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Thursday, May 30, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 30, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities entitled “Main Estimates 2024-25”.

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, entitled “Main Estimates 2024-25”.

[*Translation*]

VETERANS

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs entitled “Main Estimates 2024-25: Votes 1 and 5 under Department of Veterans Affairs, Vote 1 under Veterans Review and Appeal Board”.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages,

the 11th report of the Standing Committee on National Defence entitled “Main Estimates 2024-25: Vote 1 under Communications Security Establishment, Votes 1, 5, 10 and 15 under Department of National Defence, Vote 1 under Military Grievances External Review Committee, Vote 1 under Military Police Complaints Commission, Vote 1 under Office of the Intelligence Commissioner”.

THE CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-392, an act to amend the Criminal Code to address the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R. v. Jordan*.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to table this bill today. It closes a loophole in our justice systems, ensuring that the principle of access to justice is followed for violent and serious crimes. It will also help restore public trust in the justice system.

The Bloc Québécois's bill seeks to provide a framework for the use of the *Jordan* decision by amending the Criminal Code so that the decision cannot be invoked for primary designated offences under section 487.04 of the Criminal Code. These offences are serious crimes that include sexual assault, murder, aggravated assault, kidnapping and torture.

In Quebec alone, 148 stays of proceedings on the ground of unreasonable delay have been granted by judges at the request of the defence since 2021. Our bill will serve as a guardrail against the government's slow pace in appointing judges, which lengthens court delays.

There are currently 57 judicial vacancies in Canada. If the government were to appoint judges as requested by all chief justices of the various courts, we would not need to use this bill.

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

Routine Proceedings

● (1005)
[English]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from 7,000 residents of Langdon who have been without a post office for a year and a half. I can understand why Canada Post is losing money when it is not providing a service in this community. People are being directed 30 kilometres away to another community. This is unacceptable. This is why the post office is in deficit. It is not providing the service.

The residents of Langdon deserve a post office, and this is another petition stating that fact.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents.

I rise for the 39th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The NDP-Liberal government is failing to protect the people of Swan River amidst a crime wave that has swept through a rural town of 4,000.

A 2023 report from Manitoba West district RCMP revealed that within 18 months, the region experienced 1,184 service calls and 703 offences committed by just 15 individuals. Four individuals in Swan River were responsible for 53 violent offences and 507 calls for service. This is why the rural community is calling for action and demanding jail, not bail, when it comes to violent repeat offenders.

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

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today on behalf of Hong Kongers in Canada who are concerned about the permanent residence pathways stream A and B. This is particularly relevant given the ruling that happened in Hong Kong in the last day.

The petitioners note the 7,500 who have been granted permanent residency, but there are still 8,000 applications and many more in backlog.

The petitioners call on the government and the minister to acknowledge the humanitarian crisis that has happened, to create a mechanism to ensure that minor study permits to children are safeguarded, to create a mechanism to grant all Hong Kong pathway applicants to maintain their legal status and to get the PR process moving quickly.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to table a petition on behalf of correctional officers, who are calling for the Government of Canada to cease

the prison needle exchange and to stop the proliferation of hard drugs in our federal institutions.

Correctional officers are calling for enhanced safety measures and policies, such as a drone dereliction strategy, to stop illegal drugs from entering our prisons through drones hovering over prison walls.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present this morning.

The first one addresses processing times for applications to sponsor spouses, common-law partners or children to Quebec. These delays are really too long and result in excessively long, forced separations, while also causing a lot of suffering and anxiety for these families.

More than a thousand people have signed this petition calling on the government to honour the immigration minister's May 2023 commitment to ensure faster family reunification. Petitioners are also calling on the government to ensure fair, priority processing of visitor visas in these cases. They are also making other similar requests to ensure that families can be together, because that is absolutely vital.

● (1010)

ASSISTANCE DOGS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will now present my second petition.

Store entrances often have signs saying that no dogs are allowed, but there is no indication that assistance animals are permitted. This can sometimes lead to frustrating interactions between people with disabilities and staff on the premises.

Petitioners are asking that signage at the entrances to services and stores to be changed from “No dogs allowed” to “Assistance dogs welcome” and “no pets allowed”. They are also asking that these changes be paired with a campaign to educate and raise awareness among store owners so that people with disabilities who need an assistance dog can access these stores.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of many Canadians who are concerned about human rights protections in India.

