the Conservative Party today sat in cabinet when Shoppers was acquired by Loblaws. What did they do back then? They did absolutely nothing. That has had more of an impact on the price of groceries than anything the Conservative leader has actually said in the last year-plus to try to bring down prices.

● (1235)

I suggest that his actions back in the day when he was a cabinet minister speak louder on the policies that concern grocery prices than his actions now as leader of the official opposition. Maybe that is one of the reasons the Conservatives are filibustering. This legislation helps deal with that. We realize that when Loblaw acquired Shoppers, it was not necessarily to the advantage of consumers.

It is one of the reasons I take a great sense of pride when grocery stores open in my riding, in particular smaller stores. There is a diversity of grocery stores, whether they are of Punjabi heritage, which provide wonderful foods and a wide variety of products, or the Water Plant stores in the Filipino community in Winnipeg North, and they provide competition. We can see how the bigger chains start selling some of those products. Why is that? It is because of competition. That is why the minister called upon the big five grocery chains to come to Ottawa to justify their prices. That is why the standing committee pushes the issue.

We recognize that housing is an important issue. This legislation would help deal with housing. Prior to the Prime Minister and government, the federal government's role in the last 30 years has been negligible on housing. The housing strategy that was adopted by the government is historic. We would have to go back 50 or 60-plus years to see the kind of investment this government has put in housing.

We finally have a government, under the Prime Minister's leadership, that is taking a proactive approach to deal with housing in Canada. Never before have we seen a government as proactive, but it takes more than just the Government of Canada. We need provinces, municipalities and other stakeholders to also get on board and work together. The Conservative leader says we need to beat them over the head with a stick. We say we need to work with municipalities and the different levels of government to increase housing supply in the non-profit sector.

Whether it is legislation or budgetary measures, over the years we have consistently seen a government that is committed to developing, promoting and encouraging supports for housing. We saw in the fall economic statement, for example, that the Deputy Prime Minister brought forward a proposal to expand non-profit housing co-ops, a true alternative to condominiums, single detached homes, duplexes or townhouses. It is an alternative to being a tenant, and it is highly successful.

The government understands the importance of jobs. Show me a government that has done more to create new jobs, on a per capita basis, than the Government of Canada has provided, in working with Canadians, since the pandemic. If we want to talk pre-pandemic, over a million jobs were created between 2016 and the pandemic getting under way. This government understands that we have to build infrastructure, support Canadians and create jobs. By doing that, we are supporting Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be part of it and providing the programs that are so critically important to support those in need. We also increase affordability, where we can, by bringing in programs such as child care for \$10 a day and programs for people with disabilities, significantly increasing OAS for seniors over 75 years of age, investing in things such as CPP years ago so that, when people retire, they will have more money in their retirement.

This is a government and a Prime Minister that care about the lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and our budgetary and legislative actions clearly demonstrate that.

● (1240)

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, let us talk about affordability. It is unbelievable. My riding of York—Simcoe is now classified as Toronto. There has been a second carve-out on the carbon tax. They have actually rolled the census data back to 2016 to help other ridings. My riding of York—Simcoe, which is home to first nations and farmers, is clearly rural, and it is not going to get the doubling of the rural top-up for the carbon tax.

It takes an hour and 45 minutes for someone from the Chippewas of Georgina Island to get to the hospital in my rural riding, and this government now looks at us as Toronto of all things.

I wonder if the member for Winnipeg North could comment on that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, within the legislation, what we have been talking a great deal about is the purpose-built rental housing, which takes away the GST in order to get more homes built. It is such a good idea that the Province of Ontario, the member's own province, and Premier Doug Ford, who, by the way, is not a Liberal, are on board with it. He is doing the same thing now.

It is only the Conservatives who have this preoccupation. There was a time, before they were taken over by the far-right, when they understood the benefits of a price on pollution. Now they are fixated on wanting to get rid of the price on pollution at all costs. There will be a substantial cost for that reckless policy that is coming out from the leader of the Conservative Party, in dealing with getting rid of the price on pollution. Shame on them for being so—

Government Orders

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his contribution to the debate on Bill C-56. However, I would like to put myself in his shoes.

The member works tirelessly, and the work that he does is vitally important, but it seems to me that he occasionally has to defend the indefensible. Would he not like to have a little help from his colleagues, especially on something like Bill C-56 on housing? Small steps have been taken, but the real big step was supposed to be in the economic statement. However, real measures will not be implemented until 2025. We will likely have a new government by then. His government will not implement any actual solutions for housing until the end of its mandate.

Does that tick my colleague off a little, given that he steps up to the plate day in and day out to defend this government's integrity?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, whether the member likes it or not, the facts speak volumes in terms of reality. This government has invested more in housing than any other government in the history of Canada, period, end of story.

At the end of the day, we need to work and have continued to work with provinces and municipalities. We understand and appreciate that in order to maximize the efforts of good, sound public policy, it always works better if there are stakeholders also at the table making sure that we are maximizing the investments of tax dollars and trying to make a positive outcome for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Other provinces do get involved, along with municipalities, because they recognize that there is a great deal of resources coming from Ottawa today—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, of course, the best help that Canadians can get with affordability challenges is a well-paying job.

We know there are 605 media workers who are going to be out of a job because Metroland Media decided that it would shut down 70 print community papers.

One of the things that the government did, and I am quite happy to say worked with opposition parties to get it done, was Bill C-228, to provide pension protection in the case of bankruptcy.

However, the NDP had also negotiated amendments to protect the severance pay of workers. The member for Winnipeg North struck those provisions out on a point of order and then later denied unanimous consent in order to get them put back in.

I am wondering if the member wants to take this opportunity to talk to those 605 families and explain why he wanted to put the

predators at Metroland Media ahead of those families getting their severance.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that the member for Elmwood—Transcona would try to misrepresent the actions that I take inside the House, especially on this matter.

I have been a passionate, strong advocate for workers in many different ways. When members bring forward unanimous consent motions before the House, there is an expectation that they would have had consensus. I take my role very seriously on the floor of the House. Unless I have been assured of consensus, I will always say no. Negotiations need to take place. To try to exaggerate something, I find, is very irresponsible.

I, too, was frustrated, for example, when I tried to get unanimous consent to recognize the 1919 general strike in Winnipeg and its 100th anniversary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-56, which has just passed an important milestone. However, it is with a touch of disappointment that we note that a super closure motion has prevented the Standing Committee on Finance, and perhaps even the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, from doing the work that needed to be done in terms of competition. I will come back to that later. In less than 24 hours, the committee determined the fate of changes that could have been made to Bill C-56 even though there were plenty of good recommendations from committee members and witnesses.

I would remind the House that Bill C-56 was the first bill to be announced, even before Parliament resumed in September. There was not enough time to consider the government's proposed solution and the expert testimony. Only one solution was put forward in part 1 of Bill C-56, namely an amendment to the Excise Tax Act to include a 5% GST rebate, based on the sale price, to builders of rental apartment buildings.

I want to talk about housing because there has been a housing crisis in my riding for about 15 years now. The same goes for a number of my colleagues. Federal programs just do not work for the regions, especially not for my region, Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Let us do the math. Building a four-unit development in a city like Ville-Marie in Témiscamingue, population 2,600, is like building 2,000 units in Calgary. Building eight units in La Sarre is like building 1,800 in Montreal. Building 16 in Amos is like building 1,200 in Winnipeg. Building 32 in Rouyn-Noranda is like building 2,250 in Toronto.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, our programs are not designed for regional realities. Fixing the labour shortage means fixing it in the regions and dealing with the public land use issue. More often than not, federal programs focus on impressive stats, but when they fall short of their targets because there is no new housing in the regions, what is the point of the targets? This is simple math, and it may seem simplistic, but it reflects the importance of adapting programs to suit projects in remote regions, including Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation programs.

Our region has been experiencing a housing shortage for the past 15 years. Since 2005, Abitibi—Témiscamingue has reached a healthy balance, a 3% vacancy rate, only once. The vacancy rate has been below 1% seven times. In the last three years, the average price of a two-bedroom apartment has risen from \$681 in October 2019 to \$845 in October 2022. That is a 25% increase. On top of that, the average price of a two-bedroom built since the early 2000s is \$1,250. Without a doubt, this reflects the higher construction costs in the regions.

It is even worse with the construction that is going on right now. When I look at the government's current measures, I do not see anything that will reverse this trend, other than an empty promise for something that could happen down the road under the next government. It definitely will not happen before 2025. I do like the parenthetical interest in co-operative housing. However, those measures are also being put off until later.

It is also important to remember that, in the regions, particularly in Abitibi—Témiscamingue, the majority of our buildings were constructed between between 1960 and 1980. This means that affordable housing, including the units owned by co-operatives, needs to be renovated. Adapting programs would also help provide our regions, including mine, with the tools they need to become economic drivers. It also means addressing concerns about housing, particularly in terms of upgrading. In that regard, I am still waiting for help and for tools from the government.

Part 2 of Bill C-56 deals with amendments to the Competition Act.

The government could have gone even further and used this as an opportunity to consider modernizing the Competition Act, a crucial subject that was addressed in exceptional circumstances. The committee's recent study took place in an unfortunate context marked by the adoption of a super closure motion in the House the week before, as stipulated in Government Business No. 30. The government deprived itself of the opportunity to consider recommendations from the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, comments gathered in the competition commissioner's consultations and from his excellent brief. This is really unfortunate. The Bloc Québécois has been calling for a comprehensive reform of the Competition Act for years, if not a decade.

● (1250)

It is essential to note the challenges that the Standing Committee on Finance has faced. A single meeting with witnesses was held on the evening of November 27 and lasted until 10 p.m. Members were required to present their amendments, translated and certified by legal clerks, by noon the next day. That tight schedule hampered us from conducting a serious study and properly taking into account

the witnesses' observations. Unfortunately, the substitution of Parliament for backroom discussions in the negotiations on closure between the government and the NDP contributed to this situation. Democracy did not benefit from all this.

Despite these challenges, the committee managed to adopt a few important amendments, including some that are worth mentioning. First, we chose to considerably increase the monetary value of fines for serious offences under the Competition Act. The cap is \$25 million for a first offence, with harsher penalties for repeat offenders. The purpose is to deter reprehensible behaviour. The existing fines were often perceived as the cost of doing business and did not really have a deterrent effect.

Second, we adjusted the legal threshold required to find a major player guilty of abusing a dominant position to reduce competition. At present, there is a dual burden of proof: It has to be shown that an illegal act was committed and also that this act effectively reduced competition. However, proving that something reduced competition is often difficult, rendering the Competition Act rather ineffective. Our amendment to the bill makes it possible to go after questionable conglomerates and simplifies the law and the prosecution process by making this component more effective.

Third, we gave the commissioner of competition the power to independently undertake a market study. Although the existing act gave the commissioner extensive powers during such studies, he could only carry them out at the request of the Minister of Industry. As we know, the minister is a very busy man, so it is just as well to enable the commissioner to do this himself. Going forward, he will be able to carry out studies more independently, strengthening his ability to proactively monitor and regulate the market.

Lastly, the Bloc Québécois introduced an important amendment that targets the adverse effect that a lack of competition can have on consumers. It is crucial that major players be prohibited from taking advantage of their dominant position or quasi-monopoly over a market, so we can prevent consumers from being exploited through predatory pricing. At present, the Competition Act targets the source of the lack of competition without directly tackling its harmful effects on consumers. Abuses committed over the years, enabled by a lack of regulation and a law that was clearly biased toward industry concentration, left the government indifferent. In committee, this crucial Bloc Québécois amendment aimed to fix this flaw and was adopted unanimously.

This also applies to housing. Unfortunately, for too long, there has been little to no oversight. We have seen very shady conglomerates take over affordable housing that may have been in need of renovation and turn it into unaffordable housing. There have been examples of this in my region and in big cities. That is what helped kill affordable housing, especially in the rental market. It is just as well that the bill tackles this.

Government Orders

There has been a laissez-faire attitude about housing, the oil industry, banks and telecoms for a very long time. This is partly why prices have increased so much.

In conclusion, even though the process was marred by unusual time constraints, the amendments we made to the Competition Act are a step toward more effective regulation that is adapted to current market realities. We hope that these changes will help promote healthier competition, deter illegal practices, and protect consumers' interests.

Nevertheless, I urge the government to give us the opportunity to do what we so desperately want, which is to thoroughly update the Competition Act over the coming year, rather slip it into a mammoth bill. While we are at it, can we overhaul the Copyright Act, too, as well as the many others that fall within the Minister of Industry's purview?

• (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on purpose-built housing, I indicated that within government policy, we have seen general acceptance by the provinces. I know the province of Ontario is one and that other provinces are looking at it. This initiative in itself will see thousands of new homes built by us working with the private sector in providing this type of support.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on that. I am not too sure whether Quebec has taken up the challenge that other provinces have in getting rid of sales tax to ensure there will be more purpose-built rentals.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, under the circumstances, every step taken to improve access to housing and lower costs is positive. The problem is that my colleague says that no government has ever invested as much as the one in power now. Of course costs are increasing in real terms, but the federal government has not invested in social housing in years. That is one of the major problems.

The Liberals say they are investing historic amounts, specifically mentioning an agreement from 2016, but it took four years for Quebec to receive its due. Unfortunately, COVID-19 came along, sending costs soaring. Quebec was not able to build nearly as much housing as Ontario, partly because of how much time the federal government wasted trying to reach an agreement with it. The recent negotiations also stalled. The Bloc Québécois had to intervene to speed up agreements between the parties.

I would like to mention something. This morning I had a meeting with the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies of Quebec. It had a particularly interesting recommendation. The association recommends creating a national infrastructure assessment that would develop a long-term strategy to determine communities' infrastructure needs. Why does the government not have this long-term vision?

We need to review the funding and renew it quickly to see what happens by the spring of 2024. Predictability is what the industry is asking for, and I support that request.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the fall economic statement made announcements about social housing but did not really provide any money.

I would like my colleague to tell us a little about the problems we can expect to see as we wait for the new funding to become available not this year, but down the road, in 2025.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I wish I had the same speaking chops as my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert to properly express how angry I feel over the lack of action. In my riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, visible homelessness is increasing steadily as a direct result of the government's inaction.

There is one thing that can justify an economic statement. It has to solve a problem that did not exist six months ago, or the whole exercise is potentially a waste of time. The housing crisis is happening at a time when homelessness is becoming increasingly visible in places where it never existed before. That is one consequence.

No solutions are being offered before 2025. By 2025, the Liberal government could be gone, in its current form at least. I find it repugnant that it delays and offloads its responsibilities onto others when it has the means to act. This fake austerity will take a toll on the most vulnerable among us, and I refuse to accept that.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate listening to speeches from the member. The member always makes good comments about how the Liberal government has the opportunity to spend money and decides not to.

I wonder if the member would like to expand a bit on how the government not investing in housing and not spending the money it has for housing have manifested on the streets and in our communities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I do not get the feeling that the Liberal government is inclined to be a responsible government. It is more inclined to be a political government that is scared as it watches the Conservatives rise in the polls and it figures it will create a sort of false austerity. In any case, it will be able to control Parliament for another two years before the next general election, probably, with the complicity of the NDP. Then it will hand out some pre-election gifts when the time comes.

To me, it is not a matter of means, it is a matter of cynicism.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise at report stage to speak to Bill C-56.

Government Orders

Some important amendments were made at the committee stage that were based on the good work of the NDP leader in his own private member's bill in respect of the Competition Bureau. Those amendments give the commissioner the ability to launch their own investigations without having to get permission from the minister first. They also raise the penalties and make it easier to show an abuse of market dominance.

Right now we have to show there is a dominant market player, that harm has been done by their activity and that they had the intention to do harm. Getting all of those three things together is often very difficult, particularly in respect of intent, because traditionally the commissioner has not had the authority to subpoena documents. Lowering the threshold so that we have to prove market dominance and either harm or intent means that it will be a lot easier to address anti-competitive behaviour. Of course, there are a number of amendments, again based on the work of the NDP leader in his private member's bill, that will be coming to the budget implementation act, Bill C-59, which was tabled not long ago.

The New Democrats are very proud to be working at improving the powers of the Competition Bureau to try to protect Canadian consumers by ensuring that in markets where competition is possible, companies are not abusing their market position to reduce competition.

We are likewise pleased to move forward with getting rid of the GST on purpose-built rentals. We know there is a housing crisis. I have talked a lot about it in this place. Many others are talking about it today, and rightly so. One component of that crisis and addressing it is to get more purpose-built rentals of any kind, including market rentals. However, what we have said all along, and ever since Bill C-56 was tabled, is that it has to be accompanied by direct action to build more non-market housing, because that is housing that can be built and sustained at rents that people can truly afford.

There are Canadians who have the means to pay for market housing but are struggling to find it. There can be a salutary effect on the price of rent, driving it down if there is more supply than there currently is. We know it is a pretty tight market. However, we cannot kid ourselves into thinking that this alone will be sufficient to address the housing crisis.

That is why direct investment in non-market housing is so important. It is why in the budget implementation act that was tabled recently, Bill C-59, which I just made reference to, there is also an amendment that would see the GST rebate extended to co-operatives, which were left out of the government's initial drafting of Bill C-56, something that New Democrats think is very important.

I also want to take a moment to express our disappointment. I had a conversation with the Minister of Finance when she appeared at the finance committee on Bill C-56. The government still refuses to extend the GST rebate to projects with secured funding under the national housing strategy that are led by non-profits, whether through the co-investment fund, the housing accelerator fund or any number of funds available. We would encourage the government to do this as soon as possible by whatever legislative vehicle is required. We are certainly willing to help pass it.

We know there are non-profit organizations that started things out when they looked promising and interest rates were low. They secured government funding and were going to build either affordable or social housing in their community. Then interest rates started going up, and the projects were put on hold because those organizations no longer had the money they needed to make those projects a success. Our point is that, even though those projects may have started prior to September 14, if the GST rebate is extended to those projects, it could be the difference they need to accommodate higher interest rates and nevertheless be able to proceed with projects and get those units built.

We know the government is out there talking about those units as part of the total number that its national housing strategy has funded, even as it knows those units have stalled out and even as there is a mechanism, the extension of the GST rebate to those projects, to get them to move ahead. I think it is inappropriate for the government to be out there talking about those units as if they are going to get built, when it knows full well that the changes in the interest rate have meant those projects are not going to go ahead, even as it refused NDP calls to extend the GST rebate to those projects so they could move forward in any event.

● (1305)

Unfortunately quite unlike the Liberals, New Democrats are not satisfied with the announcement. What we are looking for, and this is the metric of success for New Democrats, is when a family moves into a new unit. The fact that the announcement was made just means the work has begun; it does not mean the work has ended. If we are going to follow through on units that have already been announced, it means extending the GST rebate to non-profit organizations' projects that started in advance of September 14 so that real families can move into units they can afford. That is really important, and I exhort the government again to take another look at it. It is a drop in the bucket cost-wise, and it is going to mean a lot of units getting built for families.

Government Orders

It is an example of the kind of intentional policy we need to adopt and that is absent not only in the Liberals' national housing strategy but also in the Conservative leader's so-called plan for housing. He attached affordability conditions in his plan to the GST rebate. It is not that New Democrats do not endorse affordability, but one of the challenges of that is the GST rebate is meant to make market projects pencil out. If we give a GST rebate but attach an affordability criterion that also stresses the budget, then we end up with the net effect that developers who want to build market rental housing do not necessarily see the financial incentive to move ahead, because the GST rebate is offset by the fact that they have to offer more affordable rent.

That is why we think it is acceptable to have a blanket GST rebate for purpose-built rentals, because it is going to incent market housing, but we need a real policy that addresses the need for properly affordable non-market housing and social housing. That is simply not in the leader of the Conservative Party's plan. It is just not there. He talks about releasing federal land in order to build more housing, but he does not talk about requiring any of that housing to be affordable or social housing.

We talk about the major levers the federal government has at its disposal beyond its ability to tax and spend. One of the big levers the federal government has in order to incent more affordable and social housing is land. Attaching conditions to the release of land is one of the best things a federal government can do from the point of view of developing more affordable and social housing.

This is remarkable, particularly in light of the controversy around another Conservative government, Doug Ford's government in Ontario, taking rules off the development of the Greenbelt, which his government subsequently had to put back on because it was scandalous and because developers were set to get rich, including a lot of developers who showed up at the wedding of the premier's daughter. None of that looked right from the outside, and apparently now not from the inside either.

That is why it is really important, when we talk about freeing up land for development, that the process is transparent and that there is a lot of accountability in that process. If part of the idea of releasing federal land, as it should be, is to create more affordable and social housing, it is all the more important that this be talked about up front, which is not done in the Conservative leader's bill.

What is talked about in the Conservative leader's bill is withdrawing resources from municipalities that do not meet an Ottawa-set target. That is problematic because we know Canada has many different kinds of communities with many different kinds of needs. I, for one, do not believe as a rule that people who are elected to public office at the municipal level are plotting how to kill development in their community. It is quite the opposite. They are looking at how to develop, whether it is businesses, the housing needed for businesses or the underlying infrastructure, such as waste water, sewage and electricity. These are all things people need access to in order to build housing on any particular lot. The idea that municipalities already struggling to get enough housing built in their own community need their resources cut, which will make it harder for them to build the underlying infrastructure that nobody else is going to pay for, makes absolutely no sense. It is a recipe for failure.

What can we do? We can pass Bill C-56. We can extend the GST rebate not only to co-ops but to non-profits with units that were already in the pipeline before this announcement, and a lot more. Hopefully I will get a chance to speak to some of those things during questions and answers.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate a number of the member's comments, but I would re-emphasize that the federal government has agreements with jurisdictions that see substantial numbers. In Manitoba alone, we are probably talking, and this is my best guesstimate, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20,000-plus non-profit housing units that the Government of Canada subsidizes.

Over the years, we have seen ongoing support to expand non-profits. I think of Habitat for Humanity, which has done a lot of fine work. The best program that has been administered in the last 20 years is not a provincial, federal or municipal government when it comes to infill housing; it is Habitat for Humanity as a stakeholder. It builds new homes that are affordable. I do not think we give some of those outside stakeholders enough credit for the fine work they do.

I wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts on the fine work Habitat, which I believe is headquartered on Archibald Street in the member's riding, does and the critical role stakeholders play, not just a specific level of government. We need to look at the larger picture.

• (1315)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, there are certainly a lot of actors in the space, and Habitat for Humanity is an excellent one. I am very proud of the work that it has done in the communities I represent.

However, the number that really captures the national housing strategy is Steve Pomeroy's. He says that for every one unit of affordable housing that the government is getting built, we are losing 15. Part of that is because of the end of operating grants. In fact, in 2015, the Liberals ran on the renewal of those operating grants and then did nothing. That is why so many buildings with affordable units are coming on the market. They cannot keep their business model going without the federal operating grant.

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The government has not been there to renew those grants. Therefore, those volunteers are saying that the numbers do not work anymore and they do not know what to do. Some are developing new business models and others are putting the building on the market. That is when we see REITs and big corporate landlords come in, buy up those buildings with the cash they have on hand, renovate the building, evict the existing tenants and then invite those who can pay more in rent into those buildings. This is why the national housing strategy has been just an abject failure. In respect to creating more affordable and social housing units, we are losing more than we are building.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for talking about social and affordable housing, but also about the Liberals' national strategy that is not working.

There is a very good article by Radio-Canada journalist Laurence Martin about the strategy on surplus federal lands. Land acquisition is a major problem. The federal government should make these lands available to builders, but especially to housing non-profits, to have social and affordable housing built.

We found out that there is land here in Ottawa that was declared surplus in 2015, but housing will not be built there until 2038. On that land, there will finally be housing 23 years after it was declared surplus. That is totally outrageous.

Does my colleague have any thoughts on this?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I would say that we need a federal government that has a lot more ambition when it comes to housing.

Earlier, the member for Winnipeg North mentioned that the absolute dollar amount spent by the federal government was higher than ever. However, if we subtract the billions of dollars that the government said that the provinces would also contribute and adjust those amounts to inflation, it is simply not true that the current government is spending more than ever.

If members want to know whether what I am saying is true, they can simply look at what the federal government did in the 1950s when it truly focused on the construction of housing in a way that we are not seeing today.

[English]

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I listened to my colleague's speech. One of the things he has highlighted is the fact that, as parliamentarians, we should not be satisfied based on announcements and photo ops.

The government has really functioned based on messaging, messaging is everything. I know that whenever we see a natural disaster in my home province of British Columbia, the government is right there to take the photo, but when it comes to providing results, it is nowhere to be found. The same thing can be said about building houses.

I wonder if the member can expand on the fact that photo ops just are not getting it done right now.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, photo ops never get the job done when it comes to the construction of housing. We have had a lot of ministerial photo ops from Liberal and Conservative governments over the last 30 years, none of which make up for the cancellation of the national housing strategy and the end of the operating grants that sustained so much affordable and social housing in Canada up to today. It is why we need a new version of that to ensure we are not just building at the high end of the housing spectrum, but that people are getting non-market housing as well.

● (1320)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Elmwood—Transcona, for really shining a light on the fact that this government and the governments before it, both Liberals and Conservatives, walked away from those operating agreements. We knew for 10 years that those operating agreements would expire for social housing, community by community, and the governments did nothing. Therefore, I thank the member for sharing that.

Today, we are debating what is called the housing and groceries act, but I would like to call it the “finally addressing corporate greed act”, because this is about the fact that corporate greed has been unchecked through a series of Conservative and Liberal governments. It is now at the point where it is harming people and communities to epic proportions.

No longer is every Canadian able to have the essentials of life, starting with having a roof over their heads and food to eat. It is unbelievable that in Canada not every Canadian has a roof over his or her head or food to eat. In Ottawa today, I walked along Sparks Street. We know people are living on Sparks Street and Bank Street. We know them by name. It is unacceptable that they are having to live out in the cold, in the rain, their sleeping bag covered with a tarp, yet the Liberals, who have the power to change this, walk by them every day.

I want to share a story from my community, the juxtaposition of the massive numbers of luxury condos that are going up and at the same time an increase in the number of community organizations that are trying to feed the community through food rescue and recovery.

Food rescue and recovery is a brand new area since COVID. It came out of the need during COVID-19. When shutdowns first came, a lot of food inventory was in restaurants, airline food that needed to be redistributed and all kinds of redistribution. The community groups came to help. They jumped into action. They came to redistribute that food. It is has remained because the grocery chain CEOs saw an opportunity window.