The petitioners say that according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, various actors are supporting and enforcing sectarian policies seeking to establish India as a Hindu state. They say that Christians in India are being targeted by extremists, vandalizing their churches, attacking church workers and threatening and humiliating their congregations. They say that crimes against Dalit groups, including Dalit women and girls, are increasing. They say that Indian Muslims are at risk of genocide, assault and sexual violence.

The petitioners ask that the government ensure that all trade deals with India are premised on mandatory human rights provisions, that extremists are sanctioned and that our government promotes a respectful human rights dialogue between Canada and India.

CARBON TAX

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by over 100 people, who are calling on the elimination of the Liberal carbon tax on home heating.

It was a cold, costly winter in Westman thanks to the Prime Minister's carbon tax on home heating. The divisive Liberal government believes only provinces that vote for Liberals should be exempt from the carbon tax on heating. However, Westman residents, struggling under the weight of high prices and inflation, disagree.

David from Cartwright wrote that the rules providing carbon tax relief to only some parts of Canada are “divisive and undemocratic, and that all Canadians should be exempt from carbon taxes on home heating regardless of which fuel they use.”

These petitioners would agree. That is because we have seen the impacts of high prices and inflation on the ground in Westman. The Samaritan House Food Bank gave out nearly 36,000 hampers last year, an astonishing increase of 12,000, 50% above its normal annual average.

The overwhelming support for this petition is plain and simple. The solution is plain and simple: Axe the tax so Westman residents, all Westman residents, can heat their homes and afford to buy food.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The rules are fairly clear for the presentation of a petition. The member should be capturing the essence of it and should not be overly lengthy. It should not be a political statement. The member made reference to “axe the tax”.

The Speaker: I am not going to entertain a series of points of order on this issue. The hon. parliamentary secretary is partially right. Petitions should be brief and should be very much the presentation of the petition. I will remind all members, please, to not offer opinions as to whether they agree with it or not. However, there is a bit of latitude and flexibility, which the Chair is happy to give.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition organized by Survivors Safety Matters, which is co-founded by Alexa Barkley and Tanya Couch.

What they are petitioning is with respect to section 278 of the Criminal Code, which allows for the disclosure of the private records of the victim, including therapeutic and counselling records and personal journals, during legal proceedings. In fact, this also gives access to notes and records from the 988 suicide hotline. The petitioners find this to be absolutely unacceptable, because it re-victimizes victims and prevents victims from coming forward to report sexual assaults out of fear that all their records will be used against them.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are therefore calling on the Government of Canada to unconditionally protect the privacy and safety of sexual assault victims by eliminating that provision in section 278.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition. The petitioners note that we are facing intersecting crises, the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis, as well as pollution and resource depletion.

The petitioners are calling on the government to publicly declare its support for the international crime of ecocide.

● (1015)

[Translation]

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present a petition from my Saanich—Gulf Islands constituents. They are concerned about threats to our old-growth forest. There is one last unprotected intact old-growth valley on all of southern Vancouver Island. Constituents asked—demanded—that the government take action against clear-cut logging.

I do not want to say something in English or joke around.

[English]

Perhaps it is “tax the axe.” The petitioners are hoping the government will act in concert with the provinces and in the interests of first nations.

[Translation]

We need to work with the provinces and first nations to immediately halt the logging of endangered old-growth ecosystems.

[English]

The petitioners point out this affects climate change, biodiversity and indigenous rights. They urge the government to take action while there is still time.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to table in regard to Canada's health care workers.

The petitioners are asking for all parliamentarians, both at the federal and provincial level, to recognize the important role that health care workers play in our communities and to support them, and also to recognize the importance of immigrant credentials and getting those recognized.

Speaker's Ruling

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first was initiated by Amalie Wilkinson. It has been signed by over 1,200 people across Canada, including many constituents. It notes that there are three intersecting crises we are facing: pollution, biodiversity and resource depletion crises. It notes that the most severe form of environmental damages related to these crises forms ecocide. It notes that many other countries in the world have brought in or have proposed legislation for ecocide, joining an international call to bring this type of measure in at the international level. The petitioners are calling on the federal government to publicly declare its support for an international crime of ecocide.

CANNABIS

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I am presenting today was initiated by Sarah Mills and has been signed by over 3,200 Canadians. The petitioners note that the current limit placed on the content of THC does not adequately cater to the existing cannabis consumers and that it is a factor in which the legal, regulated cannabis industry is unable to compete with the illicit market, which is, of course, unregulated. They further note supporting statements from the Competition Bureau and the Ontario Cannabis Store to reconsider the current restriction on THC limits. The petitioners are therefore calling upon the Government of Canada to increase the maximum THC allowed in edible cannabis products to 100mg.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED UNJUSTIFIED NAMING OF A MEMBER—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on May 1 by the member for Lethbridge, regarding the content of the Debates of April 30. In so doing, I would also like to comment on several points of order raised subsequently regarding the fallout of that day's events.

In raising her question of privilege, the member stated that the Debates of April 30 did not accurately reflect the previous day's proceedings in the House. She alleged that the words "I withdraw" had been removed from the blues in the portion where the Chair had named her. The member stated that those words appeared under her name in the initial version of the blues and were attributed to her and that they could be heard in the audio recording.

She added that, in this specific context, those words were not insignificant, as they showed that she had unconditionally complied

with the Speaker's request and that her withdrawal from the House was therefore unjustified. The member argued that since she was unable to participate in the debates and the votes of that day, her privileges had been breached. She also noted that this misrepresentation of her actions could amount to an improper reflection upon a member. The member was supported by some of her colleagues, who said that they had heard her say those words.

Let us first review the events of April 30. The beginning of question period that day was particularly difficult. There was clearly a lot of strong language and strong reactions that required the Chair to intervene. I issued warnings, but also the possibility to rephrase their comments, to both the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, for particular words they used, those terms being "racist" and "spineless" respectively.

I subsequently asked for the word "wacko" to be withdrawn when it was used as a personal insult. I am certain all members can agree that such terms are not helpful and do not contribute to the kind of civility necessary for our proceedings. In the course of these events, the Chair was subjected to invective from the member for Lethbridge. The Chair told the member that challenging decisions of the Chair is contrary to the Standing Orders and subsequently asked her to withdraw her words. The member replied by saying that the Chair was "acting in a disgraceful manner". At that point, since she did not appear to be complying with my request to withdraw her words, I rose, and her microphone was deactivated. Even though the member was only a few metres from the Chair, I did not hear what she said after her microphone was turned off, as there was too much noise in the House. The member was named pursuant to Standing Order 11.

• (1020)

[Translation]

The Hansard blues are the unrevised transcript of the debates of the House of Commons. The Debates, on the other hand, are the record of the proceedings, with the necessary editing and grammatical corrections. As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 1227, and I quote: "The Debates are published under the authority of the Speaker of the House. They are compiled using the audio recording of the proceedings as well as information provided by Parliamentary Publications staff stationed on the floor of the House."

As Speaker Milliken explained on March 20, 2001, on page 1917 of the Debates, and I quote: "The editors of Hansard always try to be fair and just in reporting and printing what we have said in the House. It is often difficult to determine exactly what was said."

[English]

An hon. member: I have a point of order.

The Speaker: It is the normal tradition of the House that the Speaker finishes their ruling before points of order are raised. I will entertain them at the end of the ruling, which will happen in a couple of minutes.

Speaker's Ruling

While the Debates are published under the authority of the Chair, the House should know that the Chair plays no part in editing the Debates. The editors of the Parliamentary Publications team craft a record that, in their judgment, best corresponds to the proceedings, without political interference and in a completely non-partisan manner.

The editors may make changes to the records of the House proceedings, whether or not those changes are proposed by members, in accordance with their own guidelines and long-standing practices. Moreover, it is understood that the revisions should not alter the substance and the meaning of the members' statements in the House.

The Chair learned that, on April 30, two versions of the blues had been prepared. The words "I withdraw" were indeed in the first version and were attributed to the member for Lethbridge. During the revision process, the editors listened carefully to the audio recording of the sitting but could not be certain that those specific words had been said or that the statement should be attributed to the member for Lethbridge. The word "withdraw" was clearly audible, but what preceded was not.

Given the context of the exchange between the Chair and the member, the words she said immediately prior and the process of naming the member that subsequently began, the audio in question could plausibly be interpreted as either "I withdraw" or "I do not withdraw".