There was a conversation happening in the media that input costs, transportation costs and all kinds of other costs were increasing, so consumers were ready to accept some increases in the cost of goods. However, the grocery chain CEOs saw an opportunity to skyrocket food prices and to take advantage of consumers. In that window since COVID, food prices have become out of control and food rescue and redistribution has become a necessary staple in our community.

Just last week, I was visiting some of those food rescue and food recovery organizations in my community. One of them is operated out of the legion. People were lined up looking for a healthy meal and food for their kids. Kids, seniors and families were all looking for an opportunity to have a healthy meal. The Liberal government has put this burden on communities and community groups with no resources.

At this point in time, I want to talk about an organization in my community that feeds over 3,000 people a month. It has over 130 volunteers. The logistics of this are very difficult, but the volunteers do it because they love the community and they know people need it.

They applied for the local food infrastructure fund. Someone from the ministry came out, saw the organization and said, yes, that these were the amounts of the grants. The local food infrastructure fund recently responded to the community group, saying that while the program received a high volume of excellent project applications, only \$10 million were available for the whole country. As a result, only a portion of project applications submitted would be given consideration for funding and that the group's project application would not be considered.

● (1325)

These are on-the-ground community groups, feeding 3,000 people a month, and the government has a \$10-million program for all these kinds of organizations across the country. This is totally unacceptable and it is totally not enough resources.

Just this week, HUMA is doing a study on volunteerism. Those volunteer community groups, including food banks, are saying they are desperately in need of infrastructure money to keep these programs growing. I say this against the backdrop of the fall economic statement and the fact that the Competition Tribunal payment alone in regard to the Rogers-Shaw merger is \$13 million, more than what the small groups in our communities that are keeping people fed get.

I will go back to the corporate greed that is harming people in our community and talk about persons with disabilities.

CEOs of corporations not paying their fair share of taxes is hurting persons with disabilities. Right now, the Liberal government is holding back on the Canada disability benefit. It is law. The whole House has said that it wants the Canada disability benefit out in our communities. The government is holding back by not taxing super-wealthy corporations efficiently so we can fund people living on disability pensions who are making less than \$10,000 a year. Women with disabilities are disproportionately affected by this, with 58% living on less than \$10,000 a year. This month is 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. We know that women are

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already at a higher risk of gender-based violence, and women with disabilities even more so. This is totally unacceptable.

I recently sponsored a petition from a disability community. The government filed its response yesterday, and it is not going to do anything about an emergency response benefit for persons with disabilities. There was an article in the newspaper last week about a gentleman who lives on the island. His family was renocted, demovicted, from its accessible, affordable home. The family members are living in a hotel, using 84% of their income, because it is the only place they can get right now to have a roof over their heads. Those are the choices that the Liberal government has made.

This all relates to Bill C-56. The NDP is going to support bill because it makes some small movements toward addressing corporate greed in the grocery industry and in housing, but it is definitely not enough.

I also want to take this opportunity to talk about why it is not enough and why corporate greed has really taken over the essentials and the necessities of life.

I think about the fact that the Liberal government and the Conservative governments before walked away from social housing. What did they do? They commoditized housing. They made it okay for large corporations and real estate investment trusts to buy up apartment buildings and then chop them up into shares, or units, and trade them on the stock exchange. They actually made housing a commodity, literally allowing it to be traded on the stock exchange. Those are the reasons our rents are going up in our communities. It costs \$2,600 a month for a one bedroom in my community.

Again, the NDP is supporting the bill. We are happy to see movement, although it is very small. I just want to point out that Liberal and Conservative governments have, for 30 years, let corporate greed go unchecked. It is literally starving out our communities.

The member for Burnaby South has an additional bill, Bill C-352, to address this corporate greed. I hope everyone in the House takes this very seriously. People are living on the street without food.

● (1330)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is important to mention what we often hear from the Conservative Party and even at times from New Democrats. They seem to want to blame 100% of the problems of society on the federal government. When we talk about people living on the streets, there are politicians of all political stripes who have a great deal of sympathy and want to see action. That is the reason the federal government has invested historic amounts of money in housing.

I was a provincial politician for almost 20 years. Provincial governments, not to mention municipal governments, also have to step up to the plate. There are other stakeholders.

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The federal government has a role to play. We are investing in playing a leadership role.

At the very least, would the member not acknowledge that other levels of government also have to step up?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I would just reiterate that the local food infrastructure fund is severely underfunded. It is oversubscribed, just like the rapid housing initiative.

Will the government go back and increase the local food infrastructure fund so that projects can be funded so that people do not have to go hungry in Canada?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I hear my colleague advocate heavily. As we know, there is a massive homelessness crisis. In the housing minister's own province, the main city has 30 tent encampments.

If the member is such an advocate, why does her party continue to be in a coalition agreement that will not allow the Liberal government to get out of the way so that we can help people?

I think that people at home do not understand that the NDP is supposed to stand up for these people, and yet it continues to prop up the Liberal government and the Prime Minister by staying in a coalition. Why?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, first of all, it is not “these people”. It is people who live in Canada that we are standing up for.

I would say that the Conservatives are refining their social media game more than they are bringing forward policies.

I think about how successful the NDP has been for Canadians in these past two years. It is because of the NDP that we are debating this today. If it were not for the NDP, we would not be looking at the corporate greed act. We would still be dealing with exorbitant grocery prices and no GST exemption on purpose-built rental housing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, as my colleague said, if nothing is done to reverse this trend, then we are headed for a real national tragedy. We need to triple the proportion of rental housing in new builds. It is important to note that the bill does not provide any details about what types of buildings or housing units are eligible for the rebate or about whether those housing units need to have affordability requirements.

What is the government waiting for? When will it take action and help Quebeckers and Canadians?

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I really wish I knew what the Liberal government was waiting for, especially as it relates to the Canada disability benefit, because we know that persons with disabilities are highly at risk.

I want to talk a little bit about indigenous communities as well and the lack of indigenous housing and infrastructure. My colleague from Nunavut has stood up many times to talk about the

hundreds of millions of dollars of infrastructure gap around housing up in Nunavut and indigenous housing.

I want to talk about the 16 days of activism for gender-based violence. My colleague, the member for Nunavut, has talked about how this is so negatively impacting women who are in abusive homes and have nowhere to go.

This government has no excuse not to be investing in Canadians.

• (1335)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, although today, I do rise with a very heavy heart.

First, I want to begin by recognizing a tragic motor vehicle accident in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo that took the life of Owyn McInnis. He perished a few days ago. He was a very young man, in his early twenties, engaged to be married. He was from Guelph, Ontario. He was a member of the TRU, Thompson Rivers University WolfPack volleyball team, who was travelling with others from the team. It is just a tragic situation.

May perpetual light shine upon him. I offer his family, loved ones, friends and the TRU community my deepest condolences.

I also want to recognize his teammate, Riley Brinnen, a former resident of Kelowna, who was also on the WolfPack volleyball team. I have read that he has a severe spinal injury. I am not sure about the prognosis. I wish to send him and his loved ones my best wishes for him onward to a speedy recovery.

Owen Waterhouse is another TRU volleyball player, who is also from Kelowna, British Columbia. I just read that Mr. Waterhouse remains in a coma in critical condition.

Again, I extend my deepest condolences to all impacted and those from the Thompson Rivers University community.

There is so much we could discuss here as we dive into the contents of Bill C-56. I often think about the price of housing. I remember when I first got out of law school, my wife and I were saddled with what, back then, seemed like insurmountable loans, probably about \$100,000. We thought about how we were going to make it. There is this perception among some people that the moment one becomes a lawyer, one makes a ton of money. That just was not the case. It is still not the case.

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I remember being stretched very thin to buy our first home. We had to balance that with a car payment, because our cars were on their last legs. We bought a house for about \$350,000. We would think to ourselves how we were going to make it through. It was not going to be easy. That same house today would sell for \$700,000, with the lion's share of the increase of the price of that house falling during the past eight years of the Liberal government and more recently the Liberal-NDP government.

Housing has been an unmitigated failure when it comes to this government. What I see in my area of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo is a lack of investment in infrastructure. We have learned that the Liberal government talks a wonderful game. We have wonderful places in my riding, beautiful areas of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo that simply do not have the infrastructure to build.

One of the things I am trying to do in north Thompson in my riding is to bring in natural gas and high-speed Internet. There are companies that would love to expand, especially in the industrial area, and they do not have the places to build or the places to manufacture. If only they had natural gas, they could actually come and build factories or manufacturing operations. We do not see the government doing any of that. It is doing none of it.

The Liberals want to focus where they think they are going to get votes. That is not what a government is supposed to do. It is either a government to all or a government to nobody. This is precisely why the Liberals had a carve-out, which we just learned about a couple of weeks ago, because the Atlantic provinces voted enough Liberals to be at the table. If only we had voted enough Liberals. Perhaps if I were a Liberal, there would be natural gas funded to those areas, and there would be more natural gas and more high-speed Internet.

• (1340)

People should not be punished because they do not vote Liberal. The Liberal government, unfortunately, has been a government to a few. Now, to top it off, it is refusing to give the same carve-out to people, like people in my riding, who heat their houses with propane. Propane is incredibly expensive. They do not have the option for natural gas, and yet they are still paying a punishing carbon tax, and the government does not seem to care. This is a key issue, because the infrastructure is just not there and housing is at a critical threshold.

There is something that the housing minister and the Prime Minister repeatedly say. If we listen to them when they speak about housing, they frequently say, “We are going to”, “We have just announced” or “We are partnering with.” What we do not hear at all is, “We have done” or “We have completed.” We never hear that, unless it is something about the future, where they will say that they have completed an agreement to do something or that they are going to do it.

Why is it that we do not see results? We saw a cabinet shuffle, and it was obvious the government came out of the summer break and looked at the polls and said, “Boy, housing is a big issue. We better start getting those photo ops.” This is a government that does not govern based on what is good for the people. It governs based on what message it thinks the people want to hear.

I referenced in a question earlier that the government is so quick to get there for photo ops. With any natural disaster, it is there, but what about after a natural disaster when there needs to be rebuilding? What about when we are dealing with displaced people? Where is the government then? Nobody is around for photo ops. That is emblematic of how the government deals with things. We do not need photo ops. We need actual results.

Complicating matters when it comes to housing is the fact that we have mortgage rates that are substantially higher. When the Prime Minister was speaking to a reporter years ago, I believe he said, “Glen, mortgage rates are at an all-time low. Borrow as you see fit.” He said to borrow, borrow, borrow, and people did. Why? People listen to their leaders, so they borrowed and borrowed.

Like me, perhaps their mortgage is coming due. My mortgage is due in 2024. I was recently doing the calculations, and I am going to pay just under a thousand dollars more for my mortgage. I am going to have to write that into a budget. There are a lot of people who do not have the fortune I do to be able to absorb that. That is incredibly problematic, and yet day after day interest rates have skyrocketed, perhaps not as high as we have had them historically, but we did not have housing prices that were this high historically. However, when it comes to a confidence motion, the NDP members vote time and time again to support the government.

If one listens in question period, one would think members of the NDP were diametrically opposed to the government when it comes to housing, yet when the time comes to either close debate or to vote against the government, the NDP will always stand with the government. This is utterly perplexing. I do not understand how a party that is so focused can do this.

I heard my colleague from Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam speak with great passion about helping the poor, about seeing tent cities and how bad the Liberals have failed, and yet when it comes down to a confidence measure the next time, members of the NDP will stand and support the government. If they want to get things done, they should stop supporting the government. Then we may see things actually change. At the end of the day, people are tired of seeing tent cities. I have seen tent cities proliferate in my riding and throughout Canada. That is not good for anybody.

In closing, I want to recognize one final person, and that is Thomas McNulty, Sr. I read he recently passed away. I went to school with his granddaughter. The family has played a significant role in the community of Kamloops, within Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. My deepest condolences go to his family. May perpetual light shine upon him.

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• (1345)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would just like to ask my colleague a question in regard to the issues of housing that he was talking about and the fact that there are so many areas of the country that still need a tremendous amount of affordable housing.

Can he elaborate more on the kind of issues that the leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Carleton, was talking about?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, it is always so great to hear my colleague from Brandon—Souris. It feels as though we should be listening to some sort of radio program with him on it, because he has such a great voice.

One of the things I admire about the leader of the Conservative Party is that he is not afraid to tell us what he believes in. One of the things I think is quite appropriate is that he says and has said to municipalities that if they get the job done, they will get more money. It is kind of like saying there will be a reward. One thing we see with the NDP-Liberal government is that the NDP will say that even if people do not get things done, it will still support them. The leader of the Conservatives is saying that if people are not going to get things done, they are not going to get their fat bonuses and they are not going to get the money. If they get things done, they will get even more money. I believe that is the right way to go.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, earlier today, I asked the finance critic a question in regard to the general pattern and direction of the Conservative Party today. We talk about the MAGA Conservatives. They have adopted a pattern of Donald Trump. It has infiltrated the leader of the Conservative Party's office, with the degree to which they want to filibuster legislation and, in some ways, even vote against important legislation like the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement.

Is the member not concerned that the Conservative Party seems to be more interested in catering to the right than in coming up with good, sound policy?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, that is a terrible question.

At the end of the day, we are looking at this and wondering why the Liberal government is attempting to divide in order to distract.

We are here to talk about housing. Here we are with the Liberals' NDP colleagues, and they want to talk about anything other than the unmitigated disaster of their housing program that has resulted in house prices doubling. It used to be that someone could get a mortgage for 25 years. Now, it takes 25 years to even save up for a down payment, and the Liberals want to talk about American politics.

We are not the United States; we are the Conservative Party of Canada and we will bring home lower prices.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, housing is extremely important, especially during winter, when being homeless or kicked out of one's home for any reason becomes a health hazard.

Builders are now faced with mortgage rates so high that they cannot build housing and still turn a reasonable profit. Some even have to close down construction sites. Across Quebec, companies have to stop and wait before they can continue to build housing.

I want to ask my colleague if he is seeing the same thing in his riding. What are the solutions to help these construction companies out?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[English]

The question as I understand it is about interest rates and how volatility and high interest rates are preventing development. I actually had a discussion with a developer about this very issue and about the difficulties that come with CMHC and not approving financing on time. We have talked about one thing that the leader of the official opposition would do: stop giving out fat bonuses to people who are not getting their approvals done on time, or within 60 days, which is the benchmark. Yes, it is certainly an issue.

One thing I have noticed is that the government wants developers to take on all of the risk. They are unafraid to tell developers to take on all of the risk, yet the volatility with interest rates is so significant that it is essentially making it an untenable situation where developers may not make any money, which makes people afraid to build.

• (1350)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-56. I think the manner in which the bill has had to be dealt with regarding the programming motion is unfortunate. It is a bill with targeted measures in it for Canadians. It is a bill that I believe the entire House supports. I know that Conservatives voted for it at a previous stage, and the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon stood up and said he supports the bill.

Conservatives have used multiple tactics to slow the bill down in moving along each step of the way, yet they say they support it. I find it really troubling that Conservatives know better than to vote against the bill, because they know it would have a meaningful impact for Canadians, yet that at the same time, they choose to drag it out, delay the vote and delay the actual measures' getting to Canadians. They support the measures but just do not want to see them get to Canadians, because that might make the government look like it is doing a good thing, and Conservatives could never allow something like that to occur, even though they clearly are in favour of the bill.

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I find it very interesting that, for months, this has been the unfortunate reality of the bill. It was an extremely important measure by the Minister of Finance, if not the first measure, then one of the first introduced in the House when it resumed in September. It was tabled, and Conservatives continued to put forward speakers on the issue and then finally did vote in favour of it to go to committee, where there was a lot of discussion. We finally had to say that it was time to program it to get it back before the House so we could vote on it so people could get the measures, because it has been three months since it was introduced.

I find that extremely disingenuous. I think it feeds into the narrative of the question from the parliamentary secretary to the House leader a few moments ago when he asked why Conservatives are taking this approach, especially when it comes to something they believe in, support and recognize is so important for Canadians. It comes back to the core fundamental of the Conservative Party of Canada right now that the only thing that matters to it is to delay and to prevent the government from actually doing anything. It will use every procedural tactic to do that, as we have seen with a number of different issues, including the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement that—

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

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, simply using as a reference some of the interventions that this very parliamentary secretary has made, I think it would incumbent upon the Chair to ensure that he maintains relevance in his remarks and stays within the realm—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member has kept relevance. He is talking about the process, and we are not going to start a debate on this.

The hon. deputy House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, for the Canadians who may not pay a lot of attention to what goes on in the House, I will just explain what happened there.

I spoke about nothing but the bill and its relevance. Somebody in the back rooms of the Conservative caucus decided to send somebody in here because I was about to talk about the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. The member literally sat on the edge of his seat waiting for the word “Ukraine” to come out of my mouth. As soon as it did, he jumped up on a point of order as though to try to indicate there was no relevance. That is what is going on right now. That is where the Conservative Party of Canada is right now. That is how Conservatives feel about the issue. They are so afraid of Canadians' finding out where they stand on the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement that they literally send people in here, when they see I have gotten up to speak, to sit on the edge of their seat waiting in anticipation for—

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

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I find it somewhat disingenuous, using the member's word, that he would suggest that

somehow Conservatives do not care about Ukraine, when, actually, the opposite is true. My point of order—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are not going to start a debate on this. I am going to let the hon. member finish his speech.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The government House leader was warned about some of the absurd comparisons the Liberals are making regarding the issue. I would encourage you to remind the member not to allow his comments to devolve into the absurdity that she allowed herself to the other day during debate.

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are going to try to finish this before the beginning of Oral Questions.

The hon. deputy House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, talk about walking on eggshells. I have not even gotten to that point yet. The member is trying to predict where I am going in my speech and is rising on a point of order pre-emptively because he is afraid I am going to make a comparison between the approach of Russia and the approach of the Conservative Party of Canada. I have not even gotten to that yet. All I said was that the member was afraid I would do that. I did not even actually make the comparison.

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the comments coming from the member are absolutely ridiculous—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I warned the member.

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Those comparisons are beneath this office. I understand he is going to lose his seat. There is a Tory gain happening in Kingston, but—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Can we stop with the accusations and try to remain focused on the bill we are discussing at the moment?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I can tell we are in a position that makes the Conservatives feel very uncomfortable. Are we not? That is quite obvious based on what is going on from that side of the House.

However, I can focus my entire comments on the particular action that the Conservatives are doing right now. The measures in the bill are ones that the finance minister introduced in September. They are measures that the Conservatives voted in favour of at the time to send the bill to committee, but they still are in a position now where they are not even willing to let it move on. We had to get to the point where we had to program the bill because they are not interested in actually getting supports for Canadians, and they never have been as long as the current government has been around. All the Conservatives have been interested in are delay tactics and trying to prevent, in every possible way that they can, pieces of legislation from going forward, just to prevent the government from doing anything. The Conservatives are not even doing what they should be doing in the House, which is to try to hold the government accountable.

Statements by Members

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It would bear mentioning that they cannot do indirectly what they are not allowed to do directly. Certainly, the many accusations that are being made in the somewhat indirect way that the member is impugning the integrity of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is debating the bill in question, and I am going to let him finish.

The hon. deputy House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, maybe the member can familiarize himself with the rules so the next time he stands up he can actually reference what it is that I did that was against the rules, because he is not even doing that. He is just calling a point of order so he can ramble incoherently.

The reality is that the bill—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha has a point of order.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent. These are the points of order that the member for Kingston and the Islands has called, just in this session of Parliament alone—

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, actually, could the member bring those to me? I feel so incredibly proud to represent a community and be able to tell constituents that I have stood up on their behalf so many times in the House of Commons. If the member would like to perhaps do a joint householder with me for our communities, to compare how many times I have stood up versus how many times she has stood up, it would be a great opportunity for us to celebrate how we are able to represent our constituents. I get a kick out of it every time when Conservatives stand up and say that so-and-so has spoken so many times—

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

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, it sounds like the member opposite would love it if I tabled this, so again I will ask for unanimous consent—

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I imagine the hon. member would like to receive the document hand to hand.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am pretty sure I heard some of the member's own colleagues yell "no" there.

It really comes down to a bill that has substantive measures in it for Canadians. It is a bill that Conservatives voted to send to committee. It is a bill that the whole House seems to be supportive of in terms of the measures contained within it. Even the Conservatives

know better than to try to vote against this one, so what do they do? They put absolutely every delay tactic possible in place to prevent the bill from actually moving forward and getting supports to Canadians. This way, the Conservatives can say they were supportive of it the whole time, even though they allowed absolutely no efforts to actually get it through the process. Once again, we are now in a position where we have had to program this—

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will be able to finish his speech after Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, President Zelenskyy gets it, the Prime Minister gets it, the countries of the European Union get it and Milton Friedman got it. A price on carbon is not just good environmental policy that will be responsible for up to one-third of Canada's emission reductions by 2030, but it is also good trade policy, especially for a trading nation such as Canada.

All member states of the European Union are part of the EU emissions trading system. Ukraine prices carbon too, because it wants to integrate into the EU market. The EU is implementing its carbon border adjustment tariff, which will penalize goods from countries that do not price carbon.

Why does the Leader of the Opposition want to shut Canadian companies out of the European market? Where is the common sense in that? Why does the Leader of the Opposition not get it? Canadians get it. They get that he is just not worth the risk.

* * *

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, Christmas is a time to give and share, and in my home communities, many volunteer organizations work tirelessly to make the season brighter for those in need.

From the Cochrane and Area Events Society to the Airdrie Food Bank, volunteers have been doing amazing work throughout the year, especially during this Christmas season. The Cochrane Actives support families by ensuring they have food and other essential items. The Helping Hands Society of Cochrane and Area assists those who are struggling with housing and basic needs. The Airdrie 1st Club and Volunteer Airdrie work hard to ensure that families have access to necessities. Meanwhile, Meals on Wheels has been delivering meals to seniors who are unable to leave their homes, and the Banff and Bow Valley food banks have been providing support to all who need it. Volunteer Canmore and Volunteer Banff help support their communities as well.

As we approach the holidays, I want to thank all these organizations and the countless other individuals who dedicate themselves to helping others. They make a real difference in so many lives. I thank them from their grateful communities for all they do.

Merry Christmas.

* * *

[Translation]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the environment is important to all Canadians, and we have a responsibility to future generations.

[English]

Canada has adopted an ambitious and affordable plan to combat the effects of climate change. Do members know that a recent analysis from the ECCC shows that pollution pricing contributes close to one-third of the expected emissions reductions the country will achieve by 2030? Do they know that, under the previous Conservative government, Canada was going to blow past our emissions targets and was on track to add another 12% of emissions by 2030?

We have been working hard to correct the path we are on, with over 100 new measures that are bending the curve on emissions. We are already 85% of the way towards our 2030 emissions reduction goals, and we have the best record in the G7 over the last two years.

[Translation]

We will not let the Conservatives take us back to the Stone Age when it comes to climate action.

* * *

FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have field crops; dairy, beef and vegetable production; honey; a wide variety of apples, and, of course, our famous maple syrup that makes us the maple capital of the world. Agriculture is clearly in my riding's DNA.

In fact, since 2021, a citizen's committee created by the municipality of Saint-Joseph-du-Lac has been working to implement an environmentally responsible system with the end goal of food self-sufficiency. On October 19, the municipality officially launched its action plan to become a food self-sufficient community. The plan is designed to make it possible to access quality products all year round while reducing the cost of groceries. This project will help build a network of sharing and mutual support between citizens and local farmers, as well as local organizations.

We can never value our farmland enough. I therefore invite the House to join me in congratulating and thanking all those involved in this inspiring project.

* * *

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has cut poverty in Canada nearly in half thanks to measures

Statements by Members

such as increasing child care spaces and introducing the Canada child benefit and dental care. These initiatives have lifted thousands of families out of poverty.

It is also important to note that investment in child care has a positive impact on the economy, especially during a labour shortage, because it enables women to get back to work faster.

We remain committed to ensuring that Quebeckers do not return to the Stone Age.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada". That is what the Prime Minister said in 2015. After eight years, we see what that ideology has brought. Canada is becoming a place where neighbours threaten violence over conflicts wrought abroad, as the government, for years, encouraged them to sort themselves based on what divides rather than what unites. This must end.

Canada does have a national identity. We are a people united in the freedom to worship freely, to speak freely and to prosper freely, knowing that any differences that we may have must be set aside to protect the identity that so many fought and died for.

As we head into the holiday season, a time when Canadians need hope, I ask the Prime Minister to reject the dangerous notion that we do not have a shared identity and to stop dividing Canadians for political gain. We must fight to save Canada's peaceful, pluralistic and prosperous national identity, no matter the cost. If he keeps Canada on the path we are currently on, the cost will be much higher still.

Lest we forget.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the leader of the Conservative Party said that what happened on the Rainbow Bridge was a terrorist attack. He was hasty and wrong. He misled Canadians and the House when he said that.

Statements by Members

Again, the Conservative Party is seeking to heckle me as they did my colleague for Brampton Centre. He had to repeat his statement in the House five or six times. When the leader of the Conservative Party said that, as my colleague from Brampton Centre said, it evoked memories of the Harper government. I personally thought the Conservative Party was well beyond those sentiments and ideas of maligning minority communities. What happened was wrong. We cannot return to the stone age or to the Harper government's policies and rhetoric.

* * *

[Translation]

ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE EDUCATIONAL CHILD CARE SERVICES

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, knowing that one in two Canadians will reach retirement age in 10 years, we need Canada's entire labour force in the labour market, including women.

As Quebec has proven for a number of years, access to affordable educational child care services is an important incentive for young parents to return to the labour market with peace of mind.

That is why our government is committed to building a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. These \$10-a-day child care services provide parents with high-quality, flexible, inclusive and affordable child care.

Children can develop their social and cognitive skills to boost their success in school later on. The system is a winning investment for our children and for our economic growth.

Would the Conservatives put a stop to child care funding in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada?

No, Mr. Speaker, we will not go back to the Stone Age.

* * *

[English]

DON TANNAS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they say good men speak more with action than words. Don Tannas was that type of man. A beloved husband, father and grandfather, Don had a distinguished life of leadership in his family and his community. As an educator and Rotarian for over seven decades, Don mentored countless community leaders and builders, leaving a priceless legacy in High River.