In addition, the particularly high level of ambient noise substantially complicated the editors' task. Faced with this uncertainty, the editors removed the words, and a second version of the blues was produced, which was provided to the member. No comments or revisions were communicated to the Parliamentary Publications department in connection with this intervention prior to the publication of Hansard by the member for Lethbridge or her staff, or any other member or their staff.

Finally, the words are not included in the published version of the Debates. While investigating this matter, the Chair also learned that the staff responsible for Debates had provided these explanations to the member in the afternoon of May 1, even before she raised her question of privilege.

● (1025)

[*Translation*]

As the member for Lethbridge later pointed out on May 9, it is true that on the morning of May 1, a member of my staff received a question from a journalist about the difference between the blues and the Debates. On the other hand, it should be noted that the answer offered was very general and was provided even before the question of privilege was raised in the House.

[*English*]

The Chair recognizes that the member for Lethbridge states that she said "I withdraw". The Chair has no reason to doubt her word, nor that of the chief opposition whip, who confirmed that others heard those words. I hope she will accept that, because she began by repeating her comments, and because the noise level was so high, the Chair did not hear her say that day that she was withdraw-

ing her words. My decision to name her seemed justified, based on the information I had at the time. If the member had begun by withdrawing her words, events surely would have unfolded differently.

I want to emphasize this point. When the Chair asks a member to withdraw offensive remarks and apologize, out of respect for the Chair and the rules of the House, the Chair expects members to comply, with no hesitation, period. An invitation to withdraw words that are deemed unacceptable is not an invitation to repeat those very words. In the event of refusal to comply, a member risks being named and asked to withdraw from the House or having the Chair decide not to recognize them until they do.

[*Translation*]

Members sometimes disagree with the Chair's decisions, but it is important for all members to accept them once they are made. Disregarding the rules is one thing; disregarding the authority of the Chair when one is called to order is another.

As the member for New Westminster—Burnaby stated in his point of order on May 1, 2024, criticizing such decisions in the House amounts to challenging the Chair, which is contrary to our practices. On the other hand, while it is true that the Chair exercises control over decorum during proceedings and generally does not comment on statements made outside, attacks on the Speaker or the deputy speakers outside of the House can have a corrosive effect on our proceedings. It certainly does not help the House function smoothly.

[*English*]

In conclusion, the Chair is of the opinion that the final version of the debates was prepared in accordance with the standards applied by the debates' editors and that their decision, as well as the Chair's decision to name the member, was justifiable based on the information available on April 30. Consequently, I cannot find a prima facie question of privilege. The member for Lethbridge has clearly indicated what her words were, and that is now also part of the record.

[*Translation*]

I thank members for their attention.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill on a point of order.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, my point of order relates to the manner in which you have arrived at this decision.

In several previous cases of questions of privilege related to your conduct, for example, when I raised a point of privilege related to the government potentially withholding information on an Order Paper question that you had signed off in your role as parliamentary secretary in this Parliament, you had recused yourself from the decision.

Speaker's Ruling

In this instance, you are ruling on a matter that directly relates to, once again, your conduct and your behaviour. How is it possible that you can make a ruling related to your behaviour, when precedent in this Parliament clearly shows that you should have recused yourself?

• (1030)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill for raising her point of order.

Because the question of privilege was germane to the question of how the blues are prepared and to how the contents of Hansard were prepared, which of course the Speaker has no role in doing, it was found to be appropriate for the Speaker to be able to issue this ruling.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When this controversy was first brought to our attention by the hon. member for Lethbridge, I rose to speak in deep concern about the possibility that the words that were spoken, which were in the initial blues, had been changed without the member's knowledge because this is an essential piece of how this place works, that we are confident that there is no interference with respect to the words that come out of our mouths, as best as they are able to be captured by the extraordinarily talented and dedicated staff, obviously with new equipment. However, for centuries there has been Hansard, and the words of parliamentarians are recorded, we hope faithfully.

I also want to make a parenthetical comment. Then, I want to ask a specific question in case your ruling included it and I missed it.

One of the things about the operations of Parliament, which is to say the fragility of our democracy, is that in Westminster parliamentary democracies, such as Canada, and I would say particularly Canada, much rests on intangibles: respect, decency, unwritten rules, traditions, concern for the country, etc. There are a lot of intangibles that float around when it comes to respect. I know that when hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle was the Speaker, I vigorously disagreed with many of his rulings, but I knew, as there is no appeal of a Speaker's ruling, there would be nothing but chaos if I were to show anything but respect for the rulings I heard, no matter how passionately I disagreed.