Don's quiet leadership served him well over 14 years as the MLA for Highwood and as a deputy speaker. He helped to build the Alberta advantage. He was so proud to represent an agricultural riding, and we shared a passion for bison and Alberta's ranching history. Determined to preserve our endangered grasslands, he worked hard to protect rough fescue as Alberta's official grass and ensure the preservation of our rangeland for generations to come. His love of politics never waned. He was always the first to pick up a campaign sign and share some sage advice, moments I will cherish forever.

Condolences to Christine, Scott, Bruce and their families. His loss will never be forgotten.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

THE MIDDLE CLASS

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight our firm commitment to Canada's middle class.

The government is investing in policies to support families, including by offering affordable child care and benefits for children. We understand that the well-being of the middle class is the pillar of our prosperous economy. At the same time, we are enhancing pensions plans to ensure that seniors have financial security and we are investing in clean energy for a green and prosperous future.

For Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, our government will continue to grow, invest in human capital, improve equal opportunity and promote a modern economy.

We are not going back to the Stone Age. On the contrary, we are determined to move forward to a prosperous and equitable future for all Canadians.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when you tax the farmer that grows the food, it is only common sense that the food becomes more expensive for the people who buy it for their table.

After eight years, the Prime Minister is still bent on his ideology of shaming people for buying what they need, which is food. This food has been produced under the increasing costs of the carbon tax, and now the Prime Minister plans to quadruple that tax.

Richard's farm already pays thousands of dollars in carbon tax to grow healthy food for Canadians and will have no choice, with the increasing quadrupled carbon tax, but to pass it on to consumers trying to feed their families. More tax on growing means even more tax on eating. It is common sense and common math.

Will the Prime Minister finally take his carbon tax off Richard's food production and all farmers, families and first nations?

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the so-called workers party, the NDP, made it official that it has turned its back on Canadian workers.

The NDP-Liberal government is spending \$40 billion on vehicle battery plants that amount to a subsidy of \$5 million per employee. Ka-ching. Newsbreak: Up to half of the workers are coming from offshore. Therefore, taxpayers will be subsidizing foreign replacement workers.

The battery building strategy has always been a boondoggle to transfer Canadian taxpayer dollars to the shareholders of foreign multinationals. It is an economic race to the bottom that the government wants to win.

On Friday, I asked the minister of cheque signing to release the contracts. He told the House that he negotiated this fiasco. However, he said the opposite when asked the same question at committee. This evasion and doublespeak is the opposite of transparency.

After eight years, it is obvious that the government is not worth the cost. While common-sense Conservatives are demanding that the contracts be released, the NDP are now on board to help the Liberals cover this up.

* * *

[Translation]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we are witnessing a resurgence in misogynistic speech in Canada. An article by Léa Carrier in *La Presse+* shows that this is a growing phenomenon among teenagers in this country. That is worrisome.

We are fighting against this phenomenon, and we are fighting so that women of all ages can continue to live in an open, inclusive and egalitarian society. Women in the Liberal Party make their voices heard. The Liberal Party has a record number of women MPs and a gender-balanced cabinet, and we see the difference that makes in the measures and laws that are proposed and passed.

On the other side of the House, the Conservatives have the lowest representation of women, with only 18% women MPs. In Canada, we got out of the Stone Age, and we do not want to go back.

* * *

[English]

2SLGBTQI+ COMMUNITY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hate and violence against 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians, and especially against trans and gender-diverse people, is clearly on the rise. This includes in my own constituency, which has seen a recent spate of hate crimes.

What we need now is action from the federal government to help communities build the resilience they need to fight back. In an election, more than 5,000 Canadians have already called on the government to implement the recommendations from the “White Paper on the Status of Trans and Gender Diverse People”.

Unions are calling for amending the Employment Equity Act to include 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians for the first time. This would help trans and gender-diverse Canadians, who are among the most eco-

Statements by Members

nomically marginalized, get access to employment in the public service and federally regulated industries.

We need leaders at all levels to speak out against hate and violence. Even more, we need to empower 2SLGBTQI+ organizations so that we can all take our place as full and equal citizens.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

LAC-SAINT-JEAN COMPANY

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my riding, Lac-Saint-Jean, is home to the Beemer distillery in Roberval, which earned accolades in an international competition for the fifth time in its history.

Beemer's gin won a gold medal in the London dry gin category at the prestigious Spirits Business Gin Masters 2023. Made with local ingredients and northern aromatics and spices that produce a unique taste, Beemer gin is named after Horace Beemer, the person responsible for building the last 135 miles of railroad linking Quebec City to Roberval in Lac-Saint-Jean. Most of all, Beemer is the story of two young entrepreneurs, Philippe and Alain, who started their microbrewery in 2017 and have since made it a true locally flavoured international success story.

I would also like to take this opportunity to shout out to my friend, Jeff Boudreault, who joined the Beemer team early on, and to Sandra and Benoît.

My heartiest congratulations to the wonderful Beemer family.

* * *

[English]

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party understands that a home is the centre of everything we do in our lives. A home is a place where we are secure. A home is where we raise our families.

Everyone but the Liberal-NDP coalition understands that this dream is being ripped from hundreds of thousands of Canadians. When the government stands in the way of someone getting a home, it stands in the way of their entire life going forward.

That is why Conservatives have a plan to build more homes. We will, one, require big cities to complete 15% more homebuilding per year as a condition of getting federal infrastructure money. Two, we are going to give building bonuses to cities that exceed that target. Three, we are going to require that every federally funded transit station be permitted for high-density apartments around it. Four, we will sell off 15% of federal buildings and thousands of acres of surplus federal land suitable for new homes.

Oral Questions

Housing costs were not like this before the Liberals were elected. Housing costs will not be like this after they are defeated.

* * *

[Translation]

GREEN CANADA

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to building a green Canada. Security, prosperity and health go hand in hand with a safe environment. Every Canadian deserves clean air, clean water and protection from extreme weather events. Now is the time to develop a clean, prosperous and sustainable economy for us, our children and our grandchildren.

The Leader of the Opposition and his party remain stuck in a Harper-era mindset, seeing Canada's fossil fuel exports as the path to national prosperity rather than a potential albatross in a rapidly decarbonizing world.

Let us move on from that. We cannot sit back and allow industrial polluters to risk the future and safety of our children.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my common-sense documentary entitled *Housing Hell: How we got here and how we get out* has had almost four million views on X.

This documentary shows that the Prime Minister doubled the cost of housing and that, because of him, Toronto's housing market has become the most inflated in the world, houses in Canada are a lot more expensive than they are in the United States and people are now living in tents.

Will the Prime Minister become the four millionth person to watch this documentary, so that he can learn how to reverse the housing hell he has caused?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Conservative leader is asking the federal government to get out of the business of housing, but we will not repeat the same mistakes he made when he was housing minister under the Harper government.

The Conservative leader's plan will not build enough homes fast enough, will not reach enough cities and will create unnecessary red tape.

He would also defund affordable housing projects and tax affordable rental construction even more.

While the Conservative leader is focusing on his online popularity, we are making sure that everyone has a roof over their head.

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people do not have roofs over their heads. After eight years of the Prime Minister, housing costs have doubled. Toronto is in the worst housing bubble in the world and Canada has the worst mortgage bubble in the entire OECD after eight years of his policies. That is why nearly four million people on X alone watched my groundbreaking and much-acclaimed documentary *Housing hell: How we got here and how we get out*.

Will the Prime Minister become the four millionth Canadian to watch this documentary so he can see a common-sense plan to reverse the housing hell he has caused?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need our bold action to keep moving forward on the problem of housing affordability. Unlike the Conservative leader, we know the federal government plays an essential leadership role in housing.

On this side, we are making historic investments in housing, we are linking public transit dollars to housing density and we are working with cities to modernize and accelerate the way we build homes. While the Conservative leader focuses on clickbait and views, we are focused on building homes for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is funny. He released a video the very same day of him in a starter home pretending he was a real estate agent. In reality, everyone laughed because they know he has doubled housing costs. He has delivered an economy where we have the fewest homes per capita of any country in the G7, even though we have the most land to build on, and Toronto is now in the worst housing bubble in the world after eight years of the Prime Minister.

That is why I am putting partisanship aside and offering the Prime Minister and the Liberal caucus a private screening of my documentary. Will the Prime Minister put his ego aside and join with me personally to take in the documentary *Housing hell: How we got here and how we get out*?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Conservative leader continues to call for the federal government to get out of the business of housing. We will not repeat the same mistakes he made when he was housing minister under Stephen Harper.

The Conservative leader's present plan will not build enough homes fast enough, does not reach enough cities and creates unnecessary red tape. He would also defund affordable housing projects and tax affordable rental construction even more.

Oral Questions

While the Conservative leader focuses on clickbait and views, we are going to focus on building Canadians more homes.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he did try to make a video. It was a total failure. His videos do not get clicks and his houses do not have bricks after eight years. That is why housing costs have doubled.

He should not have to read his entire answer. I am offering to inform him. If he would just take 15 minutes away from his photo ops, he could watch my brilliant documentary on X or YouTube, with a common-sense plan to require cities to permit 15% more homes, to give them bonuses if they exceed the target, to require housing around every federally funded transit station and to sell off 6,000 buildings. This is common sense. Let us bring it home.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative leader's plan is to pick fights with municipalities, to create more red tape and to withdraw funding for affordable housing and affordable apartments. That is not a plan to build more housing. He has demonstrated that he is extremely satisfied with his ability to spread misinformation and disinformation online, which, yes, I will admit he is very good at.

On this side of the House, we are focused on delivering solutions for Canadians. We are focused on building more housing for Canadians, not on self-aggrandizement like the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is the king of self-aggrandizement, as evidenced by the fact that he is now attacking my much-acclaimed documentary when he claims he has not even watched it. How would he know about the common-sense solutions if he has not had the attention span to sit there for 15 minutes on YouTube or X and watch it? We will even try to get it on TikTok so he can find it. It includes a common-sense plan to cut bureaucracy and taxes so we can bring it home.

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I came into question period today, I did not think I would be hearing an infomercial for how great Pierre Poilievre's social media skills—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Sorry, the leader—

The Deputy Speaker: We will back up. The Prime Minister knows he is not supposed to use the names of members of Parliament.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I did not think Canadians were going to be hearing an infomercial for the Leader of the Opposition's YouTube page.

The reality is that Canadians deserve a government focused on delivering housing for them. That is exactly what we are doing with historic deals with cities right across the country and with measures to build more housing quickly. We are concretely solving that while he is talking to himself online.

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while those two members are bickering about amateur cinema, the media industry is in crisis. Media outlets no longer have the means to fulfill their mandate. News organizations are collapsing. The regions are in decline. Arts and culture are being eroded. The French language is in decline.

Does the Prime Minister realize that this is the worst possible time to cut 800 jobs at CBC/Radio-Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very concerned about what is happening in our media, our art and our culture for years now.

That is why the government has taken concrete action to support media across the country, to invest in local journalism and to stand up against the web giants in favour of journalists and the work they do, which is essential to our democracy. For example, we were pleased to reach an agreement with Google regarding Bill C-18.

We will continue to be there to support and defend journalists across the country, especially local journalists who play an essential role in our democracy.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is obviously grossly inadequate.

The government just got \$100 million from Google through an agreement that we would really like to get our hands on. That is great news.

Private media already had to cut more than \$100 million from their operations, however.

CBC/Radio-Canada not only wants to dip into the \$100 million from Google, but it also wants to cut French-language and regional services. On top of that, it wants to hand out bonuses.

It is about time that CBC/Radio-Canada be held accountable before Parliament. Does the Prime Minister agree?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always supported CBC/Radio-Canada and the services it provides to local communities across the country.

One of the first decisions we made as a government was to cancel the Harper government's cuts to our public broadcaster. Supporting local news and journalists in this difficult juncture is exactly why we introduced Bill C-18.

Oral Questions

While the Leader of the Opposition rejoices as Canadian families are facing layoffs, we will continue to support local news and journalists in Canada.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the out-of-touch Liberals have let the housing crisis get so bad that in Halifax this winter, a man died alone in a tent. The average rent in Halifax is now over \$2,000 a month. Leaving this up to big developers will not bring down rents.

People are being renovicted. We need real action, not just words. The Liberals are running around announcing and reannouncing existing funding that will not deliver homes for another four to seven years.

Will the Prime Minister take immediate action to secure existing empty buildings to get people off the streets this winter?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to reach out and work with communities, with municipalities and with provinces right across the country to deliver. We have been announcing projects completed that we started years ago. We are announcing projects that are starting today, which will be completed in the coming years.

We understand the efforts involved in solving this housing crisis. It requires us all to roll up our sleeves, which is why we put forward \$4 billion in the housing accelerator to make sure that municipalities could build more homes. We are putting forward \$15 billion to accelerate the construction of rental units.

We are going to continue to be there for low-income and homeless people as well.

* * *

● (1430)

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, food prices are not going down. A record number of Canadians are turning to food banks for their meals.

Before the doors open at Bridges to Hope Food Bank in St. John's, there is already a line-up waiting to collect food hampers. Meanwhile, big grocers like Sobeys, which was here yesterday, are seeing heaps of excess profit, all while offering a nickel to their employees.

The Liberals are failing to lower food prices. When are they going to crack down on the corporate greed that is driving Canadians to food banks?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more competition means more lower prices, more choice and more innovative products and services for Canadians.

Our affordability legislation will empower the Competition Bureau to hold grocers accountable and prioritize consumers' interests. The fall economic statement proposes further amendments to the

Competition Act to crack down on predatory pricing to better respond to anti-competitive mergers and more.

We are ensuring that Canadians have more competitive options. We are limiting excess profits by corporations at the expense of Canadians.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we just heard shocking testimony at the human resources committee from the CEO of the Central Okanagan Food Bank. He says that projections are another 100% increase in food bank demand in the next three to four months due to inflation. He has expressed how donors and volunteers are now clients.

Liberal inflationary spending and carbon tax are adding to the cost of food. After eight years, the NDP-Liberal government is just not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister take the tax off farmers, families and first nations, finally?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in strengthening social security programs like old age security, the Canada pension plan and support for families, like the Canada child benefit and \$10-a-day national child care, programs that the Conservatives continue to vote against, totally lacking empathy and understanding for the struggles that Canadian families are facing.

On this side of the House, we will continue to do the hard work to ensure that we are there to support Canadian families.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer will not satisfy all the Canadians lining up at a food bank for the first time in their lives or the food banks that are losing donors and volunteers due to Liberal inflation.

We have heard from not-for-profits how they see the rising price of gas as a barrier to volunteering and how senior volunteers are being forced back to work to afford basic necessities due to inflation. After eight years, the NDP-Liberal government is just not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister take the carbon tax off farmers, families and first nations, finally?

Oral Questions

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that we focus on affordability for families. It is also important that we look at facts when it comes to the carbon price that we have put in place. It is also important to remind Conservative members that they ran on a carbon price. Carbon pricing is the most efficient and the cheapest way to lower our emissions.

With respect to food prices, particularly those facing lower income families, today, an article lists here that 94% of households with incomes below \$50,000 received far more rebates, exceeding their carbon tax costs in 2023.

Lower-income folks are enjoying more rebates than carbon costs because our carbon pricing—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal government has made life unaffordable for Canadians in every province and territory.

Canadians are suffering under the Prime Minister's oppressive carbon tax. While he taxes, he also divides, pausing the carbon tax on home heating oil in Atlantic Canada because he wants votes, while he quadruples the tax on every other Canadian.

When will the Prime Minister finally cancel the carbon tax on families, farmers and first nations?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I will focus my response on an economist's response to the rhetoric in the House with respect to the carbon price. He said that if we got rid of the carbon tax and the rebate, then this would harm a much larger fraction of lower and middle-income households than it would higher-income households. Very clearly, the economist from Calgary indicates that our carbon price sends more money back to 94% of families that earn less than \$50,000.

It is an affordability measure and it fights climate change.

• (1435)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a time when the country is working toward reconciliation, the Liberals have saddled first nations communities with a punishing carbon tax.

First nations are so burdened by this unfair tax that they have decided to take the government to court. Canadians everywhere know that the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

When will the Prime Minister finally remove the carbon tax from farmers, first nations and families?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I will note that our carbon pricing mechanism sends more money back to lower-income families. That includes both the fiscal amount and the economic impact. Something the Conservatives love to not focus on is the impact of climate change.

Climate change impacts the price of food more than any other factor. We are also helping farmers, because farmers are the ones that know climate change is real because it impacts them first. That is what is driving up the cost of food.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Liberal government, food banks are overwhelmed with new clients.

In my riding, Accueil Saint-Ambroise on Racine Street in Loretteville is helping 50 to 60 new families a month. Meanwhile, what is happening here in Ottawa? The Liberal government wants to impose a new carbon tax, and the Bloc Québécois is saying that we need to drastically increase that tax.

When will the Liberal Bloc realize that now is not the time to impose more taxes on people who are already struggling?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that many families are struggling to afford groceries.

We are there to support Canadians through targeted social programs and income supplements, such as the Canada child benefit and the grocery rebate. We are also providing subsidies and support to food banks and charitable organizations.

We will continue to fight against food insecurity.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely want to congratulate and thank the minister for her effort to speak French, but just because she says it in French does not mean that what she is saying makes any sense. In fact, it actually shows how costly this current Liberal government is, along with the Bloc supporting them.

I want to come back to my example of Accueil Saint-Ambroise in Loretteville. Last year, during the holidays, the organization fulfilled 176 requests. As of yesterday, how many requests has it received? It is up to 238 requests and counting.

Meanwhile, the Liberals want to invent a new tax and the Bloc wants to increase that tax. Again, my question is quite simple.

Why create new taxes when people are struggling?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we witnessed an important moment when my colleague congratulated my other colleague for speaking in French. We are seeing a bit of a change in attitude within the Conservatives, but I think they need to take it a step further. Again though, I want to commend my colleague for having the courage to stand up against the tyranny of his colleagues and speak French.

On this side of the House, we will always stand up for him if he wants to speak French.

* * *

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does anyone know how many times this government has met with fossil fuel lobbyists in the past two years? Two thousand times.

There have been 2,000 meetings with oil and gas companies in two years. Imagine: That is three meetings per day, seven days a week, with no days off. If each meeting lasted 20 minutes, that would be like watching every episode of all 35 seasons of *The Simpsons* three times. People wonder why nothing about this government works properly. Obviously, it is busy meeting with oil and gas companies.

Seriously, what is the government thinking?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that seems like an odd question. We meet with people from all sectors of the economy. It is important for the government to have those conversations so we can make sure we have heard everyone's perspective before we implement public policies.

• (1440)

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the fossil fuel lobby are in love. After 2,000 “I love yous” and 2,000 dates in two years, I really think they are ready to move in together.

Let me give some advice to my Liberal backbencher friends who feel like cabinet is ignoring them: Just resign and become oil lobbyists. That might be why the Minister of Environment and Climate Change invited Suncor, Imperial Oil, MEG Energy and Cenovus to the Conference of the Parties, or COP.

I suppose that spending a day apart would feel like an eternity to him.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we implemented a plan to fight climate change. It is the most robust and detailed plan in the world. We are very proud of that. We have a plan. We believe that we have to fight climate change, and we are taking action every day for the sake of our children's future.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have had 2,000 meetings with fossil fuel lobbyists in two years. Here is why Canada has not yet announced its plan to cap emissions in the fossil fuel sector: The oil companies have not finished writing it. They do not have time to finish it, because they are too busy meeting with the Liberals all day.

Meanwhile, the Global Carbon Project announced at COP that, within seven years, we will exceed the 1.5°C warming target set out in the Paris Agreement. While the lovefest continues between the Liberals and the oil lobby, the planet is burning. Could the Liberals cancel just two or three meetings to take care of the planet?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we introduced regulations yesterday to reduce methane emissions by 75%. We are the first nation in the world to do exactly that. This is something that needs to be done to take action on climate change, which we are doing every day.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to help the NDP-Liberal government understand why, after eight years, Canadians know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Let us look at the carbon tax alone.

A recent report by APAS shows that Saskatchewan farmers will pay over \$40 million in carbon tax just to get their grains to port. A rebate does not even come close to covering that cost for our farmers. The solution is simple: axe the tax. Why will the Liberals just not get it done?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when meeting farmers right across the country, the first question they ask me is why the Conservative Party of Canada does not have a plan for the environment. I tell them that we have a plan for the environment. We will work with governments. We will—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: He is right here and I cannot hear him.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture, from the top.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question that I get from farmers across the country is why the Conservative Party of Canada does not have a plan for the environment. I tell the farmers right across the country that we do have a plan for the environment. We will work with farmers right across the country.

For an example, in Saskatchewan, we announced \$4 million with the Western Grains Research Foundation to make sure that farmers stay on the cutting edge and that they are able to yield larger crops and make more profit.

We have worked, and will continue to work, with farmers right across the country.

Oral Questions

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers know they are the leaders when it comes to environmental stewardship.

Just imagine we are young producers. We have grown up on the family farm and our goal is to take over after our parents retire. We start looking over the bills and costs associated with farming and one of the highest line items is the carbon tax imposed by the Prime Minister. Rather than hiring a helping hand or upgrading our machinery, we are paying an increasing carbon tax.

Therefore, why will the Prime Minister not let his senators pass Bill C-234 and axe the tax for on-farm fuels?

• (1445)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would agree with my hon. colleague. Yes, the farmers are on the front line of the environment. They know that winds of over 200 kilometres an hour destroy barns, destroy crops, and there are floods and fires right across the country. They want a government that will deal with the environment and make sure that we work with governments, with agricultural clusters, to make sure that they are able to meet the demands. We will continue to work with the agricultural sector.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this NDP-Liberal government, two million Canadians are relying on food banks to feed their families.

The Prime Minister's punishing carbon tax is directly fuelling the affordability crisis in this country and still the Prime Minister plans to quadruple it. The Prime Minister and his failed policies are simply not worth the cost.

It is time to axe the carbon tax before it bankrupts all Canadians. Will the Prime Minister finally take off the carbon tax for our farmers, our families and our first nations?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the support that we do for families, which I continue to share in this House, we have also introduced programs to support organizations that are working with Canadians to help address food insecurity, including over 300 organizations through the community services recovery fund. We have also invested almost \$150 million to strengthen food systems and improve food security, including over 100 community projects.

While the Conservatives continue to oppose these investments, we will continue to work on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the ag minister and the environment minister are simply not listening to farmers.

A pork farmer with a pork farm just down the road from where I grew up had a natural gas bill in February that was \$4,300. His carbon tax was \$3,300, or 75%.

How can any farmer make a living when farmers have to pay that much carbon tax on the natural gas they use on their farms? When will the Prime Minister take the tax off farmers' families and make it fair for farmers?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's concern, but the fact of the matter is that farmers are concerned about the environment. Farmers who are on the front lines understand that we have to take care of the environment. When we have winds of over 200 kilometres an hour destroying all the infrastructure on the property, that adds, no doubt, to the farmers' costs. It adds to the price of food. It adds to everything.

That is why it is so important that our government has an environmental plan to make sure that our agricultural sector will continue to thrive.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment is not only leaving for COP28 with a record number of oil lobbyists, but this seems to be a pathological habit. For those close to power, the Prime Minister's Office is only too happy to pay. Guess who the Liberals will meet with and listen to the most. Bingo: the oil and gas companies. According to a TVA report, the Liberals meet with fossil fuel representatives three times more often than they meet with environmentalists.

If the Liberals miss all their greenhouse gas reduction targets, might that be because they are the puppets of the major polluters?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, we have meetings with participants from every sector of the economy. Of course, that includes the oil sector, but it also includes the automotive sector and many others.

As I also said, we announced something that is a first in the world. Yesterday, we announced that we will bring in regulations to reduce methane emissions by 75%. We are the first country in the world to do that.

That is climate change leadership.

*Oral Questions**[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are experiencing the horrific impacts of the climate crisis while Liberals delay, disappoint and fail to protect our planet. Young people are not only worried about their future; they also want to be part of the climate solution. Hundreds of them just delivered mock cover letters applying for a youth climate corps. Two out of three young people would consider enrolling in this program to respond to disasters, to create climate-resilient infrastructure and to reduce emissions.

Today, I tabled a motion to create a youth climate corps, like President Biden did. Will the Prime Minister listen to our future leaders and establish a youth climate corps?

• (1450)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take a moment to welcome my friend and colleague back to the House. It is good to have her back, not only because it is good to talk about how we fight climate change and not whether we fight climate change in this House.

I think the idea of having a youth environment corps to fight climate change and bring forward great ideas is an awesome one. I am looking forward to talking with the member.

It also gives me great pleasure to announce in this House that Canada is the first country ever to commit to an oil and gas methane emissions target reduction of 75%. Other countries will follow in our footsteps. We will bring down our methane emissions by 75% by 2030.

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*[Translation]***GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES**

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Quebeckers and Canadians, we are proud of our culture, our French language and our commitment to protecting the environment for future generations.

In the face of Conservative policies that would send us back to the Stone Age, can the Quebec lieutenant and Minister of Transport tell us what initiatives the government is taking to safeguard and enhance our commitments to the environment, language and culture?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for his excellent work.

Quebeckers are proud to participate in the energy transition with the battery industry. Our government is proud to support it.

The Conservative leader thinks that investing in Quebec is a waste. Quebeckers know that Radio-Canada is vital for our language, our culture and our democracy. The Conservative leader wants to destroy Radio-Canada. He does not like difficult questions.

With Bill C-13, we strengthened the rights of francophones across the country. The Conservative members do not even let their colleagues work in French. We will continue to advance the priorities of Quebeckers. We will not let the Conservatives send us back to the Stone Age.

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*[English]***AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, workers know that they cannot rely on the NDP. The NDP leader initially called for the release of EV contracts, but last night the NDP flip-flopped and voted with the Liberals to bury them. These contracts will cost taxpayers over \$40 billion. That is about \$3,000 per Canadian family and the money will be used to fund foreign replacement workers instead of Canadian paycheques.

The NDP-Liberal government betrayed workers and is complicit in a cover-up. What did the Liberals offer the NDP to get the NDP members to change their position and abandon workers and taxpayers?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investments like the LG and Stellantis EV battery plant represent a win for the economy, a win for Canadian workers and a win for the fight against climate change, but the Conservatives are so committed to their doomsday narrative that they just cannot admit that anything good is happening.

In a recent article in *The Globe and Mail*, a journalist writes that the Conservative leader “has not said he opposes subsidizing these battery makers. Rather, he is seeking to rile up working-class voters by falsely suggesting foreigners might be stealing their jobs.”

While the Conservatives are blinded by their self-induced rage, we are focused on realizing a positive vision for the future of our economy.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple proposition for the member. If the NDP-Liberal government is genuinely proud of its work, then release the contracts. Let all of us see them so that we can know, but the NDP is complicit with the Liberals in trying to bury these contracts. Why? Every Canadian family will pay \$3,000 for these deals, so they want to know. What is in these deals for them?

Again, what did the Liberals offer the NDP members to get them to change their position, abandon workers and hide these contracts? What are they hiding?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to share positive news. Canada is number three in the world in foreign direct investment, which is something that we should all be proud of.

Brendan Sweeney from the Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing talked about the “specialized expertise workers” needed from outside of Canada to help set up the giant facility. He said, “There are hundreds, if not a thousand Windsorites, going off to the U.S. to help set up, test and service machinery in assembly, engine and Tier 1 plants. It’s a little hypocritical to fail to take into account the way...foreign direct investment works”—

• (1455)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to help pay for overseas replacement workers, the NDP-Liberal government is going to send every Canadian family a bill for \$3,000. The formerly pro-worker NDP has refused to stand up to the Prime Minister and demand the release of contracts that detail the number of foreign replacement workers that are going to take Canadian jobs. The Prime Minister clearly is not worth the cost to Canadian workers after eight years and neither is the NDP.

Will the Prime Minister finally stand up and tell Canadians how many foreign replacement workers \$40 billion buys?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is curious to listen to the Conservatives after their eight years in opposition and hear how little they have learned on foreign direct investment, which is clearly nothing, how little they understand about free trade deals, which is clearly nothing, and how little they understand about creating good, middle-class jobs. What they are clearly against is 2,500 full-time jobs at the Stellantis plant and 2,300 construction jobs there.

It is clear that under a Conservative administration, Canada would be closed for business, but, guess what, not on our watch.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about what has happened under the Liberals' watch.

Canada's Building Trades Unions says that so far, this NDP-Liberal government has cost \$300 million in wages. If the Liberals are so proud of their record and so proud of these great deals that are going to cost every Canadian family \$3,000, why will they not just release the contracts? They know that releasing those contracts will expose that \$40 billion is buying a lot of foreign replacement workers that should, instead, be funding Canadian paycheques.

Why will the Liberals not release the contracts today?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are smart people on the Conservative benches, including trade lawyers and people who understand that contracts between nations and countries need to stay confidential because of important trade secrets.

Oral Questions

What do the Conservatives have against the fact that Canada is now third in the world in foreign direct investment? After the United States and Brazil, who is next? It is Canada, ahead of China.

Clearly the Conservatives are against Dow in Fort Saskatchewan. They are against Stellantis. They are against Bécancourt. When are the Conservatives going to be on the side of workers? I do not know. Maybe they do.

* * *

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, less than two weeks after the economic update, CBC/Radio-Canada, a Crown corporation, the public broadcaster paid for mostly with our money, is cutting 800 jobs and announcing that 600 people will soon be fired. The media crisis that was affecting the private sector has now spread to the public broadcaster. This will inevitably affect the quality of news. It will also affect our TV series and soaps and our ability to tell our own stories.

How long has the minister known about this? Did she agree with this decision? If not, what is she going to do to stop the carnage?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concerns regarding the future of CBC/Radio-Canada and our media in general. That is why our government worked to modernize the Broadcasting Act in order to implement new support measures for broadcasting across Canada.

With regard to CBC/Radio-Canada, when we came to power in 2015, we restored the \$115 million in funding that the Conservatives had slashed.

We were also there during the pandemic. We will continue to be there and to fight for the future of CBC/Radio-Canada.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Radio-Canada outperforms CBC. From news and current affairs to television series and soaps, Radio-Canada is doing better than CBC. That is certainly not because there are more francophones in the country. We know that for a fact. However, Radio-Canada, which has fewer employees and higher viewership, is being cut just as much as CBC. If anyone wanted to sabotage the French network, that would be the way to do it.

There is no way the Minister of Canadian Heritage did not know about what was coming. Did she alert her colleague, the Minister of Finance, before the economic update?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are certainly concerned about the future of CBC/Radio-Canada. That is why we provided an appropriate level of support, particularly during the pandemic, but also when we returned to power after the Conservatives, who had slashed the public broadcaster's funding. We will continue to be there, to work with the Crown corporation and to respect its independence.

We invite management to be transparent about the situation and about upcoming decisions. For our part, we will work to ensure the public broadcaster's future and long-term survival.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

HOUSING

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in little under a decade, Canada's housing costs have basically doubled. Earlier today, members of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations shared with me a story of seven individuals living in one apartment. We know there are many similar stories about this across the country.

After eight years, students are becoming homeless under the NDP-Liberal government. The PM is not worth the cost. When will the government step aside so we can get Canada back on track?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the members of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations for its advocacy. I used to be a member when I was in the student government at StFX University.

I should say that, when we compare the policies of the Conservative Party to the policies the government is putting forward, it is clear that its policies will do more harm than good and raise the cost of living. We are putting policies in place that are going to remove the tax on new apartment construction so we get more apartments built. The Conservative Party would put the tax back on. We are investing in affordable housing when it is campaigning on a commitment to make sure it does not invest.

When it comes to supporting students and the housing they need, the solutions lay on our side of the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, our leader premiered a documentary on the housing crisis to explain its cause to Canadians and outline the solutions he is proposing. The documentary *Housing Hell* has garnered nearly four million views for a good reason. After eight years of this Liberal government, the price of houses, rent and mortgages has doubled and the number of people who are homeless is skyrocketing. People are suffering.

Will the minister put his ego aside, watch the Leader of the Opposition's documentary and adopt the solutions suggested to help Canadians put a roof over their heads?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to accept a question about checking my ego at the door when the opposition leader uses his space on the floor of the House of Commons to invite people to watch a video. I am curious how many of those views are actually the opposition leader—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Housing has the floor.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to question how many of those views are the opposition leader going home at night to watch himself in the evening.

The reality is, when it comes to which party has a plan to build more homes, it is clear that it is the government. We have a plan to cut the costs of building. We have a plan to invest in cities. We have a plan to invest in affordable housing. We will get the job done.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister can laugh all he wants, but what will he say to the 30-year-old guy from Sherbrooke who has no place to live and cannot find a place to rent because \$1,500 a month is more than he can afford? Right now, he says that he will have to live in a tent this winter at an encampment that has practically become a refugee camp, in the middle of Sherbrooke. It makes no sense.

Every measure this government has taken in the past eight years has led us to this, to situations where 30-year-old men and women, with all their means and abilities, cannot even afford rent. Will the minister admit that the measures taken by his government have produced no results for the past eight years?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand the situation. That is exactly why we are investing in affordable housing in Sherbrooke. That is why we are investing a total of \$900 million with our partners in the province of Quebec. It is very important to keep making investments.

I cannot believe that the member and the Leader of the Opposition are opposed to investments in affordable housing. We absolutely have to keep making our investments.

[English]

We are going to continue to make a difference and build the homes that Canadians need, including in Sherbrooke.

* * *

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here in Canada, we have attracted an incredible amount of foreign investment by making the most of Canada's assets.

In Quebec, 99% of businesses are SMEs. To say that we are going back to an economic stone age where we are lining the pockets of foreign multinationals and letting them dictate our policies is simply not true. No, we are investing in the heart of our businesses and SMEs.

I have a question for the Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. How are we supporting SMEs in Quebec?

• (1505)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. Our government is a partner in economic development, not only in Quebec, but across the country.

Unlike the Conservative leader, who wants to take us back to the Stone Age and fossil fuels, we are investing in innovative green projects, such as the Carrefour d'innovation bioalimentaire de l'Est in Montreal, the transformation of mine tailings into fertilizer in Theftord Mines and the manufacture of brake pads for wind turbines in Gaspésie.

We will continue to invest in the economy of the future. I would like to know what the Conservative Party is going to cut for business owners in Quebec.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Prime Minister, New Brunswickers are struggling to pay their rent. After eight years, he is just not worth the cost. While rents are too high in major cities, recent increases have been the biggest in New Brunswick. According to Stats Canada, rent has inflated nearly 30% in New Brunswick in the last four years alone.

Will the Prime Minister agree that now is the time to get the gatekeepers out of the way so more rental housing can be built in the province of New Brunswick?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to getting gatekeepers out of the way and reducing red tape, I will point the hon. member to the fact that we recently signed an agreement with the City of Moncton so it can change the way it allows homes to be built in that city. We are going to see thousands of new homes in the city, and now we are working with other cities across New Brunswick and rural communities as well.

It is fascinating that, if the Conservatives were concerned about reducing the cost of rent, they would abandon their plans to put the GST back on rental construction. They should avoid the mistakes of the past by abandoning their commitment to stop investing in affordable housing. We will get—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Oral Questions

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government's incompetence and lack of caring, we have seen a housing hell unleashed on Canadians. They have actively caused housing, mortgages and housing-related costs to double over the last eight years. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost. We have people living in tent cities and in their cars, and the dream of home ownership is evaporating for younger Canadians. The Liberals are putting photos ahead of housing.

When will the Prime Minister realize that he has built more tent cities than houses?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the enormously difficult situation that families are going through in having trouble affording a place to live. However, I will not accept criticisms from that member or the Conservative Party of Canada when they stand up while the cameras are on to make hay of this for a political reason.

When they had the opportunity to stand up to vote on whether we should support initiatives that would help the homeless population in Canada, they voted against them. They are currently campaigning on a promise to get out of the business of housing. We have made that mistake for 30 years. This government, in 2017, started with the national housing strategy to invest in affordable housing. We need to invest, not make cuts as the member wants to.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Prime Minister has created housing hell.

Mortgage payments have doubled. The price of housing has doubled. Tent cities, where people sleep in tents, are popping up in cities across Canada. For example, in Sherbrooke, a young, 30-year old man is forced to live in his tent because he cannot find a single room.

Will this Prime Minister stop with his inflationary spending so that Quebeckers can have a roof over their heads for once and for all?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to understand the solution to the problem.

We are making investments to build affordable housing, including in Sherbrooke. We are making investments in partnership with the Province of Quebec with the goal of building 8,000 new affordable housing units.

It is very important to continue our work. The Conservative Party does not support these programs. It is against them. It cannot ask these kinds of questions and vote against every time.

*Points of Order***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many countries have agreed to triple their production of renewable energies, such as solar energy, wind energy and hydroelectricity.

This commitment stands in sharp contrast with the approach of the opposition leader, who promotes oil production and wants to go back to the Stone Age when it comes to fighting climate change.

Can the minister tell us about the commitment that our government made at COP28 to move Canada and its renewable energy production capacity forward?

• (1510)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her work.

This global goal is in keeping with our work to provide affordable energy while protecting Quebec's advantage in clean, reliable energy. The new federal clean investment credits will unlock projects and create jobs.

While we are working hard to build the future, the Conservatives on the other side want to tear down Quebec's clean economy, and the Bloc Québécois has nothing to offer but talk.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, two people died, and one is still missing at sea because their vessel could not be found. It was discovered that life-saving, direction-finding technology has been unavailable.

Those on the water deserve to know that help will be there to find them. However, instead of investing in the safety of people, the Liberals followed the lead of the Conservatives, slashing funding and closing 10 Coast Guard communication centres. Canadians deserve better.

When will the government provide the Coast Guard with the necessary resources to keep mariners safe?

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring the health and safety of Canadians at sea is a top priority for our government.

The Coast Guard is working around the clock to modernize and replace the radio detection system with a more robust and accurate network. While this work continues, there are a wide variety of other systems in place, including a radar installation and on-board ship detection finding system on Coast Guard vessels.

I want to reassure the member, and I want Canadians to be reassured, that the Coast Guard's mission of safety at sea is unimpeded by this work.

TAXATION

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this summer, Canada relied on volunteer firefighters and search and rescue to risk their lives to keep us safe, but the Liberals have been letting them down.

Ninety-five hundred volunteer firefighters quit in 2023. The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, which is here today, says that doing the work and paying for the equipment is unaffordable. The Liberals are in luck. The NDP has a bill that would up the volunteer firefighter tax credit to \$10,000.

Will the government support our volunteer firefighters by voting yes on the NDP's plan to increase the volunteer firefighter tax credit?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, just yesterday, I was in West Kelowna visiting the firefighters after the devastating wildfires that happened in West Kelowna and all across British Columbia. We talked about many different measures for firefighters that we will be supporting, in addition to the training of 1,000 firefighters.

We have a lot of options currently on the table, but no doubt about it, we will be supporting our firefighters.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the Gallery of the Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services and Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board of Yukon.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order on decorum.

During Statements by Members, the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle called the women of the Conservative Party "weak". I have been called a lot of things in my life, but weak is not one of them.

The member's language to tear down women and reduce our value to a quota is exactly what discourages women from running for office and makes it harder for every single one of us here. Strength comes from courage of action, no matter someone's gender, not from tokenization.

If the member wanted to show some strength of her own, she would apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: I will say quickly that we must be judicious in our words. We will go back and listen to that and come back to the House if something needs to be done.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1515)

[English]

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a certificate of nomination and biographical notes for the proposed appointment of Eric Janse to the position of Clerk of the House of Commons.

I request that the nomination and biographical notes be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:16 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Call in the members.

● (1530)

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

(Division No. 470)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brook	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Dalton
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Garrison	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu

Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Green	Hallan
Hughes	Idlout
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kniec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	MacGregor
Maguire	Majumdar
Martel	Masse
Mathysen	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zarrillo
Zimmer— 167	

Routine Proceedings

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alhabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Boissonnault
Bradford	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier	Coteau

Speaker's Ruling

Dabrusin	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Duclos	Duguid
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gerretsen
Gould	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schieffe	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sorbara
Sousa	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Yip	Zahid
Zuberi — 149	

PAIRED

Members

Champagne	Chong
Damoff	Deltell
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Gaudreau
Guilbeault	McGuinty
Michaud	Normandin
Qualtrough	Savard-Tremblay — 14

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 15 minutes.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACH OF SPEAKER'S IMPARTIALITY—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on December 4 by the House leader of the official opposition concerning the Speaker's participation, by video message, at a provincial party convention on December 2.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker, in a statement earlier in the sitting, had explained that he had been asked to record a personal message to be played as part of a tribute video to a colleague and friend from the national capital region whom he has known for many decades. He apologized for the perception of partisanship that his involvement in the said convention created. He also indicated that, if concerns were brought to the floor of the House, he would recuse himself from discussions on this matter.

As such, I fulfilled the role bestowed upon the Deputy Speaker to weigh the arguments from hon. members, assess the procedural authorities and precedents, and prepare a ruling on this matter.

[*English*]

It is exceedingly rare that actions involving the Speaker are questioned in the chamber. It requires a thoughtful and serious response. The role of Speaker is central to our parliamentary institutions. It cannot be seen to be diminished or drawn into partisan debate. It is with this in mind that I approached this ruling.

In his intervention, the House leader of the official opposition alleged that the Speaker failed in his responsibility to uphold the impartiality of his office. He did so by providing a video tribute, in an allegedly partisan manner, from the Speaker's office and dressed in the Speaker's attire, for the departing interim leader of a provincial party, which was shown at that party's convention. He contended that the Speaker clearly indicated a partisan preference. The member quoted extensively from numerous procedural authorities on the high expectation for impartiality that is attached to the position of Speaker of the House of Commons.

The member argued that the matter should be viewed as a contempt of the House. He pointed to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which emphasizes that a matter of contempt can be addressed by the House, even in the absence of any specific breach of privilege. In a subsequent intervention, he called on the Speaker to resign.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

The member for La Prairie, for his part, emphasized that the Speaker's participation in a partisan political activity was a breach of his impartiality. He posited that speakers need two qualities to successfully fulfill their duties: They must always show impartiality in all their activities and must show good judgment. On both counts, according to the member, the Speaker has failed to do so, and as such, must resign.

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby also spoke of the gravity of the situation. According to the member, the Speaker's actions went against the principle of impartiality, so important to the position. He called on the Deputy Speaker to find a prima facie question of privilege, and that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[English]

Other members also intervened on the matter, but I would like to highlight a quote from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 323, that the House Leader of the official opposition cited. It bears repeating because it succinctly sums up the requirement for impartiality by the Speaker. It says:

When in the Chair, the Speaker embodies the power and authority of the office, strengthened by rule and precedent. He or she must at all times show, and be seen to show, the impartiality required to sustain the trust and goodwill of the House.

Allegations of partisanship against the Speaker are a very serious matter. To protect the integrity of the position, it is generally not permissible for members to call into question the Speaker's impartiality. If members wish to object to the Speaker's conduct, there is a clear process by which this is to be accomplished.

[Translation]

As stated by *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, at page 323: "The actions of the Speaker may not be criticized in debate or by any means except by way of a substantive motion."

[English]

The House leader of the official opposition acknowledged as much in his remarks, noting that this is the usual manner in which complaints against the Speaker are dealt with. While he would have this motion brought forward before the House by way of a prima facie finding of a question of privilege, this is not the course of action that has been followed in the past.

It further states, at pages 620 and 621 of the same work:

Only by means of a substantive motion for which 48 hours' written notice has been given, may the actions of the Chair be challenged, criticized and debated.

[Translation]

We do have past examples of similar occurrences. On June 1, 1956, at page 4540 of the Debates, Speaker Beaudoin directed that a motion be first placed on notice to address complaints about his conduct. Similarly, on March 13, 2000, at page 4397 of the Debates, Speaker Parent took the same approach when faced with a comparable situation. He directed that a motion be placed on notice, first. In both cases, Speakers Beaudoin and Parent declined to rule on their own conduct and did not ask another chair occupant to rule on their behalf. I will note that the matter at issue in each case was dissatisfaction with a procedural ruling.

In the present case, what is at issue is the Speaker's conduct outside of the House, and whether or not it has brought into question his impartiality. As we saw, the Speaker decided to recuse himself and to entrust me in guiding the House as to the next steps to take, if any, regarding this matter.

Privilege

[English]

The House leader of the official opposition elected to bring his concerns through a question of privilege and not through the preferred means to bring such a matter forward to the House, and that is to place a substantive motion on notice. I allowed the arguments yesterday, even though it is not the usual course of action, as I recognized the grave concerns some members had and wished to express.

[Translation]

The Chair finds itself in a difficult position, having to determine if, on the face of it, a colleague's behaviour brings into question the impartiality of the chair. This is more properly an issue for the House to decide. I also acknowledge that for all of us, the House, chair occupants and members, it is important to settle this matter as soon as possible.

• (1540)

[English]

On that basis, and on that basis alone, rather than insisting that a substantive motion be placed on notice, I find that this matter should have priority over other orders of the day and will allow the House leader of the official opposition to move his motion.

In the future, if members wish to take issue with the conduct of the Speaker, rather than raising points of order or questions of privilege, I would instead direct them to place a substantive motion on notice.

I thank members for their attention.

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the Speaker's public participation at an Ontario Liberal Party convention, as Speaker of the House of Commons, constitutes a breach of the tradition and expectation of impartiality required for that high office, constituting a serious error of judgment which undermines the trust required to discharge his duties and responsibilities and, therefore, the House refers the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with instruction that it recommend an appropriate remedy.

I appreciate the difficult position this scandal has put you in, and I appreciate your ruling, where you spelled out the normal course of actions for members to follow when dealing with a chair occupant or dealing with the Speaker. I appreciate that you also acknowledged the time-sensitive nature of what this scandal has caused for the House and for members. As you know, I made substantive remarks yesterday in making the case for this privilege motion. To save the House's time, I will not go through all of those again, but will just sum up the points.

Privilege

The Speaker has incredible authority here in the chamber. The Speaker makes decisions that are not subject to appeal. There is no higher authority whom members can ask for a second opinion should they lose out on a point of order or on a question of privilege. The Speaker's word is the command during debates. If the Speaker does not like something that was said, the Speaker can take the floor away from a member. The Speaker has the sole authority to expel a member from the chamber. The Speaker is the only person who can name someone and force them to leave the chamber for the rest of the day. That decision is not appealable either. In other parliaments, that type of thing must be ratified by the House. In our chamber, the Speaker has sole executive authority. The reason I am talking so much about the incredible powers the Speaker has is that, for members to accept someone to hold that power, there has to be trust in that person.

I would like to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

That is the type of authority the Speaker has here in the chamber. Around the precinct, the Speaker also has incredible authority as well. He chairs the Board of Internal Economy. The Board of Internal Economy sets the rules about how members are able to use resources to fulfill their functions, which is everything from printing protocols and ensuring there are adequate translation services to what types of expenses are allowed. It is a very important role. For members to accept someone to hold that authority, they must have 100% trust that the person holding that position is exercising their duty free of any partisan bias and free of any favouritism or preferential treatment.

It can be challenging. We all get elected through a political process. All of us seek a nomination. We join a political party. We sell memberships in that party in advance of a nomination race to win that nomination. During general elections, we pound in signs promoting our party, in terms of the brand, the policies and the leader. We all understand that.

When somebody enters this place and decides to run for Speaker, they usually go to some length to assure members that they do have a non-partisan side, that they can put aside their partisanship and partisan affiliations, and that they can take the Speaker's chair, put on the Speaker's robe and be impartial.

In the case of the current Speaker, the current Speaker was the former president of the Liberal Party. The current Speaker was the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, right up until he ran for Speaker. In the course of this Parliament, between the last election and the date he was elected as Speaker, the current Speaker was engaged in very partisan activities. As the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary, he was busy because there were a lot of scandals the Prime Minister was involved in. There were all kinds of ethics violations, spending scandals and allegations of corruption across multiple departments. The current Speaker would dutifully go to committee, defend the Prime Minister, engage in filibusters to prevent the committee from arriving at a decision, go on TV with other members of other parties, make accusations and defend his boss in a very partisan way.

We were all asked, as MPs, to take a leap of faith with this current Speaker that after being elected, after winning a majority of the

votes in the House, he would go above and beyond what might be expected. Since his partisanship was so intense and so recent, we went out on a bit of a limb to believe he would put aside all that partisanship and would conduct himself in a way that would earn that trust and would justify that trust.

• (1545)

We gave him the benefit of the doubt. That is why it was so shocking. I could not believe my eyes when I saw the image of the Speaker in his robes, in his office on Parliament Hill, at a hyperpartisan political event. This was no quiet dinner among friends. This was a leadership election convention for the Ontario Liberal Party, a party in a province that he does not currently reside in.

I was shocked. At first, I honestly thought it was a bit of a joke. I thought somebody was trying to troll me or something. I did not believe it at first. Upon seeing the other images shared and the video itself, I realized, oh my goodness, the Speaker has actually done this.

Here is why it matters for Canadians. We heard the Speaker's excuse yesterday. We talked about the incredible authority, the need for trust between the House members and the Speaker.

We can think of other examples of institutions in Canada in which we can all instantly recognize the need for impartiality and the need to make a serious change if that impartiality is ever broken. Imagine a case in the NHL, if there were images displayed of an NHL referee wearing his referee's uniform and giving a pep talk to the Toronto Maple Leafs in their locker room during intermission.

How would fans of the Montreal Canadiens, the Ottawa Senators or the Edmonton Oilers feel if they ever had to see that referee ref a game between their team and Toronto?

It would not matter if the referee did that because he happened to know one of the players or maybe he had some close personal relationship. He did not expect it to be videoed; he just thought he could go in and say a few encouraging words and then leave. It would not matter, because once one sees that image, one cannot unsee it. That doubt will always be there. Doubt is the opposite of trust.

Imagine a defendant in a court case, where someone texts them an image of the judge, in his robes, at a backyard barbecue with the Crown prosecutor. The judge might have all kinds of context that he would want them to understand before jumping to conclusions, but would a defendant want to go through a trial proceeding with a judge who had shown that kind of partiality and bias? I would not.

Imagine a situation between a union and management that has gone to arbitration; the arbiter is then seen at a restaurant in his attire, in the same clothes he wears during the mediation session. Now he is sitting down with one of the parties involved in the dispute. Would a union want to accept a ruling, even if there was context and a rationale behind it? Of course it would not.

Privilege

That is the situation we find ourselves in here in the House. That is why our recommendation to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will be to recommend to the House that the Speaker resign. We do not believe that, to go forward, to accept those rulings without appeal, the current Speaker can fulfill that role.

Yesterday, I mentioned a few very important cases that are technically still under the purview of the Speaker. One touches on whether the budget bill was properly introduced. The government made a ways and means motion error, and we contend that this motion should have been ruled out of order. That is taxation and spending.

For us to trust that the Speaker made that ruling last week free of any bias or partiality is just impossible after seeing those images.

I hope my colleagues in the House will agree with me that this situation is serious and that it matters not just to members but also to Canadians. This is the pillar of our parliamentary democracy. Members should support this motion and support our calls at committee for the Speaker to do the right thing, put the institution above himself as an individual, make the role primary and step aside.

• (1550)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for bringing forward the motion. Of course, as a member of the New Democratic Party, I can echo much of the concern that he has expressed. We are very worried about this and the precedent that this has set.

We are supportive of this going to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for further examination.

Could the member comment briefly on what he would specifically like to see the PROC committee look into and what specific recommendations he would like it to come up with?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, the member touched on a very important point that I would like to address.

She talked about precedent. One reason I brought this through in the form of a question of privilege is this: I fully believe that an important concept here is that future speakers see very clearly that this type of activity is so offensive to the House that they should take extra precautions to never find themselves in a similar situation.

The member asked what specific course of action we recommend. I would just use this opportunity to again state our belief that the Speaker has reached the point where he should step aside. This would preserve or re-establish that trust between the office of the Speaker and individual MPs.

I will let PROC decide how best to deliberate. We believe there is a timeliness to this. Every day that goes by, there are questions before the Chair that need to be decided. It may interest the committee to hear from the Speaker, to get to the bottom of the invitations and any correspondence that went back and forth between the Liberal Party of Ontario and the Speaker's office to help substantiate what the Speaker claims to have happened. I will leave that to the procedure and House affairs committee.