My point is this. We are in a perilous place, to all my colleagues I would say the same, and we have to be able to work together and to respect our traditions. They are intangible and imperfect, but without them, there is nothing here but chaos.

My question is this. I do not know if you can respond to it now or if you will have to fill me in later. I have had the experience of saying things and the Hansard staff got back to me to say that they were not sure they heard me right and asked me what I said. What I am missing here is this. I remember the day; there was a lot of noise and a lot of chaos, so I can understand that it was hard to hear clearly. What I am not certain about, and I would feel much more reassured as I am very concerned about the point the member for Lethbridge made, is if we were absolutely certain that nothing untoward occurred between what she said and how it was recorded.

Do we know if the staff from Hansard reached out to the member for Lethbridge to seek clarification before the new version of Hansard emerged with the words "I withdraw" removed?

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for rising on the point of order.

As was contained in the ruling of the Chair, and if members were to check the ruling they would see that we do address precisely that point, that there were two times that the blues were prepared and shared, and there was a discussion on top of that between the member for Lethbridge and the people who prepare Hansard.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I would offer to respond to that, actually.

There was no effort made to reach out to my office to clarify what I had said that day and whether or not the blues had been changed. In fact they were changed without my knowledge and then published in the Hansard record, which was signed off by your office, all without my knowing about it. It was only after the change that I, on my initiative, reached out to your office in order to seek clarification and understand the procedure better.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Lethbridge. Once again, I would encourage all members to read the ruling very carefully.

The honourable Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, part of the concern I have on this is that there is the official Hansard record when a member is standing up and speaking. Then there are individuals heckling, and there are mics that are around that often pick up the heckling.

From my understanding, there is no issue with regard to members who have been recognized and are speaking. What we are talking about is off-to-the-side comments. Hansard does not record all the offside comments, nor do I believe we would want to mandate it to do that, because we would need another whole team, plus, at times, to record all of the statements that are said off the record. What the member said was completely off the record. I never even heard it.

• (1035)

The Speaker: Before we get into a back and forth, I just want to make it clear that the Chair has been very open to hearing points of view, especially on a sensitive issue like this. I am going to invite all members to please take a closer look at the ruling. The hon. parliamentary secretary raised a point that I think can, again, be found in the ruling, in terms of how this was captured or not captured.

I am going to allow the chief opposition whip to rise on the last point of order on this matter. It is not normally—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The reason is that after a decision of the Chair, it is not up for debate. I do understand, and I have great respect for the chief opposition whip.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am standing for clarity on this. This was not a heckle. It was not an offside comment, as it has just been characterized. It was—

An hon. member: It was.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: No, it was not. The member is heckling now. That is not the same thing.

It was a statement by the person who had been recognized. There was an exchange going on. Her last comment was “I withdraw”, which was picked up and then put in the blues. I will not go any further on the point other than to say that was a mischaracterization of what happened on the day.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. official opposition whip, and I appreciate the point. It is a fair point as well. I invite all members, once again, to read the ruling where it makes it very clear the sequence of events.

I am afraid that is the final point the Speaker is going to entertain on the issue.

If the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville is rising on the same matter, I am going to invite her to please take a look at the ruling of the Speaker, as I said earlier.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SUMMER TAX BREAK

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC) moved:

That, in order to help Canadians afford a simple summer vacation and save typical Canadian families \$670 this summer, the House call on the NDPLiberal government to immediately axe the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, and the GST on gasoline and diesel until Labour Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Prime Minister, the Liberal Bloc is not worth the cost. Housing costs have doubled. The debt has doubled. Inflation is at a 40-year high. These tax and spending increases are penalizing the work being done by Quebecers. These increases are also further centralizing our country's power in the hands of federal politicians and bureaucrats.

All this was done with the support of the Bloc Québécois, which is the bizarre and ironic part. A so-called separatist party is becoming increasingly dependent on the federal government. It voted in favour of \$500 billion in bureaucratic, inflationary and centralizing spending. This spending is not on health care or old age security, but rather on bureaucracy, agencies, consultants and other parts of the bloated federal and central machine here in Ottawa.

From time to time the Bloc Québécois votes to ensure Ottawa collects Quebecers' powers and money. It is not an pro-independence party. It is a pro-dependence party.