However, it is our belief that at this point, the best thing for the institution would be for the Speaker to step down.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to this motion and the last one, and it appears that we are going to be heading towards a meeting at PROC to discuss this.

We have heard from two parties that represent almost 150 members of Parliament, which is almost the majority, calling for the resignation of the Speaker. The only other opposition party that has not stated a position on remedy is the NDP.

I would like to hear from the opposition House leader on the pressures or consequences if the NDP does not side with the other 150-plus members who are calling for the Speaker's resignation. What would be the consequences for those members?

• (1555)

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague has made an important point. With the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives, we are almost at a majority of the House.

I just have to say, for anybody in a leadership capacity to lead a group, especially a group such as members of Parliament in the House of Commons, who are divided by party, that relationship cannot be maintained with such a significant percentage of the group not having confidence in him. I hope the Speaker reflects on that.

I do not want to prejudge what may or may not happen or deal in hypotheticals, but I do not see how a Speaker could continue in the role knowing that virtually 50% of the people he has to administer over or guide have lost confidence in him. I hope he reflects on that in the coming hours and days.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a representative democracy, people who elect us to serve here must have a certain degree of faith that our voices count and that their voices are heard through us. I believe this is why we have the standing order that requires the Speaker to be impartial.

My colleague from the NDP raised a question about what recommendations she would like PROC to make. In that vein, could the member also talk about the need for the impartiality of the Speaker's chair to be maintained, in order for the public to have faith in the function of Parliament?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, this is a very profound question that warrants more time than I have.

I will just quickly say this: We have a government that has, for two elections in a row, received fewer votes than the main opposition party.

Privilege

The vast majority of Canadians did not vote for the government, and especially when we have a government that was elected with such a low percentage of the votes, they need to have trust that, at the very least, the government is constrained by some of the rules and traditions of the House. The Speaker is the guardian of that. Canadians also have to have confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to begin, allow me to thank the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, the House leader of the official opposition, for his speech.

Let us keep in mind that this member has occupied the Speaker's chair, so when he raised the question of privilege, he knew full well what this is all about. He also knows why it is important for those who occupy the chair of Speaker of the House of Commons to be impartial and take on the role of the referee, not one of the players on the House of Commons ice rink.

I was shocked when I first saw the video of the current Speaker of the House for the very first time. I was shocked by his comments and by the fact that, not only after his election as Speaker, but also before, in the speech he gave to be elected Speaker, the member for Hull—Aylmer made several references to the importance of words, deeds and decorum in the House. As a referee and the person responsible for decorum in the House, if he is to achieve this goal, he must, without fail, demonstrate absolute impartiality.

I will remind the House about what the member for Hull—Aylmer said before he was elected. Again, everything is a matter of judgment, of course, but it is also a matter of perception. At the time, before he was elected, this is what he said to all his colleagues in the House. He used his speaking time, the time that every candidate for the speakership is entitled to, to say, “The words we use matter. Symbols matter. I know this all too well. As your Speaker, I will act swiftly to restore the honour of the House.”

That statement offended me because I did not think the House had been dishonoured in any way prior to his arrival. Nevertheless, as a group, we chose to elect the member for Hull—Aylmer as Speaker despite what he said. Given his statement, we expected the honour and decorum of the House to be impeccable. Then the Speaker made a statement from his seat before oral questions. Let us not forget how astonished we were to see the Speaker make such a statement at such a time. He announced his intention to elevate debate in the House of Commons and do better than his predecessors.

Who would have thought, just a few weeks later, that not only would all his attempts to do so fail, but on top of that, he would prove to be the most partisan Speaker since I do not know when? Who would have thought that the comments he made at the Ontario Liberal Party convention would have harmed the position he holds? We must also consider the way in which he said he wanted to lead the House to have better deliberations.

When the referee takes sides, how are the players then supposed to respect any of his decisions? When the referee practically becomes one of the players on the ice and he decides to score a goal with his striped shirt in the opposing team's net, he loses all credi-

bility in any decision he makes after that. It is unfortunate, but that is how it is.

To remind people why we had to raise this question of privilege, I will quote some of comments from the famous video at the root of the situation we find ourselves in today.

• (1600)

The Speaker was dressed in his Speaker's robes in the video that was seen by Liberal supporters at the Ontario Liberal Party leadership convention. The video was filmed in the Speaker's office, likely using House of Commons resources.

His words were very clear. Despite the apology that he gave in the House this week, he cannot dismiss or erase what he said to the convention on that video. In reference to Mr. Fraser, the interim leader of the Ontario Liberal Party who was retiring after an election, the Speaker said, “He's demonstrated so much calm, conviction and resolve and determination, and he's held it all together at a very challenging time in the history of our party.” He very clearly stated “of our party”.

Even though, in his apology, he indicated that he was not a member of the Ontario Liberal Party, that he did not have a membership card and that he did not participate in activities, he still took the time to say “our party” in front of all those Liberal supporters.

When it comes to partisanship and perceptions, the Speaker, dressed in the robes of the Speaker of the House of Commons and standing in the office of the Speaker of the House of Commons, clearly failed in his basic duty to show reserve. There is a reason why no other Speaker of the House of Commons has spoken at a political convention. It has never happened before in Canada, not in legislative assemblies, not in the Quebec National Assembly and not in other parliaments around the world operating under our British parliamentary system. It has never happened anywhere.

Various excerpts from the many books of standing orders and procedures of Houses of Commons operating under the British system concur in this matter. It is written. It is a rule. It is not mere tradition that requires the Speaker to refrain from partisan displays.

I would like to quote from *Parliamentary Procedure in Québec*, third edition, at page 132. This excerpt demonstrates that non-partisanship must be demonstrated in all parliamentary systems, not just here:

While the legitimacy of the Chair stems primarily from the rules that govern the selection process, the impartiality of the Chair is essentially determined by the attitude adopted by the President in the exercise of the functions of office. Of course, the rules of parliamentary procedure state that the President does not belong to any parliamentary group, does not participate in any of the Assembly's debates and votes only to break a tie, but it is the manner in which the incumbent oversees the proceedings and follows those rules that determines whether actual impartiality and the appearance of impartiality are maintained.

I am saying this most sincerely: Unfortunately, with this video that was shown at the Ontario Liberal Party convention, the Speaker failed in his duty to be truly neutral and, primarily, in his duty to maintain an appearance of neutrality.

Privilege

I will also add my voice to that of the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, who is asking that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs as soon as possible. The solution for the Speaker is none other than to ask for his resignation, because he has lost the confidence of the House.

While I am at it, I will move an amendment to the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle's motion. The amendment reads as follows:

That the motion be amended by adding the following: “, provided that the committee: (a) meet within 24 hours after receiving this order of reference to consider the matter; (b) ensure this matter take priority over all other business; (c) shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for the committee meetings, subject to the special orders adopted on Monday, May 16, 2023, and Monday, December 4, 2023; and (d) be instructed to report back to the House not later than on Thursday, December 14, 2023”.

• (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will take the amendment under advisement for a few minutes and make a decision as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was also very shocked to see the Speaker address Ontario Liberal Party supporters. For most Canadians watching this debate and listening to the motion just moved in the House, I think it might seem a little like baseball.

Could the member talk a little about the confidence that the House places in the Speaker? Can he talk about the effect of the Speaker's ruling? More than 120 members are now calling for his resignation. The NDP has not taken a stand on the matter. Can my colleague talk about that?

• (1610)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, we are in a minority government situation. This means that, at any moment, there could be a very important vote that would send Canadians to the polls. At any moment, this government could be defeated.

The rulings by the Speaker of the House and his impartiality are of paramount importance. We must have confidence that the Speaker of the House will ensure that the rules are followed. The governing party, the Liberal Party, could call an election anytime it wants, and unfortunately we would always have doubts because we no longer trust the Speaker, who has shown extreme partisanship. We will always have doubts about his rulings. Were they based on rules and traditions, or on partisan interests?

That is why Canadians need to pay close attention to what is happening right now and to the recommendations that will be made by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[*English*]

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been honoured to serve under six Speakers, this one being the sixth, and I have to say that he is the most partisan Speaker I have ever served under.

It is such a disappointment to have to bring this up, as we had such great hopes for this individual, hopes of restoring respect and improving decorum. However, from his actions on the weekend, the only obvious solution is for him to resign.

I would like to know whether you believe that future Speakers would view this as a precedent. If we act in accordance with our traditions, it would be to further the position as being non-partisan, but if we decide to keep the current Speaker on, it would lead to more partisanship creeping into that office. Would you agree or disagree with that stance?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will not pronounce for myself, but I am going to ask the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, personally, I agree with what my colleague just said. If we do not have confidence in the Speaker to be the referee, then how do you expect us to then respect his decisions and his calls for calm and order? It is total chaos.

In any event, I am already wondering one thing. Two political parties have already called for his resignation and another is questioning the Speaker's judgment for taking part in a partisan activity. Three out of the four parties in the House of Commons have already questioned the Speaker's judgment with respect to his participation in an event that calls into question his ability to be non-partisan.

Because that happened, I do not see what other option my colleagues at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs have. The only thing they can do is call for the Speaker to tender his resignation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The amendment is in order.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one thing I take a great deal of pride in is the opportunity I had to represent the people of Inkster for just under 20 years in the legislature in the Province of Manitoba and, since 2010, being able to represent the people of Winnipeg North here in Ottawa.

I have a passion for the debates that take place in the chamber, and at times even I can get somewhat political. I know that is a little tough to believe. There are some things that should be treated in an apolitical fashion. I would suggest this is one of those situations, and we should try, to our greatest ability, to ensure we treat this matter in an apolitical fashion.

Privilege

I would like to read part of the motion that was introduced. The essence of the motion is that “the House refers the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with instruction that it recommend an appropriate remedy.” Based on how I read the motion, just as when I first heard it, I believe that members of the Liberal caucus would say with me that it seems to be very fair. Because we all recognize the serious nature of the issue, let us have the procedure and House affairs committee deal with the issue. We are okay with that. However, I want to emphasize that the motion makes very clear that the House is to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with instruction that PROC recommend an appropriate remedy. That is the most important part of the motion.

I am not a lawyer by profession, but I am concerned about some of the statements by the mover and seconder of the motion. I wrote down specifically what the most recent speaker said, which was that the only outcome should be asking for the Speaker's resignation because he has lost the trust of the members of this House. That seems to be the absolute opposite of what the motion says. It is as if members of the Conservative Party have already drawn a conclusion, and that concerns me. It should concern all members of the chamber. I have confidence and faith in the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

In the debate taking place on this important issue this afternoon, what is best is that we reinforce two points. Number one, this chamber and members should have confidence in the membership of the PROC committee, and number two, we should let the PROC committee do what is being asked of it to do, which is to recommend an appropriate remedy. The PROC committee has the resources to do what is necessary to come back to the House.

The problem I have with the amendment in particular is that it tries to put a deadline on the PROC committee. It wants PROC to report back to the chamber by December 14. Again, through an amendment to the motion, we are interfering with the PROC committee, if in fact one believes, as members of the Liberal caucus and I do, that we need to put partisan politics to the side on this issue because we are talking about the Speaker of the House.

• (1615)

At the end of the day, I would suggest, from a personal point of view, that the amendment not be supported and that we support the motion itself. If, number one, members believe in and have confidence in PROC and, number two, want to depoliticize this issue, I highly recommend that they seriously consider voting the way I have suggested from my perspective.

With those few words, I will leave it at that in the hope that PROC will be able to come up with a remedy, as recommended by the motion.

• (1620)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the issue at hand is one of great urgency. It speaks to the confidence the House has in the Speaker to perform his abilities in an independent and non-partisan manner. The amendment is completely appropriate given the circumstance we find ourselves in. The procedure and house affairs committee should deal with this matter expeditiously and then come back to the House with a recommendation.

Does the hon. member not believe that for the confidence of this House and its ability to ensure the Speaker, in a non-partisan way, has the ability to make the decisions required, as there are many decisions to come, this matter needs to be dealt with at the speed the amendment calls for?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the amendment references that PROC deal with the matter in an urgent fashion, and I agree. However, politics is entering in a very real way when members speaking to the motion instruct that a resignation has to be the outcome. That is a huge jump and it is a politically partisan jump.

On the issue of urgency, yes, let us get it to PROC, but when we say that PROC has to have a report in by December 14, let us remember that December 14 could be our last day. We are here at the latest until December 15, unless there is unanimous support for us to extend sittings in the month of December. Therefore, it seems to me that there is urgency, but we do not have to have the report on the day the House is recessing or the day prior, if in fact we have faith and confidence in PROC's membership and we truly want to be apolitical on this. I am taking people at face value.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what I find really interesting about this particular issue, which speaks to the political partisanship of it, is that when the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, the House leader for the Conservatives, originally proposed his intervention this morning, he made no reference to calling on the Speaker to resign. Then in the next intervention, the Bloc Québécois called on the Speaker to resign, and as though not to be outdone, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle ran back into the House, rose on another point of order and said that the Speaker should resign. Now he has come to the conclusion, a mere couple of hours later, that there is absolutely no other option but for the Speaker to resign. However, in the entirety of his intervention, when he started off on the matter this morning, he never once raised it.

I wonder if the member can—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable has a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the facts are very important when we are talking about partisanship and the Speaker of the House. All of that did not happen on the same day. That happened yesterday, so I would like—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable is referring to the fact that this started yesterday, not this morning. It is putting into perspective the observations the member was making a couple of hours ago, so it does make a point.

Privilege

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not see the procedural error I made there. I certainly made an error with respect to the timing, but it was not a procedural error on which the member could stand up on a point of order.

In any event, my point was to say that when the House leader for the Conservatives rose on his question of privilege, he never once made reference to the Speaker resigning. He did not do that until he decided he needed to because the Bloc Québécois was doing it. That signals that there is a great degree of partisanship going on here.

To the parliamentary secretary's point, when the Conservative member made his comments and was directing that this issue go to the procedure and House affairs committee, he had already precluded what the outcome would be. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary would like to provide his insight into that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would like to emphasize a couple of points.

First and foremost, at the end of the day, given the importance and respect I would think every member of the House has for our democracy, our Standing Orders and so forth, and the amount of respect we should have toward the Chair, I would think we can put partisan politics to the side. That is number one. If, in fact, members are prepared to do that, we can then make some significant progress in enabling and supporting the PROC committee to come up with what would hopefully be a unanimous report on what should come of the Speaker's actions. My concern is that there are already hints that some say they want to treat it in an apolitical fashion but their actions seem to speak differently.

• (1625)

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member refers to our House leader and other members, but 150 members of this place raised the concern with this individual. It is not just one Conservative member or one Bloc member. It is members who represent every region in Canada.

Canadians are watching. They are very disturbed by what has been going on in this place and to find out that it appears the head referee is in the tank for one side. That is very disdainful for Canadians who have fought for this country, fought for our democracy and freedoms. For us to throw that away in an instance of partisanship, which is now commonplace in the Speaker's office, is shameful.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what the member across the way said is that the only outcome should be asking for the Speaker's resignation because he has lost the trust of members of this House. That is drawing a conclusion before PROC is even assigned the responsibility of dealing with the issue. That is what I mean. If the Conservatives' approach is that they want to hang him and hang him high no matter what and want a resignation, and that is the position they take—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to be prudent with his choice of words considering the situation we are addressing and please show moderation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, without any hesitation, I retract that comment and apologize.

The point is that at the end of the day, if we really and truly want to be apolitical on this, the words we speak inside the House and what takes place at PROC should clearly demonstrate that. That is what I am asking for. We need to be consistent, and I hope that is what we will see.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know it is not proper parliamentary procedure to bring attention to the presence or absence of a member of the chamber. However, I do not know whether I can do that to myself. I will admit that I was not in the chamber when the amendment was brought forward, so my question to the member across the way is this. The amendment deals with deferring to the PROC committee and returning a decision by December 14. Does the amendment talk about a resignation?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is right. The essence of the motion is this, and let us be very clear on it: "the House refers the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with instruction that it recommend an appropriate remedy."

The argument I was putting forward is that if members really and truly believe this should be apolitical, that we should treat the Speaker with the utmost respect, putting partisan politics to the side, then as a collective caucus, members should not be calling for the resignation of the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is an absolute opposite. Members cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, what I am hearing the parliamentary secretary say is that he supports what is being proposed. He supports PROC studying this issue and making a recommendation. However, he believes that rather than trying to dictate the answer from the House, as the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle did in his intervention, we should let the committee do its work and provide the recommendation.

This is why I am led to believe that this is nothing more than a hyperpartisan game, another one put on by the Conservatives, because of the manner in which they are treating this issue. They claim to take it so seriously but, on the other hand, treat it with such disregard and say there is only one possible outcome.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is why I started my comments talking about my history and the respect that I have for the institution. At the end of the day, given the importance of the role played by the Speaker, the Liberal caucus supports this going to PROC, but it is critically important that everyone recognize that the partisanship needs to be put to the side. The most appropriate action would be for opposition members, if they are going to continue to talk about it, to concur with that thought. Let us not draw conclusions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think the partisan jabs by the Conservatives and the Liberals are extremely inappropriate in such an important debate. This is an important debate that affects the very foundation of our Parliament. In my opinion, those jabs are inappropriate.

Privilege

I rose in the House not that long ago, in October, to talk about the controversy surrounding the former speaker. At that time, I said, “Every day members of Parliament entrust the Speaker to guide this Parliament through challenging circumstances.” At that time, I said that the Speaker had done an admirable job through COVID-19, the occupation of downtown Ottawa in the winter of 2022 and the putting in place of a hybrid Parliament.

I also said this: “*House of Commons Procedure and Practice* indicates that the Speaker's role is not just administrative and procedural, but also ceremonial and diplomatic....[T]he Speaker often acts as a representative of the House of Commons.” That is when I said that the NDP caucus thinks it is important to look at the precedents and the values of the House, and that I regretfully had to ask the former speaker to resign.

That day, our party was the only one to stand up in the House and demand the Speaker's resignation. We did this because of our values and House procedures, and with deep regret. This is not something that should be done out of partisanship. It is not something that should be done in a hurry. We need to consider all the values of the House, which all Canadians truly hold dear. We need to determine what the next steps are for Parliament.

[English]

Given the precedent set in October, the NDP approaches this issue with the same thoroughness of thought. We are looking at the procedures and principles of Parliament and for the best way to advance to ensure that this Parliament is something of which all Canadians can be proud. When I rose yesterday, I said very clearly that we were dismayed to see the Speaker in that video tribute to the outgoing interim provincial Liberal leader, even more so because the video was shot from the Speaker's chamber, in the traditional Speaker's robes.

[Translation]

I also said that the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states the following: “In order to protect the impartiality of the office, the Speaker abstains from all partisan political activity”.

I went on to say: “This morning's apology by the Speaker partly explains why this unfortunate situation occurred. Although we understand that the video was intended for an intimate gathering for a personal friend, it was the duty of the Speaker and his office to ensure that the message was not used in a partisan context.”

Of course, we agreed that the Speaker should recuse himself from discussions on the matter. We felt that was important.

● (1635)

[English]

Yesterday I rose on behalf of the NDP caucus to say that we believe the proper way to deal with this would be to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It would then be able to study the matter and recommend any appropriate remedies to ensure this never happens again. That is something that all members of Parliament should agree upon, that we need to ensure this never happens again. Particularly because of the parliamentary crisis, which I think is fair to call it, in the month of

October, we need to have the assurance at all times that there is strict impartiality coming from the Speaker's chair.

We understand the Speaker's explanation and his apology, but New Democrats believe it needs to be referred to the procedure and House affairs committee. We believe that this question needs to be fully studied and brought back to the House in a timely way so members of Parliament can deliberate on the decisions made by the procedure and House affairs committee. That is the committee charged with this type of situation.

The Speaker's ruling earlier today set the very clear direction that this needs to go the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for timely study and for remedies to be brought back to the House. This is the approach that we believe is important and something we have been unwavering on.

I do need to raise a point of consideration. I note that yesterday the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, who I have a lot of respect for, provided a very extensive reasoning for his question of privilege, which included referring this matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I thought the research that was done was thorough and effective, and I agreed with his question of privilege. That is why I noted it when I spoke after question period, not being able to speak before question period because I was at the public safety committee.

As everyone knows, New Democrats in the House all have double and triple functions. None of us has a single job. We all have two, three or four jobs, so I could not be at two places at once, which is why I spoke after question period.

I should mention as well that, because the NDP has 25 members, it receives smaller resources through the House leader's office than any other party. I want to say very clearly that with the very small team we have, Blake Evans and Alexandrine Latendresse do a fabulous job in the House leader's office. My office has two team members, yet we provided to the House after question period a very lengthy and well-thought-out argument that was based on what was said by the official opposition, which has far more resources and an office that is much larger. We came to the same conclusion, which I think shows that, even with fewer resources, there can be an equally effective team.

I was surprised that, after I cited the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, he seemed to put aside the very learned and deep analysis that he had given to refer this to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and took quite a different stand. I am a little perplexed that he would do that after providing, in the morning, something that all members of Parliament would agree should go to the committee. I thank my team, the mighty twosome in the House leader's office, for their terrific work.

The reality is that New Democrats are unwavering. We are not changing our position through the course of the day. We are not saying something different today than we did yesterday. We believe this needs to go the procedure and House affairs committee. We believe that remedies need to be provided by the committee and brought back to the House. We have not changed on this. We believe this is a serious issue. We need to ensure this never happens again. That is why the NDP is unwavering in its support of the motion. In fact, had it not been proposed by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, we would have moved that motion taking another route.

• (1640)

It appears that the government did not initially see that this is a serious issue, but it has now agreed that it is serious. I understand that we have some consensus that this is to be referred to the procedure and House affairs committee. I welcome that because, on an issue like this, I think it is important that we have all-party agreement to refer it to the procedure and House affairs committee, which is the venue that this should be directed to, to allow it to do that timely work and then have the House consider the results of that work.

I am hoping that the debate will continue at the procedure and House affairs committee if we do have that agreement. That is where this should go. On behalf of the NDP caucus, we would say that this is a serious matter that needs to be dealt with in a thoughtful manner. That is why we are supporting the motion.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can tell by the sombreness of the hon. member's tone that he is taking this issue as seriously as it needs to be taken.

When, or if, this goes to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the matter would need to be dealt with in an expedited manner. It would need to be dealt with within the next week, in my opinion and in the opinion of many members of the House, for PROC to make a recommendation to the House for some sort of outcome on what the Speaker has done. It speaks directly to not only the confidence in this institution but also the confidence of all members in the Speaker's ability to make decisions free of any partisanship.

Can we expect this to be done quickly at PROC to ensure that the confidence of the House is maintained, as well as, certainly, the confidence in the Speaker's ability to make non-partisan decisions?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is the former official opposition House leader, so he understands the rules and the importance and gravity of this situation. I believe the hon. member was asking a rhetorical question. He understands, as I do, that this would have to take precedence for the procedure and House affairs committee, if it were to become a House order, which it would at the adoption of this motion. It would then become the top priority for the procedure and House affairs committee.

I have confidence that the procedure and House affairs committee will treat it with the timeliness that is required and ensure that this is the top priority of that committee moving forward. The rules of the House, as we well know, indicate that as well. The committee simply cannot continue doing other work. This would be an or-

Privilege

der of the House, so the procedure and House affairs committee would have to put it top of mind.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the New Democratic House leader. I know he has been, in many ways, a parliamentarian first and foremost in many different respects.

When we take a look at the matter at hand, there is the idea that we need to ensure, as much as possible, that we take the political partisanship out of the debate, and I think that is achievable, to enable the procedure and House affairs committee to ultimately make that determination.

It is so important, given the very nature of the institution. If we, as parliamentarians, are making that our first priority, we will get the most positive result for the institution, but only if we take the partisanship out of the process. I am wondering if he could provide his thoughts on the institution and how important it is that we do make it apolitical.

• (1645)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I know I can be partisan often. I know the member can be partisan often. I think we both, with his long experience and myself having been in this rodeo a few times as well, know that there are times when it is appropriate to be partisan and times when it is clearly not. This is one of those times when it is clearly not appropriate to be partisan in any way.

We are dealing with an institution that has led our Parliament for more than a century and a half. It is vitally important that we preserve the institution, that we ensure that best practices are part of the institution, and that the procedure and House affairs committee, if we adopt this motion, which seems almost certain, will be charged with finding those remedies to ensure that this type of situation does not occur again moving forward. I think all members of Parliament will approach this in a thoughtful way, in a non-partisan way, in a way that gives credit and merit to our Parliament. We are the reflection of Canadians and Canadian democracy and we need to act in that way.

There are times when it is appropriate to be partisan. This is not one of those times. We must ensure that we are doing something that is to the benefit of Canadian democracy and Canada's Parliament.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, the House leader for the NDP, for the measured tone he is taking in this conversation, both in his comments this afternoon and yesterday, and for the substance as well. I think the approach he has taken has heightened our democracy.

I would like to follow up on the comments we heard with respect to how the procedure and House affairs committee would deal with this. Of course, we have seen in the last year that the committee has been a particularly partisan one, where we have seen some measure of theatrics at times.

Privilege

I would like to know if he could give advice to the MPs on that committee and/or to the House on how we might see PROC move ahead with this in a way that reflects the answer he just gave to the member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the member is a relatively new member of Parliament, but he certainly understands the importance of us removing our partisan hats at key moments in our nation's history. This is one of those times.

When we went through the convulsions of what was an unprecedented situation in October, where I felt very strongly it was appropriate, as did the NDP caucus, to ask for that Speaker's resignation, I have not done that this time because I feel the circumstances are different. I also think we have to take a measured, thoughtful approach on this issue. That is why the procedure and House affairs committee, I believe and certainly hope, and I know the member does as well, will step up and understand the importance of the situation and, in a non-partisan way, offer those remedies that can be brought back to the House in a timely way.

These are things of vital importance. I know there have been times in this nation's history when all members of Parliament have stood together. One just has to think of the COVID-19 pandemic where members will recall that decisions had to be made by unanimous consent. We took those decisions together to provide supports for Canadians right across the country. To the credit of every member of Parliament, we all stood together to ensure that Canadians had the wherewithal to weather the pandemic.

This is another example of that kind of situation where MPs have to stand together. I think the members of PROC will understand that and work together to provide those remedies.

• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think of the procedure and House affairs committee and the opportunity that will be there for the committee. I think about the potential witnesses. Canada is part of the Commonwealth, and in the Commonwealth, there are experiences that can be drawn upon that would help the procedure and House affairs committee come up with a remedy to the situation.

I just want to get my colleague's thoughts regarding the importance of PROC being able to entertain, at the very least, the possibility of having some important witnesses, potentially even some of our friends in the Commonwealth, who would be able to contribute, who may have some real, tangible experiences on the issue. They could reflect on what has taken place in Canada in the last 40 to 50 years.

PROC does provide that opportunity and it will have the time to look over things and ultimately come up with a better remedy because of the research capabilities of a standing committee.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the questions from my colleague from Winnipeg North.

The reality is that the procedure and House affairs committee will make those decisions. However, I do feel it is important that there be a timely resolution on this for obvious reasons. This is a priority, and it has to be a priority given that it is a House supporter

for procedure and House affairs. At the same time, it is important that those remedies be provided in a timely way.

I think all of us would allow the procedure and House affairs committee members to decide how to balance out the timeliness with getting witnesses as well as to help provide the supports for developing the remedies. That is a balance they will have to achieve, and I wish them the best of luck in doing that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, Correctional Service of Canada; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Health; and the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, carbon pricing.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising to speak to this important motion that has been put forward by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. It reads:

That the Speaker's public participation at an Ontario Liberal Party convention, as Speaker of the House of Commons, constitutes a breach of the tradition and expectation of impartiality required for that high office, constituting a serious error of judgment which undermines the trust required to discharge his duties and responsibilities and, therefore, the House refers the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with instruction that it recommend an appropriate remedy.

I think that this is a good course of action that came out as a result of a ruling earlier today that this is typically the proper course of action in order to deal with this. I echo some of the comments that I have heard through the House in this debate, specifically as they relate to trying to reduce the partisan nature around this particular issue.

As others have indicated, the Speaker's chair is extremely important in our democratic institution, in the Westminster parliamentary system specifically, which we utilize here. Despite the fact that a Speaker is elected by his or her peers in this place, the Speaker might come from a particular political party and obviously does, although not always. We usually run under a political banner. Once we get to this place and actually elect a Speaker to sit in that chair, the Speaker does need to ensure that they are completely impartial in terms of how they are running the House. Of course that should extend to what the Speaker does outside of the House as well, because having the perception of impartiality is just as important as having actual impartiality as it relates to the role of the Speaker.

I come from the same riding as former Speaker Milliken, who is the longest-serving Speaker of the House. I must admit when I first heard what had occurred, he was the first person I thought to contact to get his opinion on this. I have not had an opportunity to do that yet, but I think calling on former Speakers and former people who have worked in the clerk's office to seek guidance on this is extremely important.

That is why I think it is important that we do get this issue before the procedure and House affairs committee so that we can do that study. I know there have already been calls in this House that are a predetermined outcome as to how people see the result will come back from committee. I prefer to err on the side of allowing the committee to do its work, to properly investigate this and to call people like former Speaker Milliken and other people who perhaps worked in the Speaker's office to provide important insight into the role of the Speaker, how they should be perceived inside the House, outside of the House and how important that role is.

Being a member of the procedure and House affairs committee, under the assumption that this motion will pass and be sent to committee, I look forward to the opportunity to do that, to properly do that research, to look into it and do it, as the member for New Westminster—Burnaby said moments ago, as quickly as possible given the serious nature of this and the fact that it is something that we are tasked with dealing with immediately.

What that outcome will be and how the committee ends up reporting back, I think, will be based on the deliberations that occur in the committee based on the content of the information that is received and how we assess the content based on other examples of what has occurred. Then the committee can make a recommendation back to the House in terms of what it sees the appropriate course of action would be.

For members to get up in the House, including the one who just heckled me moments ago, to say that there is no other option and that 150 or so members feel a certain way right now, then my question for that member would be what the point is in even sending this to the committee.

• (1655)

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, no one was heckling the member. He constantly does this for attention.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I heard it and I did not interrupt it.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It was Corey.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We do not refer to colleagues by name in the chamber. Could the hon. member retract, please?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, thank you for validating my claim, because it did occur.

The reality is that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I asked the hon. member to retract the mentioning of the name of the person, please.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, another member asked who it was, and I said the person's name. I should not have done that and I apologize.

Back to the substance, what I was trying to say was that—

Mr. Corey Tochor: He did not retract, though.

Privilege

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the exact same member is still heckling me.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member apologized, which, in my view, means that he retracts what he said, because he apologized for saying it.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, as I said, when a member stands up during questions during this debate and make claims that 150 members of his caucus already feel a certain way, it makes me wonder what the purpose is in even sending the matter to committee if the outcome has already been predetermined, at least by one particular group. However, it does not diminish the fact that the committee can still do very good work on the matter. I think the committee could actually use this as an opportunity not just to figure out the proper recourse in terms of what should be done now about what has occurred and what the proper remedy is, but also to set a precedent and certain rules, and to establish a best practice to ensure that something like this does not happen again.

I do not know the context for why the Speaker chose to do this, nor will I try to guess as to what it was, but I will say that the Speaker has stood and apologized; he has recognized that it was not the best course of action. He has nonetheless done that, which is I why I think it is extremely important that we accept it but still determine whether there are other courses of action that need to be taken.

There is also an amendment on the motion that came forward. It was odd, because the motion was moved, and then the second speaker from the same party put forward an amendment. I do not know why they did not just include it in the full motion. It was:

That the motion be amended by adding the following: “provided that the committee: (a) meets within 24 hours of receiving this referral order to study the matter; (b) prioritizes this matter over all other business; (c) has first priority in using the resources of the house for committee meetings, subject to special orders adopted on Monday, May 16, 2022, and Monday, December 4, 2023; and (d) is tasked with reporting to the house no later than Thursday, December 14, 2023.”

The original motion set the context for the work that needed to be done and for how important it was, and then it appears as though the amendment that came forward just moments later got very prescriptive in terms of how to deal with the issue. I would have thought that this would all have come together. It certainly does not appear to be an amendment that was proposed as a result of having listened to the debate. From how it was tabled, I perceive it to be something that was well planned in advanced. My sense is that it is probably to try to pressure political parties one way or the other with respect to potentially voting against one part but not the other. Maybe, tactically speaking, it is a good move. However, that certainly does not support the notion that has been widely spread around the House during discussion, which is that this should be a non-partisan issue. If my assumptions are correct, that would suggest that there is a partisan nature to the manner in which the amendment has been tabled, and obviously I would have a concern about that.

Privilege

However, I do want to see the matter sent to committee. I think it is extremely important that we have a resolution, that we set some parameters for how Speakers are expected to engage in the future, and that we have something reported back to the House that we can then debate and determine how to move forward with.

I will return to what I said when I began, which was about the importance of the impartiality of the Speaker. As many members of the House know, with a good Speaker, yourself included, Madam Speaker, after a while, people do not look at them as being associated with a political party; they start to just respect the fact that the Speaker is non-partisan. However, we do come from a partisan nature; the vast majority of us who are elected to the House are elected under a political banner. Nonetheless, it is really important that once somebody is elected into that position, they ensure that they do it with utmost impartiality in order to avoid a situation that can be seen as their favouring one side or another.

● (1700)

I will be the first to admit that, during my time here, there have been times when I have agreed wholeheartedly with what Speakers have said, and that there have been times I have not agreed with them. During the time I have been here, all the Speakers who have sat in the chair have been of the political party I am associated with, and sometimes I do not agree with them and am frustrated by a particular ruling they make.

There is an appropriate way to handle this in terms of when the Speaker is doing their very important work of being impartial. They receive advice from the Clerk's table. I remember once asking Peter Milliken how he used to deal with situations where he would have to rule on something like that. He told me that he took the advice from the clerks around the table, and then at the end of the day it was his decision as to how he would proceed. Having that kind of authority is extremely important, and that is why we need to ensure that impartiality continues.

I will conclude by saying that I hope the matter goes to the procedure and House affairs committee as soon as possible so we can deal with it there and report back to the House.

● (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate what the member has indicated in his support, in essence, for the motion. That is a positive thing.

When I spoke earlier, I talked about the amendment and said that I had reservations about putting in a time limit. I would not want members to think that I do not recognize the urgency of the matter. I look to my colleague to provide his thoughts on whether, at the end of the day, it would be nice to see PROC deal with the matter as quickly as possible and also to get a report back also as quickly as possible.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, this is, to be honest, my concern over the matter. The amendment that the second Conservative speaker put forward basically dictates that the work be done by December 14, which is nine days from now. Any of us who have been on committees know the work that goes into finding witnesses, bringing them before committee, listening to the witnesses,

making sure they are available to attend, and having the resources, although I do recognize they have indicated the resources are extremely important.

I guess that if one comes from a perspective of already knowing what one believes the outcome should be, then one may as well just ask the committee to report back tomorrow, because one already knows what the outcome will be. I genuinely feel as though we need to have the proper time to be able to do this. I do not think anybody who sits on a committee of Parliament would argue with the view that nine days just is not enough time to properly do due diligence. We will see how Parliament ends up ultimately deciding on whether we, as a collective, think that nine days is enough.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments, and I made reference to this in questions and answers when I had the opportunity. PROC has demonstrated that it has wonderful membership, and to give a vote of confidence to the PROC committee is in essence what the motion itself does, to say very clearly that it is PROC that would come up with the remedy.

The biggest concern I had was from the member who moved the amendment, who said at the end of his speech that the only outcome should be asking for the Speaker's resignation because he had lost the trust of the members of the House. If members make that sort of comment here, it seems to me they are in essence making a decision potentially as a caucus. When it goes to the PROC committee, we do not want to see that sort of partisanship against PROC's doing what it needs to do, which is to make sure it is very thorough on its report. Could the member provide his thoughts on that?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, my Conservative colleague who tabled the amendment that the parliamentary secretary references was heckling across the way, "I am open and transparent." I am not going to disagree with him on that. He certainly is. He is very transparent. All I would ask is this: What is the point of the motion? Why is he even bothering sending this to committee if the objectives in this are very open and transparent, which is what he stated, that there is no possible outcome other than the one the member indicated?

This lends itself to the member from Burnaby, who talked about this, and basically anybody who has stood up to talk to this and talks about impartiality and letting the committee do its work. Yes, let the committee do its work. I know there are lots of prosecutors in this room. Have they ever had a judge who sits down and says that they already know the defendant is guilty, but to let them hear the case? Come on. That is what we are getting from the Conservatives. I hope we can genuinely see beyond that; I hope there is an opportunity here to really look into this at committee.

● (1710)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is important for all of us to remember that this current issue does arise in a context. The context is that we just had the rather disturbing occurrence of having seen a Speaker resign because of a serious lapse of judgment. I think it is fair to say that the confidence of the House and of the Canadian public was tested and shaken. Now we find ourselves with another issue of a Speaker whose judgment is being called into question.

My question to my hon. colleague is twofold. First, could he give us his thoughts on how the context of just having lost a Speaker might bear on how we proceed moving forward? Second, there is not only an issue of impartiality but also perhaps an issue of a misuse of House resources for partisan purposes. Does the member have any thoughts on this aspect?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I will address the second part first. What the member is raising is exactly why this needs to go to PROC, so the committee can look at that. If I try to prejudge that now and say what I think the outcome is, as a member of that committee, I am showing that I cannot be impartial when I sit and listen to the evidence that comes. Therefore, I look forward to doing that.

In terms of how this plays into what happened previously this fall with the Speaker, it is certainly unfortunate that we find ourselves in this position. However, the two issues can be treated in isolation. I do not think they are connected in any way other than the fact that it is the Speaker of the House of Commons who is the subject of both. Having said that, I certainly regret and find it troubling that we are here once again, but I do also respect the fact that the—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am getting heckled again. I respect that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I interrupt the hon. member because it is true. The hon. member for Saskatoon—University, who is a former speaker himself, should know better than to keep interrupting members who are speaking.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, as political as I am, unlike that member and the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, who were previously speakers and had to execute this impartiality, I have never been put in that position. I find it very interesting how some of the most hyperpartisan people from the Conservatives also happen to be former speakers.

In any event, there is an opportunity here for the committee to do its work. I look forward to doing that work at the committee and reporting back to the House.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I certainly look forward to the procedure and House affairs committee's taking a serious look at this. I am interested to see what conclusions it will draw.

We would be remiss in this debate if we did not call to the House's attention that the person who raised this issue initially is a former speaker. The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has defied a lot of standing conventions about what former speakers do. Typically, speakers do not run for the leadership of a political party. Typically, they are not the House leader. Making the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle the chief spokesperson for the Conservatives in this regard has done a disservice to the issue. I would be happier to see the Conservatives pick some other capable person from their caucus to be the lead person on this criticism, because it is actually not appropriate for a former speaker to play such actively partisan roles. I do not think it reflects well on the office.

Privilege

When we talk about raising the spectre of partisanship around the Speaker's office, a poor way to make that point is to be a former speaker now acting in one of the chief partisan positions in the House for a caucus, such as House leader. Could the member offer some of his own reflections on the appropriateness of a former speaker being the lead attack dog on such an issue?

● (1715)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member answered his own question.

I will say this: Before coming to the House, I was the mayor of Kingston, and I had the opportunity to come to Parliament, to the House of Commons, on a couple of occasions. I actually remember meeting the former speaker, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, and reflecting on how calm and non-partisan this particular individual was. Now, 10 years later, to be sitting here and for him to be one of the most partisan people in the House is truly eye-opening for me.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: He is absolutely right. Madam Speaker, I will be the first to say that I am nothing like Peter Milliken, who was from Kingston and the Islands. He was a non-partisan Speaker. He did his role very well. He was elected under a Conservative minority government to be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will leave it at that. The time is up.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is as follows. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If a member participating in person wishes that the amendment be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Madam Speaker, I would like a recorded division, please.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 6, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND GROCERIES ACT**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-56, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Competition Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a true honour to stand in the House of Commons to speak on behalf of the best community in Canada, Peterborough—Kawartha.

After eight years of a Prime Minister who has recklessly spent taxpayer money, we have a cost of living crisis. If the economy does not work, then nothing works. Charities and social programs suffer, and everything we need to take care of our most vulnerable is no longer available.

Why are there tent cities across this country? Why are full-time employed nurses living in their cars? Why are seniors forced back to work? Why do we have the highest rate of food bank usage in history? Why are Canadians getting poorer? Why do we have the lowest GDP per capita growth rate since the Great Depression? It is because we have a Prime Minister who does not care about monetary policy. Those are his words, not mine.

This is basic Budgeting 101. Most kids can tell us that if we spend more money than we make, we are going to have a major problem. That is exactly what the Prime Minister has done. He did not understand what would happen if he borrowed gobs of money. He was warned many times, but, as we have seen over and over again, the Prime Minister refuses to listen to the people. He doubles down on policy that creates chaos and suffering. The Prime Minister promised everyone that interest rates would stay low for a long time.

Who remembers the exchange on CTV in 2020 with the Prime Minister? CTV's Glen McGregor said, "Future governments are going to have to carry that debt. The servicing costs on that are going to be very high." The Prime Minister replied, "Sorry?" Glen McGregor responded, "The servicing cost on that debt that you are going to have to carry, that you're adding to right now. Right?" The Prime Minister said, "Interest rates are at historic lows, Glen." Three years later, we are in a very serious situation.

The current housing minister is also on record telling Canadians that interest rates will stay low for a long time and not to worry. Surprise, just as Conservatives predicted, they did not; now we have chaos and suffering.

In order to understand how we got here, we need to understand why. What is the motivation of the Liberal-NDP government? It believes that government knows best and that it will take care of the people, that the people are not capable. Let us take the Liberals' favourite talking point, for example: child care. This is a classic example of a program that has created more losers than winners. The Liberals drove up inflation by overspending and borrowing gobs of money, which drove up the cost of living. What happened? That promised money to make child care more affordable became less

valuable, because this is the cycle of overspending. Child care centres now need more and more money, because money is worth less. It is a vicious cycle, and we will never get out of debt. We will go further and further into debt.

Do members know that, right now, we are spending more on servicing our debt than we are on health care transfers in this country? It is wild that a government in charge of fiscal responsibility has not seen what it has been doing. It does not understand that when one spends more than one makes, one accrues debt. The government does not have money. It has Canadian taxpayers' money, and it can only make money by taxing people. That is what we have seen in this country. People's paycheques have decreased over and over again.

Because I am the critic for families, children and social development, I want to read an open letter by ADCO, which is the Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario. It really explains the ideology behind the government and why it is so important to understand this. The letter says, "The framers of the program," referring to the \$10-a-day child care, "seem to have a strong preference for building a government-run child care system, even if it means parents with young children have to work more hours so that they can pay higher taxes to cover the costs. The assumption seems to be that all children are better off in government-managed institutionalized care and that all parents can and should be employed full-time."

● (1720)

This out-of-control spending has caused chaos in every sector of our country. As I have said, when the economy does not work, nothing works. However, we have a finance minister and Prime Minister who continually gaslight Canadians and tell them that they have never had it so good. Canadians are not stupid, but they are miserable.

I want to read some messages that have come through to me:

Hi, Michelle...I'm a single mom of a 19 YO in college and a 15 YO in high school with no child support. I'm paying almost \$1600 rent plus approx \$1000 for utilities, car payment and insurances for a 3 bedroom townhouse in the "ghetto of Burlington". As tenants move out, they are gutting the units, adding central air, stainless appliances and raising rents to over \$2500. I work in healthcare and live basically cheque to cheque. I only buy groceries that are on sale or in the reduced bin. Thankfully I was gifted a large freezer and buy fresh items on sale and am able to freeze. I make a decent wage. I do not know how others do it making less than I do. Something needs to be done.

There is also this one:

Government Orders

We bought our house six years ago and we have a variable mortgage, so we are already feeling the effects of the higher interest rates. Over the last year and a half, our mortgage has gone from \$3400 a month to \$5000. My husband and I both work full-time and we have two young kids. We have had to rent our basement in order to afford our mortgage increase. If even one single month goes by that we don't get the rent income, we will not make our mortgage. If our mortgage continues to rise, even with the rent income, we won't make our mortgage. It is extremely scary. Every time the interest rate rises, I wait for the letter in the mail to tell me how much higher my mortgage is going to be. It's terrifying and quite literally taking away from the quality of life that I can offer to my children.

That is the message I cannot say loud enough in this House: Our children are feeling the consequences of this.

I recently gave a talk about basic politics to grade 5 students. They are 10 years old. We did a mock House of Commons. It was very fun to get these kids engaged in politics. I said, "Okay, we get to decide what issue you guys want to debate. We will take a vote and do the majority."

Six kids raised their hand. Do members know what the number one issue was for every one of them? It was that everything is too pricey. They said their parents cannot afford gas, cannot afford food and cannot afford the mortgage.

This is the burden we put on our children when we do not put fiscal responsibility first and when we do not care about monetary policy. That is exactly what the Liberal Prime Minister has done, and it is hurting our most vulnerable. We can read any headline. Charities cannot make it happen anymore. Today is International Volunteer Day, but people cannot find volunteers because they cannot afford the gas to drive to volunteer. That is the reality of what we are living in this country.

We have put forth lots of solutions. I will be brief in what the solutions are, but the real solution has to come down to the fact that the government cannot tax the farmer who makes the food. Farmer Brown from Ontario phoned me this week. He said that he wanted me to tell the Prime Minister that the carbon tax will make everything cost more, that everything must go up in price. Whatever they spend to make the product, they have to get back when they sell it. Whatever amount the carbon tax is increased by, the price will have to go up that amount. They have to get that money back, and the only way to do that is to raise prices.

Farmer Brown gets it. Why does the Prime Minister not get it? We are long overdue for common sense, and Conservatives will bring it.

* * *

● (1725)

PRIVILEGE

AWARDING OF CONTRACT TO BOEING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to respond to a question of privilege raised by my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois respecting the procurement decision relating to the replacement of the Aurora aircraft.

First, I want to be clear that the government has not misled the House with respect to this matter. I will run through the chronology of events as articulated by the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot

to substantiate my assertion that the statements made in the House on this matter were accurate and truthful.

The decision of the government to award the contract for the replacement of the Aurora aircraft to Boeing was taken in the evening of November 28, well after the time allotted for Oral Questions. The member referred to statements made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence on November 24 and the response to the question on this matter by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement on November 28. Both of these responses were accurate at the time they were given because the government had not yet made its decision on this matter. As I stated earlier, the government's decision to award the contract to Boeing occurred well after question period on November 28.

The facts speak for themselves. Questions were asked about the matter before the government's decision had been made, and the answers reflect that. There are no grounds to find a prima facie question of privilege relating to this matter.

* * *

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND GROCERIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-56, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Competition Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30, pursuant to order made Thursday, November 23, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on Motion No. 1.

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[*Translation*]

The question is on Motion No. 2.

*Government Orders**[English]*

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 3.

[English]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division stands deferred.

Pursuant to order made Thursday, November 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at report stage of the bill.

Call in the members.

● (1820)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negatived on the following division:)

*(Division No. 471)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Cooper	Dalton
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeschen	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay

Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Jeneroux	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zimmer— 139	

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau

Government Orders

Dabrusin
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fisher
Fortier
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Green
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrisey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dubourg
Duguid
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gainey
Gazan
Gould
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McKay
McLeod
Mendés
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
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PAIRED

Members

Champagne
Damoff
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)

Chong
Deltell
Duncan (Etobicoke North)

Dzerowicz
Guilbeault
Michaud
Qualtrough

Gaudreau
McGuinty
Normandin
Savard-Tremblay — 14

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated.

The next question is on Motion No. 2.

The hon. government whip.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting against the motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives agree to apply the vote, with the Conservatives voting yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and will be voting in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party has agreed to apply the vote, and we will be voting no.

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 472*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif
Albas
Arnold
Barrett
Beaulieu
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Cooper
Davidson
Desbiens
Doherty
Dreeshen
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferrerri
Fortin
Garon
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Jeneroux
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barsalou-Duval
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Dalton
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dowdall
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lehoux
Leslie

Government Orders

Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Patzer
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Wagantall
Wagh
Williams
Zimmer— 137

Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Redekopp
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 171

Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Battiste
Bendayan
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Cannings
Casey
Chahal
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fisher
Fortier
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gerretsen
Green
Hanley

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Carr
Chagger
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Davies
Dhaliwal
Diab
Dubourg
Duguid
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fry
Gaaney
Gazan
Gould
Hajdu
Hardie

PAIRED

Members

Champagne
Damoff
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz
Guilbeault
Michaud
Qualtrough
Chong
Deltell
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Gaudreau
McGuinty
Normandin
Savard-Tremblay— 14

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 defeated.

The next question is on Motion No. 3.

The hon. government whip.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting in favour of the motion.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives agree to apply the vote, with the Conservatives voting yes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote. We will be voting yes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote, and we will be voting yes.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the results of the previous vote, voting in favour.

(The House divided on Motion No. 3, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 473)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeschen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca

Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hajdu	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khanna
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Majumdar
Maloney	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McDonald (Avalon)	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Powlowski
Redekopp	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Rota
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Scheer

Government Orders

Government Orders

Schieffe	Schmale
Seeback	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Sorbara
Soroka	Sousa
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Thompson	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Uppal	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williams	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi— 309	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Champagne	Chong
Damoff	Deltell
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Gaudreau
Guilbeault	McGuinty
Michaud	Normandin
Qualtrough	Savard-Tremblay— 14

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 3 carried.

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-56, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Competition Act, as amended be concurred in at report stage with a further amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives agrees to apply the vote, with Conservatives voting yes.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote. We will be voting yes.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote, and we will be voting yes.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the results of the previous vote, voting in favour.

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

(*Division No. 474*)

YEAS

Members

Aboutaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gazan	Généreux
Genius	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge

Gould
 Gray
 Hajdu
 Hanley
 Hepfner
 Housefather
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Ien
 Jeneroux
 Joly
 Jowhari
 Kayabaga
 Kelly
 Khera
 Kmiec
 Kram
 Kurek
 Kusmierczyk
 Lake
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lapointe
 Lattanzio
 Lawrence
 Lehoux
 Leslie
 Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Lightbound
 Lobb
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacGregor
 Maguire
 Maloney
 Martinez Ferrada
 Mathysen
 Mazier
 McDonald (Avalon)
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod
 Melillo
 Mendicino
 Miller
 Morantz
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Naqvi
 Ng
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Paul-Hus
 Perkins
 Petitpas Taylor
 Poilievre
 Redekopp
 Richards
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Rood
 Ruff
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Scarpaleggia
 Schiefke
 Seeback
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Shipley
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sinclair-Desgagné
 Small
 Soroka

Gourde
 Green
 Hallan
 Hardie
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Idlout
 Jaczek
 Johns
 Jones
 Julian
 Kelloway
 Khanna
 Kitchen
 Koutrakis
 Kramp-Neuman
 Kusie
 Kwan
 Lalonde
 Lametti
 Lantsman
 Larouche
 Lauzon
 Leboutillier
 Lemire
 Lewis (Essex)
 Liepert
 Lloyd
 Long
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Majumdar
 Martel
 Masse
 May (Cambridge)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McKay
 McLean
 McPherson
 Mendès
 Miao
 Moore
 Morrison
 Motz
 Muys
 Nater
 Noormohamed
 Oliphant
 Patzer
 Pauzé
 Perron
 Plamondon
 Powlowski
 Rempel Garner
 Roberts
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Rota
 Sahota
 Saks
 Sarai
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simard
 Singh
 Sorbara
 Sousa

Steinley
 Stewart
 Strahl
 Suds
 Taylor Roy
 Therrien
 Thompson
 Tolmie
 Trudel
 Uppal
 Van Bynen
 Van Popta
 Vandenbeld
 Vidal
 Viersen
 Villemure
 Vis
 Wagantall
 Waugh
 Weiler
 Williams
 Yip
 Zarrillo
 Zuberi— 309

Royal Assent

Ste-Marie
 St-Onge
 Stubbs
 Tassi
 Thériault
 Thomas
 Tochor
 Trudeau
 Turnbull
 Valdez
 van Koeverden
 Vandal
 Vecchio
 Vien
 Vignola
 Virani
 Vuong
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Wilkinson
 Williamson
 Zahid
 Zimmer

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Champagne
 Damoff
 Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Dzerowicz
 Guilbeault
 Michaud
 Qualtrough
 Chong
 Deltell
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Gaudreau
 McGuinty
 Normandin
 Savard-Tremblay— 14

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROYAL ASSENT

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
 Ottawa

December 5, 2023

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 5th day of December, 2023, at 5:11 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ken MacKillop
 Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-48, an act to amend the Criminal Code (bail reform).

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

The House resumed from June 14 consideration of the motion that Bill C-219, An Act to enact the Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to a private member's bill, Bill C-219, the Canadian environmental bill of rights, brought forward by the member of Parliament for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Before I speak to the bill, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize former MP Linda Duncan for her important work on this bill in previous Parliaments.

I would also like to acknowledge that, much like the bill's former sponsor, the bill's current sponsor, the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, has dedicated much of his career to being an educator and proponent of conservation and environmental protection. I thank him for his important work in these areas.

Returning to Bill C-219, the bill proposes to recognize the right of every person residing in Canada to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment and to amend the Canadian Bill of Rights to include this right as part of the right to life, liberty and security of the person. The bill also sets out a number of procedural rights. These include the rights to access information and participate in environmental decision-making, request reviews of federal environmental laws and policies, and access courts and tribunals for matters regarding the protection of the environment.

While the purpose of Bill C-219 and its proposals are intuitively appealing at first glance, upon deeper reflection and examination, they raise a number of significant legal, practical and policy concerns.

The government recognizes that environmental stewardship is essential for the well-being and prosperity of Canadians, and it is devoted to working with the sponsor and all members of Parliament to secure a healthy environment.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has been mandated by the Prime Minister to follow the clear direction given by Canadians, to take bold, concrete action to build a healthier and more resilient future. More specifically, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was tasked with recognizing the right to a healthy environment in federal law and introducing legislation to require the development of an environmental justice strategy.

We have taken action to meet these commitments. On June 13, a right to a healthy environment was recognized under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, known as the CEPA. With the passage of Bill S-5, work is under way to begin developing an implementation framework, which must be completed within two years of royal assent. It would set out how the right must be considered in the administration of the CEPA and, thus, bring the lens of a right to a healthy environment to the programs that the CEPA enables.

The government has also committed to making an environmental justice strategy a reality by supporting a private member's bill, Bill C-226, an act respecting the development of a national strategy to assess, prevent and address environmental racism and to advance environmental justice. Instead of introducing its own bill, and in line with the government's support of Bill C-230, the government reaffirmed support for Bill C-226.

If Bill C-226 passes, the national strategy would provide an opportunity to examine the link between race, socio-economic status and exposure to environmental risk, as well as to discuss how best to address environmental risks faced by historically marginalized communities.

It would help structure discussions on addressing these inequalities and discrimination, which are the root causes of many vulnerabilities. It would also complement other efforts that contribute to advancing environmental justice in Canada, even where the cause of environmental injustice or environmental racism may not have been directly identified or acknowledged. Supporting and advancing these initiatives is where our focus should be now, especially given the flaws in Bill C-219.

I will now turn to outlining a few specific issues with Bill C-219. Although both bills recognize a right to a healthy environment, the approach in Bill C-219 is at odds with the approach that was taken with Bill S-5, which is now in the amended CEPA.

• (1830)

I will first talk about the path we are currently on following the passage of Bill S-5 and then address how Bill C-219 clearly departs from it. As we know, Bill S-5 recognized that every individual in Canada has a right to a healthy environment under CEPA, the cornerstone of federal environmental protection laws. The right to a healthy environment is a new concept in federal law. Given this, Bill S-5 included clear and robust provisions on the process to describe how this right would apply under CEPA and how it would be reported upon annually.

Bill S-5 proposed that the meaning of the right under CEPA be developed in consultation with Canadians and elaborated upon through a concrete implementation framework to ensure that the right is meaningful and tailored to the regime at hand. That framework, which is now under development, will set out how the right will be considered in decision-making. It will also describe how related principles, such as environmental justice, nonregression and intergenerational equity, will be considered. I believe these additional details are very important.

Bill S-5 provided a concrete path for clarity and greater certainty over time on what adding a right to a healthy environment to CEPA will mean. It also included related amendments that would support the protection of that right, built from established procedural rights and specific provisions for public participation, including public comment and notice periods and the right to request investigations into alleged offences.

While we are already on this well-considered path, which has been carefully studied here and the other place, Bill C-219 proposes a very different path. The approach in Bill C-219 is unclear. It would likely lead to uncertainty in its application and we would have to resort to the courts to resolve the issues. The bill recognizes the right to a healthy environment, which is still a novel and undefined concept, but it does not set out its meaning or provide a process, such as the implementation framework in Bill S-5, to work out the definition and how it applies. That very likely means it is the courts that will determine what it means in the course of litigation.

The right to a healthy environment in Bill C-219 is broad and applies to all federal laws, and it is difficult to predict how it would be interpreted by the courts. We must avoid environmental rights being so unclear that timeliness and certainty in federal decision-making are compromised and the right becomes a burden falling on litigants to operationalize.

The approach already adopted via Bill S-5 is different, and I will remind the House that it is also better. Our approach is centred on public consultations and proposing a concrete way to elaborate on the meaning and the content of the right through an implementation framework. It applies only to CEPA, the pillar of federal environmental protection laws. This is what an issue of this novelty and complexity demands.

If Bill C-219 goes ahead, we would end up with two different versions of the right to a healthy environment in federal statutes, one set out in CEPA through Bill S-5 and another set out in Bill C-219. This would result in two different framings of the right and two ways to implement it. The misalignment between the two approaches could hamper progress on this important and complex issue and slow down decision-making across government. If the main objective is to truly secure a healthy environment for Canadians, moving forward with the approach that is now set out in the amended CEPA is the only prudent approach. We cannot just suddenly endorse and bring in the new and uncertain elements of Bill C-219.

Bill C-219 would also make changes to the Federal Courts Act and the Canadian Bill of Rights. The Canadian Bill of Rights is not an appropriate statute for a new environmental right. As I said earlier, our government is committed to taking bold, concrete action to

Private Members' Business

build a healthier and more resilient future with measures that are clear and effective. The proposed Canadian Bill of Rights amendment could provide neither clear nor effective guidance on this front.

The Canadian Bill of Rights only codifies pre-existing rights as they were understood in 1960. For more than 60 years, that has been its sole purpose. Its interpretation always refers back to those historical origins. With the proposed amendment, Parliament would recognize and declare, through section 1 of the Canadian Bill of Rights, that there “have existed” historical rights that have already included a right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment.

• (1835)

It is uncertain how courts would attempt to interpret this new but backward-looking right, what pre-existing content they would find in it and where they would look for it. Not only would the amendment be wholly unclear, but it would introduce significant uncertainty into the interpretation of the Canadian Bill of Rights itself.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member's time is up. I gave him the one-minute signal a little while ago and was trying to get his attention.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we address Bill C-219. This legislation, regarding environmental rights and protections, is an important topic for discussion. It reflects a commitment to the environment that Conservatives share and strongly advocate for. Our party has consistently supported effective environmental measures, recognizing the crucial role of a healthy environment in the well-being of Canadians and for the future.

However, while we stand in agreement with the underlying goal of protecting our environment, we have reservations about certain aspects of Bill C-219. Our philosophy toward environmental legislation is to find a balance between safeguarding our environment and implementing practical policies. It is essential that our efforts to protect the environment are matched with a realistic understanding of economics and policy. Our concerns with this bill lie particularly in its approach to environmental governance and the legal implications it may entail. It is crucial that any environmental policy not only achieves its intended goals, but also aligns with our principles of democratic decision-making.

Private Members' Business

In addressing Bill C-219, it is crucial to discuss the implications this bill has on the judicial system and its role in environmental governance. The bill proposes a significant shift in decision-making power from elected representatives to the judiciary. This approach, while intended to strengthen environmental protection, raises substantial concerns regarding the balance of powers and the appropriateness of the judiciary in policy-making roles. The foundation of our democracy is built upon the separation of powers among the legislative, executive and judicial branches. This structure ensures that no single branch overextends its authority, maintaining a balance that is vital for a functioning democracy.

Bill C-219's proposal to transfer environmental decision-making to the judiciary disrupts this balance. It places judges, who are not elected and therefore not directly accountable to the public, in the position of making key policy decisions. This shift risks undermining the role of the legislative branch, where such decisions are traditionally debated and made.

Moreover, the judiciary's primary function is to interpret and apply the law, not to engage in policy-making. Judges are legal experts, but they may not have the specialized environmental knowledge. Decisions on complex environmental issues require a nuanced understanding of scientific, economic and social factors, which are typically outside the judiciary's expertise. Relying on the courts to make these decisions could lead to outcomes that are legally sound but may not be the most effective or practical from an environmental or policy standpoint.

Furthermore, involving the judiciary in policy-making can lead to increased legal disputes and litigations, potentially clogging our court systems and delaying environmental action. Environmental policy decisions are often complex, involving various stakeholders with differing interests. Addressing these through the legislative process allows for more comprehensive consideration and debate.

Another aspect to consider is the precedent this sets for other policy areas. Extending the judiciary's role into policy-making in the environmental sector could open the door for similar shifts in other areas, further blurring the lines between the branches of government.

While the goal of enhancing environmental protection is one we share, the approach taken by Bill C-219 raises significant concerns. It is imperative that we maintain the integrity of our democratic system and ensure that environmental policy-making remains in the hands of those elected to represent public interests. Effective environmental legislation should balance the need for protection with practicality and respect for our democratic institutions.

• (1840)

In considering Bill C-219, it is also important to reflect on Bill S-5, the strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act. Bill S-5 shares several objectives with Bill C-219, particularly on environmental protection and sustainable development. Both bills seek to modernize our approach to environmental governance, but they do so in a way that may infringe on different jurisdictions and that leaves too much of the decision-making power to the courts. Furthermore, this overlap between the two bills raises questions about the necessity and redundancy of Bill C-219.

Bill S-5, which has already received royal assent, makes amendments to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999. Although it addresses many of the same environmental concerns outlined in Bill C-219, it also contains the same deficiencies, such as its overreach in the way of jurisdiction and leaving much to be decided in the courts.

In terms of redundancy, it is not just a matter of legislative efficiency; it also pertains to the clarity and effectiveness of our environmental laws. Having overlapping legislation could lead to confusion, complicating the implementation and enforcement of environmental protections.

As we aim to strengthen our environmental framework, it is essential that we do so in a manner that is clear, coherent and efficient, avoiding duplication of efforts and ensuring that our laws are as effective as possible in protecting our natural heritage. The Conservative Party firmly believes in adopting common-sense policies that effectively address environmental concerns while fostering economic growth.

A key component of our environmental strategy involves supporting innovative industries in Canada, particularly those developing clean technologies. By investing in these sectors, we aim to lead the way in sustainable development, demonstrating that economic prosperity and environmental stewardship can go hand in hand.

Our approach is grounded in the principle that innovation, rather than heavy-handed regulation, is the key to achieving long-term environmental goals. We advocate for policies that incentivize research and development in the clean energy, sustainable agriculture and green technology sectors. This not only helps in reducing environmental impacts but also positions Canada as a global leader in the emerging green economy. It is about creating jobs and opportunities in fields that will define the future of both our economy and our environment.

In contrast, the Liberal government's approach to environmental policy has often been marked by inefficiency and red tape. A prime example is the carbon tax; not only is this policy ineffective in reducing carbon emissions, but it also imposes an undue economic burden on Canadian families and businesses. This tax affects every aspect of Canadians' lives, from heating their homes to fuelling their vehicles, without offering a viable solution to environmental challenges. It is a policy that penalizes rather than incentivizing, hindering economic growth without delivering the promised environmental benefits.

Furthermore, the Liberals' environmental policies often fail to strike a balance between environmental protection and economic realities. This one-size-fits-all approach overlooks the diverse needs and circumstances of different regions and sectors, leading to policies that can be more harmful than helpful.

The Conservative Party's vision for Canada's environmental policy is one that values practical, innovative solutions. We support fostering industries that contribute to a cleaner, more sustainable future, emphasizing the role of technological advancement and market-driven solutions. Our approach stands in contrast to the Liberals' reliance on taxation and regulation, highlighting our commitment to policies that are both environmentally responsible and economically sensible.

In summary, the Conservative Party champions a balanced approach to environmental policy, prioritizing innovation and economic viability. We stand for practical, effective solutions over burdensome regulations, striving to protect our environment while ensuring prosperity for Canadians.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-219, which was introduced by the NDP member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, British Columbia. We want to examine the bill in committee.

At first glance, this bill appears to be well thought out and well drafted, in stark contrast to the far too many bills, including some from the NDP, that all too often amount to mere statements of principle and contain no provisions that are likely to truly benefit the public. We believe that this bill about the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment will have just such an effect. We cannot say it often enough: It is high time we took meaningful action on environmental issues. We are lagging behind in many respects. Today's COP28 report is a grim reminder of this, with its assessment of the failure of the Paris Agreement.

Since 2006, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms has established that “[e]very person has a right to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved, to the extent and according to the standards provided by law”. The Bloc Québécois is therefore in favour of recognizing the right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment as a universal human right. It is better late than never. It was not until July 2022 that the United Nations General Assembly adopted an historic resolution declaring access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment to be a universal human right.

Obviously, Bill C-219 will not make the right to a healthy environment a fundamental right like the rights guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Ultimately, its scope might be less powerful than that of Quebec's charter of human rights. That said, the bill will amend the Canadian Bill of Rights to provide that the right of the individual to life, liberty and security of the person includes the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, which could make this right quasi-constitutional in scope.

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In any event, this bill creates a true right under Canadian environmental laws. It is a right that citizens could avail themselves of in order to require the government to investigate potential violations of environmental laws, to bring an environmental protection action against a person who has allegedly violated federal environmental laws, to file a petition for the review of any federal environmental law, and to file an application for judicial review, even if the applicant is a person not directly affected by the matter in respect of which relief is sought, if the matter relates to the protection of the environment.

We also believe that this bill, as drafted, will apply to federal environmental laws without prejudice to Quebec laws or Quebec's environmental sovereignty. With regard to environmental protection, respecting our sovereignty is the one condition that must be fulfilled in order for the Bloc Québécois to support a bill.

On April 13, 2022, Quebec, which was once again ahead of its time, saw parliamentarians from all the parties represented in the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopt a motion affirming the primacy of Quebec's jurisdiction in environmental matters. Quebec's elected representatives unanimously opposed “any intervention by the federal government in matters of the environment on Quebec territory”.

The Bloc Québécois fully endorses that position and strongly advocates for the interests and values of Quebec in the federal political arena. In fact, the Bloc Québécois believes that the Quebec nation has sole jurisdiction over public decisions concerning the environment and Quebec's territory. We must not bury our heads in the sand. Quebecers are not fools. Canada is far from being the best country in the world when it comes to the environment. We know that for certain.

That said, in the existing legal framework, the federal government has certain environmental protection responsibilities, including controlling toxic substances. The Bloc Québécois intends to do everything in its power to ensure that the federal government carries out its duties properly.

• (1850)

Strengthening the right to a clean and balanced environment, by establishing measures and recourse that apply to federal environmental laws, fits into the federal government's responsibilities within the bounds of its jurisdiction with respect to environmental protection.

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Although we want to carefully review Bill C-219 in parliamentary committee to ensure that there is no way it will allow Quebec's environmental laws to be violated, we can already state that the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay was clearly guided by a concern for respecting the jurisdictions of Quebec, the provinces and the territories on environmental protection, and we appreciate that so, so much. We believe the people of Quebec need to be able to control their own environment, protect it and protest against or even challenge the federal government when necessary, if it does not meet its environmental obligations.

When we discuss and pass laws here, we must always keep in mind that they must benefit the generations that come after us. A healthy environment is a critical issue for future generations and, as elected members in the House, we must guarantee the future well-being of this bountiful and generous planet. As we mentioned the other day, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have to be able to rely on our support and leadership when it comes to environmental protection.

Some elected officials in the House still question the climate crisis, and yet it certainly is a crisis. Sure, there is the fisheries crisis, the housing crisis or the financial crisis, but on top of all of those crises sits the absolute worst crisis of all: the climate crisis. One has to wonder what planet these people are living on when they do not believe in the urgency of taking action.

I can say that, for my part, I saw first-hand what the climate crisis could do to a community when the floods hit the town of Baie-Saint-Paul, in my riding, on May 1. People there were in distress, feeling anguish and uncertainty because they did not know whether their homes would be salvaged. Not to mention the fact that two people died. An entire village was hit by climate change, by a deadly current of water that swept away hundreds of homes. Never before have we witnessed a climate event like that in Charlevoix. An entire community suffered the horrors of the climate crisis and its radical, dramatic changes. I do not want anyone telling the people of Baie-Saint-Paul that the climate crisis is a sham, an invention or a hoax. I challenge anyone to try.

This bill needs to be studied further in committee to make it the best possible bill to the benefit of future populations. However, again, it all needs to be done in accordance with provincial jurisdictions. Quebec has come too far for the federal government to bypass all of the efforts made by Quebecers. The lucidity of the Quebec people is a significant advantage when it comes to talking about solutions for the environment.

We have wasted too much time. We need to have the political courage to deal with the oil lobby. We need more money for the green transition and much less for fossil fuels until we achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions. We do not have the right to abandon our future generations on this issue. We must instead open a path for them to be able to live safe and healthy lives in the world that will belong to them.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am so glad to rise today to speak in support of the MP for South Okana-

gan—West Kootenay's Bill C-219, the Canadian environmental bill of rights.

Before I speak to the bill, I want to acknowledge that I am grateful to the Algonquin Anishinabe people and that we are here on their unceded territory. I am grateful for their environmental stewardship and the leadership of many first nations, Inuit and Métis communities and individuals who continue to advocate for stronger environmental protections for present and future generations. I also want to acknowledge the work that a fellow New Democrat and former MP, Linda Duncan, has done to make the bill a reality.

I am so glad to be speaking to a Canadian environmental bill of rights. While I was thrilled to be able to push for, strengthen and pass a right to a healthy environment, under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA, unfortunately, the government rejected many of our amendments and actually ended up limiting the scope of Bill S-5 so we could not tackle the enforcement. CEPA lacks the force and scope to fully protect Canadians' right to a healthy environment.

However, Bill C-219, the environmental bill of rights, would ensure that the right to a healthy environment is applied across Canadian legislation. It would give Canadians legal tools so that, first, they would have the power to hold the government accountable on effective environmental protection, including ensuring that they have standing before the courts and tribunals. Second, it would give them a voice in decisions impacting their health and the environment. Third, it would affirm the duty of the government to protect the environment for present and future generations. I want to touch on each of these three elements.

First, the ability to hold the government accountable is critical, because while the Liberals are willing to say the right things, more often than not they refuse to do the right thing. People are tired of and disappointed with broken Liberal promises. The bill would provide concrete mechanisms for accountability, which would enhance public confidence in the administration and enforcement of environmental laws, including by allowing individuals to request reviews of laws, to apply for investigations of offences and to bring environmental protection actions.

Second, the environmental bill of rights takes a more comprehensive approach to safeguarding our right to a healthy environment and would make sure that people have a voice in decision-making, which is critical. The bill would ensure that all Canadians have access to adequate information regarding the environment, to justice in an environmental context and to effective mechanisms for participating in environmental decision-making.

Third, the bill would address the government's responsibility to protect the environment for present and future generations of Canadians. The right to a healthy environment for future generations was something that the Liberals and the Conservatives teamed up to vote against. Despite the advocacy of environmental organizations, first nations leaders and many Canadians, the government refuses to acknowledge its duty to future generations. Ensuring a healthy environment for present and future generations requires hard work. Ensuring a healthy environment means taking proactive measures to tackle the effects of our warming planet and to reduce our emissions.

I want to take a moment to talk about a related New Democrat proposal, which is to establish a youth climate corps. Like President Biden's American Climate Corps, a youth climate corps in Canada would engage young people, create jobs, support conservation and address climate change. Bill C-219 states that "Canadians have an individual and collective responsibility to protect the environment for the benefit of present and future generations". Young people, whose futures are most impacted by the climate crisis, feel this intensely. They have marched in the streets and have staged climate strikes, and they want to be part of the solution. A youth climate corps would be a way to harness the passion and the power that young people have to protect and uphold Canadians' right to a healthy environment.

The New Democrats' vision of this would create jobs in three sectors. First, there would be jobs in emergency response during extreme weather events like wildfires, heat domes and flooding. Second, it would create jobs in strengthening community resilience, with things like making forests more resilient to fires, enhancing natural ecosystems, and wetland protection. Third, it would also create jobs in greenhouse gas reduction, including things like apprenticeships in renewable energy, installing solar and wind power and heat pumps, doing building retrofits and building public transit systems.

● (1900)

This past summer was devastating. It was the worst wildfire season on record. We are seeing not only enormous forest fires every summer now but also floods, hurricanes and heat domes, which have killed hundreds in British Columbia. If we want a healthy environment for all, we need to take our responsibility to future generations seriously. We need to take strong actions. We need to meet this moment with actions that match the scale and the urgency of the crisis we face.

Therefore, I urge the Prime Minister to implement a youth climate corps and I urge my colleagues in the House to pass the environmental bill of rights. The House of Commons legislative team has confirmed that it is constitutional since it would simply build in tools for accountability to pre-existing federal legislation. We need to give Canadians the mechanisms for individuals to request investigations of unlawful activity that harms the environment and to ask the courts to enforce federal environmental laws.

The Liberal members who have spoken to this claim they cannot support it because the Canadian Bill of Rights is not the appropriate place for the right to a healthy environment and that their approach is better because it only applies to the Canadian Environmental Pro-

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tection Act. However, legal experts, environmentalists and citizens from coast to coast to coast are calling on the government to apply the right to a healthy environment more broadly and, critically, to build in accountability. We cannot allow government members to keep throwing up their hands when it is time to roll up our sleeves.

Establishing a youth climate corps goes hand in hand with an environmental bill of rights. To guarantee a healthy and safe environment for all, we have to respond to the changing climate and extreme weather events, lower greenhouse gas emissions, mobilize climate action, strengthen community and environmental resilience, invest significantly in renewable energy and have strong regulations that protect the right to a healthy environment. This must be done in partnership with indigenous peoples, frontline and vulnerable communities, labour unions, worker co-operatives, civil society groups, academia and business, and it must include a whole-of-government approach.

Earlier this year, we won a huge victory in establishing the right to a healthy environment in CEPA, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Bill C-219 would extend this right beyond CEPA to apply more broadly. Even more important, it would give people in Canada the ability to hold polluters to account when environmental laws are violated.

We know that the corporate-controlled Conservatives will not vote for it. Their national executive is mostly lobbyists for industries such as oil and gas. What we have seen from the Liberals is equally disappointing. Despite saying that they believe in climate change and the right to a healthy environment, when it comes down to it, they put the needs of rich CEOs over people and the planet. They water down, greenwash and delay real action. They invited oil and gas executives to help write their climate policy, and they do not have the courage to stand up to big oil. Only New Democrats are willing to take on wealthy CEOs, who are gouging Canadians while raking in record profits and destroying our planet.

The Prime Minister himself voted for this bill when the NDP put it forward in 2010. Now that he is in power, what is he going to do? I urge my colleagues to vote in favour of this bill, give Canadians access to the legal tools to protect the environment, give young people hope for their future and give future generations a chance at a livable planet.

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● (1905)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, a Canadian environmental bill of rights sounds like a great idea. Who could possibly think a healthy environment, especially with clean air and water, is a bad idea? Certainly not me.

That said, Bill C-219, an act to enact the Canadian environmental bill of rights and to make related amendments to other acts, falls far short of what we as a country need. It is my hope that, working together, we can make amendments to this legislation to make it something Canadians can be proud of.

None of us in this House lives in a vacuum. When we consider legislation, we know what we are doing is not an academic exercise in political science. What we say here and what we do here have implications that go beyond this room. That is why we debate proposed legislation and policies. We need to try, within the best of our abilities, to get things right, and there is probably no issue on which there is a greater need to get things right than when we are dealing with the environment.

As a father, I want to do what is right and to set an example for my two sons. I want them to be able to look back on my time in Parliament and feel their father spent his time doing good, that he was working for their future and for the future of Canada.

Of course, there are sometimes things over which we have little or no control. Climate change, for example, is a global issue. The parties in this House, though we may differ on our approach to the issue, are in agreement that Canada is a very small player when it comes to dealing with climate change. That does not mean we should not do our part. Rather, we need to understand that our best will only produce positive results on a global scale if we can convince other nations of the seriousness of the need for immediate action.

Let us take a look at Bill C-219, what it would do and what it would not do and consider how we can improve it.

Bill C-219 would enact the Canadian environmental bill of rights, which provides that all residents have the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment; the right to reasonable, timely and affordable access to information regarding the environment; the right to effective, informed and timely public participation in decision-making regarding the environment; the right to bring a matter regarding the protection of the environment before courts or tribunals; and the right to request a review of any act of Parliament respecting the environment, any instrument made under such an act or any environmental policy of the Government of Canada.

Bill C-219 would also amend the Canadian Bill of Rights to provide that "the right of the individual to life, liberty and security of the person includes the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment". It is important that we safeguard the right of present and future generations of Canadians to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment. We also need to confirm the Government of Canada's duty to protect the environment so as to protect the collective interests of Canadians in the quality of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

It is also important to ensure that all Canadians have access to adequate information regarding the environment, justice in an environmental context and effective mechanisms for participating in environmental decision-making. This is to enhance public confidence in the administration and enforcement of environmental laws, including by allowing individuals to request reviews of laws, to apply for investigations of offences and to bring environmental protection actions.

Protection of our natural environment has long been a core Conservative principle. We want to conserve and strengthen what is good. As we know, it was a Conservative prime minister, the right hon. Brian Mulroney, who took strong action to stop the acid rain problem. When confronted with a climate problem, Conservatives know how to get the job done.

● (1910)

I am encouraged that Bill C-219 calls for increased transparency in information relating to environmental matters. Conservatives have long called for government transparency and access to information.

However, I am concerned that, under this bill, decision-making power on environmental matters would be transferred from the legislature to the courts. This seems unwise, as I am not convinced that the judiciary has the necessary expertise to delve into policy issues.

To my friend opposite, who I am sure is about to suggest that many in this House are also not policy experts, I say that the responsibility still resides with us. I would suggest that we spend more time considering policy than most judges. Policy debates should happen through representative institutions and electoral politics. Courts are not well equipped to examine policy instruments, nor do they have the expertise to evaluate the consequences of various policy options. Not only do they not have the expertise to do so, but they are not elected officials either, and it is not within the purview of the court to make such decisions.

We have a very recent example of the problems that can ensue when the House delegates its responsibility to someone else. The Liberal government, in its wisdom, or more accurately, in its lack of wisdom, has tasked the CRTC with implementing provisions of the Online Streaming Act. As a result, streaming companies are restricting what Canadians can access online, and the government does not know what to do as it tries to force them to pay what amounts to a tax.

Furthermore, the CRTC, which has no expertise in these matters, has announced that it is putting all new radio licence applications and any complaints relating to radio on hold for two years. Meanwhile, it is trying to figure out how it is supposed to regulate what Canadians can and cannot see online. It is abandoning its core functions to take on this task, because this government had no idea of the effects of its legislation or what it is doing. Given that experience, is it any wonder that I have concerns about transferring decision-making functions on environmental matters to the judiciary? We have judges to enforce our laws. This bill, it seems to me, transforms them into a legislative authority. That is going too far.

I think everyone in the House agrees on the need for a healthy and ecologically balanced environment. We also agree on the need for more transparency and public input. Where we disagree is on how to combat climate change. The Liberals believe that they can tax Canadians until they can no longer afford to heat their houses or drive their cars. They think that will solve Canada's emissions problem. In Canada, with our cold weather climate, our options are not as varied as they are in some other countries. It is important that we focus on the development of new technologies and Canadian ingenuity as the key to lessening, then eliminating, our dependence on fossil fuels.

Conservatives believe that, in order to have a strong economy and maintain good health, Canada must have strong, coordinated and achievable environmental policies. The Conservative Party believes that responsible exploration, development, conservation and renewal of our environment are vital to our continued well-being as a nation and as individuals. An environmental bill of rights is a nice idea in theory. This bill, though, needs a lot of work to make it acceptable.

● (1915)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am so delighted to be standing here today speaking to the bill from the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

I want to start by saying how proud I am to be his colleague in the House. He is one of the nicest parliamentarians in this place, if not the nicest. I think if we asked members from any party, they would agree with me on that statement. He is also such an unbelievable champion for the environment. He has been his entire parliamentary career, and even before then.

I was at a bird sanctuary just outside my riding, the Beaverhill Bird Observatory. The member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay is like the Wayne Gretzky of birds. The people there were very excited that I actually know him in person.

He has also been a very big environmental mentor for me. I brought forward a bill earlier on in this Parliament that would stop coal mining in the Rocky Mountains, something that is very important to the vast majority of Albertans. In fact, it was his advice that helped me draft that legislation.

I also have to say I am now succeeding the amazing and incredible Linda Duncan, who was the member of Parliament for Edmonton Strathcona, the seat I now hold. She brought forward this bill

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many times. The first time was in 2009. Before Linda was elected as a member of this House, she was an environmental lawyer.

Since she left the House, she has continued to be an absolutely incredible advocate for the environment. Her dedication and her commitment to environmental conservation, and the absolute tenacity she brings to her work, is nothing short of remarkable. I am deeply proud to be her successor in this place.

This bill does three things. It confirms the duty of the Government of Canada to uphold its public trust duty to protect the environment. It creates a new human right for Canada, which would be the right to a clean and healthy environment. It also gives legal tools to all residents of Canada.

I am going to talk as an Albertan. The reason we need an environmental bill of rights could not be more clear right now. Right now, in the province of Alberta, the provincial regulation of our polluting industries has been completely inadequate. We have a regulator that works directly with polluters to cover up the seepage of toxins into the environment downstream of indigenous communities.

Right now, Imperial Oil's Kearn site seepage and spill is the latest example of how this is happening. The Alberta regulator has approved a massive oil sands development on the McClelland Wetlands. These are wetlands, which are very important environmental sites, and it has approved putting a wall in the middle of the wetlands. That is how it is intending on protecting our water from the tailings ponds. What could go wrong?

In addition to that, we have Danielle Smith from the UCP, a Conservative premier, who is putting coal mining back on the table. Every Albertan thought that this was behind us. We thought we had won this battle. We thought that we had made it very clear to our government that we did not want to rip down our Rocky Mountains so that we could mine coal to ship to China to make a whole bunch of Australians really wealthy, all while undercutting our steel industry. We thought we made that clear. Clearly, we did not because that is back on the table. It is another reason we need to have this environmental bill of rights.

In northern Alberta, where much of this industry is happening, that is where the indigenous communities need to have more tools. They need more tools to protect their communities from toxic pollution. They are counting on the federal government to protect their treaty rights.

We had chiefs from the Mikisew Cree First Nation. Chief Tucaro came to committee and he said, during the hearings on the Kearn site seepage and spill, "One of the clearest lessons from this crisis that grew is that it has reconfirmed the AER is a captured regulator that is simply not a trusted partner in protecting federal interests in our community."

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I am only speaking of the province in which I live. In Alberta, there are so many gaps where people are not being protected and where industry is not being held responsible for the pollution that it is putting into our environment. The legislation that the member has brought forward is long overdue. I am delighted to support this piece of legislation. I strongly urge all members to stand with the NDP to fight for the human right to a clean environment for all people, now and into the future.

• (1920)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is once again a real honour and a pleasure to rise here to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-219, the Canadian environmental bill of rights.

I would like to thank, once again, Linda Duncan, the former MP for Edmonton Strathcona, for drafting the bill and tabling it in, I think, four successive Parliaments, starting in 2009. She is such a real champion for environmental justice in Canada, and an environmental lawyer who knows how to draft bills, despite some of the aspersions we have heard tonight. This is a good bill and a really necessary bill. Her bill, the same bill, basically, passed second reading in 2010. The Liberals and the Bloc Québécois joined the NDP in supporting the bill, so it was passed at second reading. Unfortunately, it died when the election was called in 2011. I am hoping that the Liberals will join the Bloc and the NDP in voting for the bill tomorrow when it goes to a vote.

I would also like to thank everyone else who has supported the bill over the years, especially by helping me understand the legal ramifications of it. I know a lot about ecology, but environmental law is not my specialty. I would like to thank people like Lisa Gue from the David Suzuki Foundation, Stephen Hazell from Nature Canada, Josh Ginsberg and Melanie Snow from Ecojustice, Joseph Castrilli from the Canadian Environmental Law Association, and many others.

Canadians are rightfully proud of their beautiful landscapes and clean environment. They do not want to have it degraded in any way. We have, of course, a number of pieces of federal legislation that protect the environment, including the Canada Environmental Protection Act, CEPA, which deals mainly with toxins. We have heard a lot about it tonight. There is the Fisheries Act, which speaks to aquatic ecosystems, the Pest Control Products Act and others that deal with biodiversity and other aspects of environmental health.

The revised CEPA, through Bill S-5, says that Canadians have the right to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, but that right in CEPA is restricted to the protections within that act. It applies only to CEPA and not to other federal pieces of legislation. Bill C-219 would not add any obligations to the federal government with regard to environmental health. It would merely broaden what is said in CEPA, in terms of the right to a clean and healthy environment, to cover the rest of federal government legislation.

The bill is long overdue. Canada voted in support of a motion at the UN General Assembly last year, which said exactly that, that a right to live in a clean and healthy environment is a human right. The motion passed unanimously. Canadian provinces, Ontario and

Quebec, have very similar legislation. The courts are not clogged, despite the concerns I hear from the Conservatives, and the sky has not fallen, although I hope the sky is perhaps a little clearer in Ontario and Quebec because of the rights that are in their pieces of legislation.

I have had discussions with the minister of environment about the bill, and he had some concerns about its constitutionality when we first talked. Therefore, I asked the House of Commons legal team for an opinion, and they were clear in their opinion that this is basically a human rights bill that would add no obligations on the government regarding the environment, other than living up to the obligations set out in other federal pieces of legislation. Because it is based solely on federal legislation, it would not in any way infringe on provincial jurisdiction. It is clearly constitutional. I would like to thank the Bloc Québécois for standing with me on that. It would carve out CEPA, so there would be no conflict with the powers set out in that act, despite what I have heard from members of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party this evening.

I will close simply by saying that the vast majority of Canadians believe they should have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment. The government has international obligations to make this a reality, and my bill, the Canadian environmental bill of rights, would do just that. Let us get this to committee to make sure it works to ensure a clean environment for all Canadians.

• (1925)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 6, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

• (1930)

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, on November 24, I raised a question relating to corrections. I would like to restate my question tonight. I will simply read what I asked at the time, and then I will read the hon. Minister of Public Safety's response. I said:

Mr. Speaker, also on the subject of corrections, on a recent visit to Joyceville Institution, I was informed that personnel at Correctional Service Canada had been trying to introduce red seal apprenticeship programs so inmates can re-enter the workforce with real job training.

After eight years of a Liberal government and of the Liberals' running Correctional Service, how many federal inmates are enrolled in red seal programs? Which programs are they enrolled in, and how many are enrolled per program? How many have graduated, and from which trades? Finally, is there a plan to assist inmates to finish their respective programs upon release?

To this, the minister responded:

Mr. Speaker, I will be very happy to get those exact details and provide them to the member.

He then went on, adding the following comments:

I can tell him that, as the member of Parliament for Beauséjour, when I visited the medium-security prison Dorchester Penitentiary, I met inmates and CORCAN staff who work on exactly those programs. I share his view that if we can give inmates the skills and ensure that, for example, they complete their high school education or a trade, it will make them much more likely to successfully reintegrate into society when they finish their sentence. That keeps Canadians safe as well.

These are sentiments with which, of course, I agree. I would just observe that the nature of question period is that members get 35 seconds to ask a question and 35 seconds to give an answer. It goes without saying that it is not possible to answer the kind of detailed questions I was asking about Red Seal programs at that time. That is the purpose of these adjournment proceedings questions, where members have four minutes to answer, as well as some lead time to do the research.

Having said that, I am very hopeful that, tonight, we will learn something we cannot seem to find from the Corrections Canada website, which is the answer to those detailed questions:

...how many federal inmates are enrolled in red seal programs? Which programs are they enrolled in, and how many are enrolled per program? How many have graduated, and from which trades? Finally, is there a plan to assist inmates to finish their respective programs upon release?

That information would be extraordinarily useful in dealing with the critical problem of inmates returning to the community untrained, unprepared to find a job and, in consequence, likely to reoffend. This causes damage to the community as a whole and, of course, to those former inmates themselves and their families.

I do not blame the current government for the fact that Corrections Canada has done such a poor job of making these records available. I do, however, hope that we will have clear answers tonight to the practical, factual questions I have asked.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise this evening to participate in a discussion about the benefits that correctional interventions, including the employment and employability program, have for the safety of our institutions and for communities all across our country. I would like to remind the hon. colleague that the Minister of Public Safety has committed to following up directly with him to provide the information he asked for, and the minister will do just that. Hopefully it will happen relatively soon.

At all federal correctional institutions, on-the-job and vocational training, essential skills training and other employability-related training and services are offered to inmates. This includes CORCAN-operated training sites at 36 institutions across the country and seven community-based sites. In addition, training is offered through employment assignments under the supervision of the CSC areas, such as food services, institutional services and maintenance, as well as vocational training being offered at all its correctional institutions.

Through the CORCAN program, on-the-job training is specifically offered to inmates within five main areas: manufacturing, construction, textiles, services and agriculture. Vocational training is offered at all sites as either stand-alone training or integrated within the on-the-job training during employment assignments. These offer offenders the ability to learn and develop technical and essential skill sets that are transferable to the workforce in communities across the country, both urban and rural.

In 2022-23, on-the-job training opportunities were provided to 2,628 offenders within one of CORCAN's five business lines. During the same fiscal year, I am proud to note that a total of 16,445 vocational training certificates were earned by inmates of all backgrounds. CSC also offers over a dozen Red Seal programs for offenders, which include trade jobs such as carpenter, welder, plumber, electrician and automotive service technician. Since September 2020, a total of 147 offenders have participated in apprenticeship programs, 64 of whom have completed their certifications, with many more continuing to work toward it.

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CORCAN utilizes extensive agreements and partnerships in its vocational training and employment services. They include agreements with universities and colleges, as well as private industry and organizations, across the country that provide established or developed curriculums to provide vocational training to offenders. CSC engages with the provincial trade associations to sponsor and facilitate tracking of apprenticeship hours in a variety of trades. Furthermore, CSC forms partnerships with indigenous communities to further increase project availability to provide indigenous offenders with additional on-the-job training opportunities.

The delivery of vocational certificates to offenders demonstrates their acquisition of skill sets that rely on curriculums mostly developed by or in collaboration with educational facilities or private organizations. It is not accurate to state that these are not relevant to employment when in fact many of these curriculums are delivered to individuals external to prison and who happen to live in our ridings all across the country.

I would like to assure all members of the House of the benefits associated with the CORCAN program. Employability programs provide offenders with meaningful correctional interventions and activities while they are incarcerated and upon their release. This contributes to building self-confidence and transferable technical skills, as well as improving their overall employability.

● (1935)

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, some key facts and some numbers were mentioned. I am grateful for those.

There was a specific number for the total number of inmates involved in Red Seal programs and a mention of similar programs. There was no breakdown of who is in which program. I wonder if I could ask for those details. I am aware the parliamentary secretary probably does not have those at his disposal at this minute, but I wonder if I could ask him to undertake to ensure that the minister or his parliamentary secretary will provide them at a reasonably brief interval from the present. I assume that this information must be present given that some partial information was provided tonight.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I say with all sincerity that I am encouraged by the member's interest in this area. It is an area that I have always had an interest in. I have been a very strong advocate of the Red Seal program. I think it is great that it has been incorporated into our correctional facilities. At the end of the day, we want to see individuals have better employment opportunities to be able to get back into our communities in a very positive and productive fashion.

The minister was very clear to the member, indicating that at some point in time he will get back to him in terms of some of the specifics. I think that is a good start. I would encourage the member, if there are some very specific aspects that he is looking for, to raise it with the minister.

I think there is good intent on both sides to get some real, tangible numbers that maybe the member across the way is looking to receive for whatever reason. It seems to me that the member is trying to do what he can on a very important, positive issue.

HEALTH

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, last Wednesday, I informed the Prime Minister that 35 doctors and addiction experts had recently written to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, recommending significant reform, or outright abolishment, of the safe supply drug addiction strategy.

These were not cruel and heartless recommendations; far from it. The letter was a response to those who champion band-aid safe supply strategies. These misguided champions seem totally oblivious to a simple, scientific fact: harm reduction without treatment does not break the cycle of addiction.

In Toronto and across rural and urban Canada, the safe supply strategy is not working. It adds to, not reduces, addict deaths. I asked the Prime Minister to listen to what doctors and experts were saying. These were not some ideologically twisted individuals. They were caring health care professionals who specialize in addictions and substance use.

I further asked the Prime Minister to provide appropriate funding to municipalities hosting injection sites so that they can keep their people safe. Instead of taking my suggestions seriously, the Prime Minister repeated the alleged mantra that the government “will remain grounded in science, not ideology”.

The government is not following the science. Additionally, why blindly follow questionable science that supports a strategy that basically amounts to government-assisted suicide? Where is the ideology in questioning a dubious safe supply strategy? Are addicts' lives changed for the better by a strategy that, in the final analysis, leaves far too many dead?

What do the experts say? In a forthcoming Macdonald-Laurier Institute report by Adam Zivo, Dr. Meldon Kahan, who recently retired as medical director of the Substance Use Service at Toronto's Women's College Hospital, said that most patients who are actively using fentanyl will be far more attracted to the tablets than to opioid agonist therapy, OAT. Unproven fentanyl tablet programs could thus well end up diverting people away from life-saving, evidence-based treatment. Dr. Martyn Judson, an addiction physician who pioneered the use of methadone in Ontario, said offering powerful, short-acting opioids is the last thing which should ever be offered because that encourages the destabilization of the nervous system and physical tolerance, contributing to individuals seeking ever more supplies of opioids.

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In the letter to the minister, which I referenced in my question to the Prime Minister, the authors are all expert clinicians who have extensive experience in addiction medicine. They sent that letter because they are deeply concerned about the continuing rise in opioid-related hospitalizations and deaths, and Health Canada's inadequate response to this crisis. They pointed out that Health Canada's current focus on safe supply ignores opportunities to fund and support the implementation of accessible, quality opioid agonist treatment to help people across Canada break the cycle of addiction.

OAT is considered to be the most effective public health strategy for reducing opioid overdose deaths and opioid-related hospitalizations. Therefore, in addition to asking again if the Liberal government will listen to the experts on reforming or abolishing safe supply, will the Liberal government prioritize the safety of communities that host injection sites and provide them with the resources needed to keep them safe?

I also call for Health Canada to increase funding for projects that increase access to OAT and improve treatment retention rates of OAT programs.

• (1940)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, substance abuse is shaped by complex factors, many of which are beyond an individual's control. These factors include experiences in trauma, physical and mental health, income and access to stable housing, and the ongoing effects of colonization and the residential school system on first nations, Inuit and Métis communities. That is why we need a comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based response that is grounded in the four internationally recognized pillars of substance abuse and use policy: prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement. It is not one or another, or one against another, but all of them.

The toxic drug supply is killing people. People do not know what they are consuming. People fear criminalization, which leads them to use alone and die alone. Stigmatizing language, like that the member used, and talking about closing essential health services will just increase the harms. Creating false narratives is not useful to anyone. Through the investments we have made, we will continue to improve access to evidence-based treatment and life-saving harm-reduction services and supports for people who use drugs.

Since 2017, we have funded close to 400 projects across Canada at the community level through Health Canada's substance use and addictions program to support and build the evidence with respect to innovative approaches to prevention, treatment, harm reduction and recovery. These investments are part of our comprehensive strategy to address problematic substance use, to which we have committed more than \$1 billion since we formed government.

Our approach to saving lives and protecting the health and safety of Canadians is rooted in evidence. This crisis is evolving every day and our response must follow the same pace. We need to look at all innovative solutions to put an end to this tragedy. We cannot be working in silos or through an approach that is not integrated. Offering treatment alone is not enough. Providing a broad array of care options and wraparound supports allows people to access the

right services at the right time to improve their overall health and well-being.

Supervised consumption sites are essential to keeping people who use drugs alive by providing them access to a range of support services in a safe and supervised environment staffed by trained professionals and peers. They have seen over 4.3 million visits and have responded to 50,000 overdoses. Importantly, SCSs are responsible for over 256,000 referrals to health and social services. Above and beyond the lives saved thanks to these sites, countless illnesses and infections have been avoided, prevented or attended to.

All levels of government must work together to ensure access to these life-saving services in a manner that also respects community safety. The Supreme Court of Canada, experts, service providers and people with lived experience agree that supervised consumption sites save lives and often are the first step along the path to a healthier life. We remain committed to a collaborative, comprehensive, compassionate and evidence-based approach to addressing the overdose crisis.

• (1945)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary says that they are following the science and following the experts, but I have cited experts who specialize in addiction and substance-use medicine, and what they are telling the government is that what is happening is not working. They can accuse us of stigmatization or of false narratives, but the reality is that, if government members would leave their ivory tower to walk the streets of the communities that host these sites, experts would tell them that harm reduction without treatment is not working. Let us look at the trend of deaths. It is unfortunately only going up. Why would we continue to do what is not working?

I have cited a number of times an injection site in my riding. If the parliamentary secretary does not believe that, that is fine. There is one in Toronto—Danforth, and I spoke to a constituent Brooke who said that the injection site is not harm reduction, but harm facilitation. The government needs to listen to the experts and either abolish or reform safe supply.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I disagree with the member's approach because, at the end of the day, he does not recognize the reality of the consultation and work put into ensuring that the right decisions are made. It is not a silo. We work with different levels of government, first responders and victims, and I will call them victims. We work with community members.

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It is not one individual who makes the decision. It is not one individual who says he or she thinks it is a bad idea and that person happens to have “Dr.” in front of the name. That is not what dictates it. There is much broader consultation that needs to take place, and the evidence has been very clear in terms of the success of programs such as these.

I would hope even the Conservative Party of Canada recognizes that we are saving lives and that people are put on a healthier path into the future.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I previously asked a question about Bill C-234 and the exemption to the carbon tax that it would provide. My question has changed a bit because, earlier tonight, the Senate passed an amendment to exclude barns and buildings on farms from the carbon tax exemption. I will read the part of Bill C-234 that the Senate is now going to scrub from the act, which is in paragraph 3(3.1)(f), “property that is used for the purpose of providing heating or cooling to a building or similar structure”.

The environment minister went to the Senate and basically exerted his influence on the senators to get them to strip this bill bare; that way, it would provide a limited exemption for farmers. Farmers grow the food and have done way more to protect and steward the environment than the government will ever have a hope of being able to accomplish. That is what the government has decided to do. It was aided by the deputy leader of the progressive Senate group, the hon. Pierre Dalphond, who was the mover of the amendment that has stripped that part of the bill to exempt buildings and barns from the carbon tax. This is absolutely ridiculous.

Let us go back to when the carbon tax was first put in place and do the calculations on it. There are many farmers, ranchers and cattle feeders who use over 100,000 litres of on-farm fuels in a given year. Given the rate of the carbon tax right now on those on-farm fuels, that would be about \$25,000 a year. The Liberals will say that there is a huge exemption for farmers and ask what everyone is complaining about. There is an exemption that applies in some cases, but not in every case, and certainly not for farmers and ranchers who are trying to keep their barns warm in the winter. As we know, winter is already here; it will be -30°C very soon. In the summers, it gets up to +30°C. With the wide variance in temperatures all across Canada, various temperature controls are needed in barns and shops for farmers to do their jobs.

If we think about the Prairies, with the snowstorms and blizzards that they regularly get, especially in calving season in February and March, farmers quite often have to bring their cattle into the barn. That way, they can calve without the threat of the animals being buried in snowbanks or freezing to death, never mind the threat of predators going after them and using the weather conditions to their advantage. A very important part of agriculture is farmers having these barns and buildings, yet the Senate has decided to gut this important key in the bill. It did so under the pressure that was put on it by the Liberal government, which is absolutely shameful.

When we look at the approach the government is taking, it is almost as though it were trying to reduce agriculture's impact and footprint in such a way that it will chase people out of the industry,

much like what is happening in the European Union and other parts of the world. They have literally forced farmers and ranchers to reduce their herd sizes and the amount of crop they are able to grow.

What the government is doing is ridiculous. It is being aided and abetted by certain members of the Senate, and it is absolutely disgusting.

• (1950)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member seems to be of the opinion that it is the government that has some sort of link, and that we are meeting with the senators and so forth, when, in fact, they are independent senators. The only ones who are politically affiliated are the Conservative senators. The Conservative caucus actually meets tomorrow, both the members of Parliament and the Conservative senators of Canada. They are the ones who get together on a weekly basis when the House is in session, in order to develop a strategy.

The Conservative Party is using the farmers to try to highlight its bumper sticker that says, “Axe the tax.” It is a political manipulation of the farmers. That is what we are seeing. It is just like when the Conservatives make reference to other aspects of the price on pollution. I get it. The Conservative Party of Canada has flipped, for the 10th time, it seems, and most recently, its members are saying that they oppose the price on pollution; that is what they are saying today. I suspect that there is a good chance they will stick with that, because I suspect they already have the bumper stickers printed.

The world is leaving the Conservative Party behind. Even though the world recognizes that climate change is, in fact, real, the Conservative Party continues to say nothing about an environmental plan. What is somewhat shameful is that the Conservatives are picking and choosing in order to try to cause division on a sound policy. The member made reference to some exemptions. Yes, for the rural communities there is the top-up in terms of the rebates, and gas and diesel are exempt. However, at the end of the day, we are finding that the Conservatives are trying to whittle away here and there, but their objective is to get rid of a price on pollution. I look at it from the point of view that the price on pollution is something on which the Conservative Party stands completely alone in the House. Whether it is the Bloc members, New Democrats, Liberals or Greens, we all understand the importance of a price on pollution.

What is nice about the price on pollution that we put into place is that there is a significant rebate component. When the Conservative Party goes coast to coast to coast, going into communities like Winnipeg North and saying, “Well, we’re going to axe the tax”, they do not say that they are axing the rebates also. In Winnipeg North, 80% of the residents I represent get more money back; they get a net benefit, but the Conservatives do not talk about that. Instead, they continue on the far right, which does not give a darn about the environment, and they continue to deny climate change. I think it is reckless, and it is bad Conservative policy.

• (1955)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, only this member would think that higher grocery bills are somehow a net benefit. Only this member would think that higher energy bills are a net benefit. I wonder how that goes over with the residents of Winnipeg North.

I was messaging a family friend earlier today, and they were telling me a story about their son, who has actually started out as a young producer; he is raising cattle. He has home heating oil in his house. We have heard so much about the government’s vaunted home heating oil program, but guess what? Yes, we can get the heat pump, but heat pumps do not work in Saskatchewan because of how cold it gets in the winter, and the government knows that. This producer cannot afford to buy heating oil for his house, so he has to use electric heat. It is costing him over \$400 a month just to use electric space heaters to heat his house, and it is not even that cold in Saskatchewan yet. However, the member opposite seems to think that this is just fine because there is a rebate out there that is going

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to exist and make everything all better and rosy, and that this young producer should just be happy for his rebate cheque. Who does the member think should actually pay for that? Is it this young producer?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member across the way, his leader and the Conservative Party of Canada would have a bit more credibility if they would share with Canadians what their policy is with regard to climate change and what, if anything, the Conservative Party of Canada would do. The best we can tell is that the climate deniers are prevailing.

The Conservatives do not care about climate change. They are in the only political entity in the House of Commons that feels it does not have to say anything to Canadians, as if Canadians have no right to know what the real intentions of the Conservative Party are when it comes to dealing with the climate issue.

The price on pollution is not unique to Canada. Maybe the U.S. as whole does not have it, but many American states have it. The Conservative Party needs to get with the times.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:59 p.m.)

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