In contrast, the Conservative Party seeks to reduce the federal government's role, power and costs. We want a smaller federal government to create more space for Quebecers. We are going to reduce the cost of government by cutting spending and waste with a view to lowering taxes, inflation and interest rates. That means more money in Quebecers' pockets and less money in the coffers of this centralizing Prime Minister.

Business of Supply

We are the only party that supports Quebecers' autonomy and that of all Canadians. Our common-sense plan is very focused. It consists in axing the tax, building the homes, fixing the budget and stopping the crime. We are also proposing that Quebecers get a gas tax cut of 17 cents per litre this summer. This would at least allow them to have a vacation and spend time in Quebec communities, while supporting small and medium-sized businesses, such as camping sites and the magnificent hotels and small inns that dot this beautiful province. It would keep more money in the Quebec economy instead of feeding the bloated monster that is the federal government.

Our approach means less for Ottawa and more for Quebecers. That is common sense. Fortunately, there is a party that is there for people. On the other side, there are the other parties and the Liberal bloc. For the next elections, the choice is clear. It is either the Liberal bloc, which taxes food, penalizes work, doubles the cost of housing and releases criminals into the streets, or the common-sense Conservative Party, which is going to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. That is what we call common sense.

• (1040)

[English]

I am going to begin with a text message I just got from the owner of a small business in Ottawa who has opened some beautiful, legendary local restaurants, Fratelli, which is Italian for “brothers”; and Roberto, an incredible and beautiful pizza shop where one can get some wood-oven pizza.

He sent me this message, in which he was responding to a friend who asked him about a business investment opportunity in Ottawa: “Hi Victor, I appreciate you thinking of me. I am personally done with investing any time or money in Canada. I've actually started the process of leaving. My kids have already left and don't want to come back here. One is in Italy, the other in Florida. Both are extremely happy and living life the way it should be lived. It's sad, but it's my new reality based on what's happening with this Liberal Prime Minister and Canada, for the next generation. I hope all is well with you and your family. Lastly, FYI, I found out today that 46% of businesses in the downtown business improvement area will not renew their leases. Yikes, that's scary. What's coming in the next year or two? I hope you and your family are well. See you soon.”

Is that not sad? This is the kind of person the Prime Minister likes to demonize. The person is someone who has earned a living and built his own business from scratch. He did not inherit a multi-million-dollar tax-deferred trust fund.

No, he had poor immigrant parents from south Italy, the kind of people whom we see in communities across the land, including in South Shore—St. Margarets, where the member with whom I am splitting my time resides, and I know that this is the kind of story that the Liberal-controlled media likes to shut down. For example, I told the story of a Cape Breton couple that had moved to Nicaragua, and Bell CTV tried to gaslight them and me by claiming that it was all crazy talk. It was actually a story told by the person themself.

Business of Supply

Of course, Bell is the Prime Minister's favourite telephone company. It loves to get favours from his regulatory arm by giving him a lot of gushing media propaganda. It even publishes the propaganda that is regurgitated by The Canadian Press. It just literally cuts and pastes the stuff the PMO feeds The Canadian Press to write. It can no longer gaslight Canadians on these facts.

Let me read from an article. Even the CBC had to admit it today:

Emigration from Canada to the U.S. hits a 10-year high as tens of thousands head south. Census [data] says 126,340 people left Canada for the US in 2022, a 70 per cent increase over a decade....

One group called Canadians Moving to Florida & USA has more than 55,000 members and is adding dozens of...members every [single] week....

Marco Terinesi is a former professional soccer player who grew up in Woodbridge, Ont. and now works as a real estate agent in Florida's Palm Beach County with a busy practice that caters to Canadian expats.

"I hate the politics here"—

"Here" is Canada.

—Terinesi said his phone has been ringing off the hook for the last 18 months with calls from Canadians wanting to move to sunny Florida.

"With [the Prime Minister], I have to get out of here,' that's what people tell me. They say to me, 'Marco, who do I have to talk to to get out of here?'....

"There's a lot of hatred, a lot of pissed-off calls. It's really shocking for me to hear all of this....

"And I'm not sure all these people are moving for the right reason. People are saying, 'I hate the politics...., I'm uprooting my whole family and moving down,' and I say, 'Well, that problem could be solved in a year or two.'"

God willing. I think a lot of people are hoping that common-sense Conservatives will come in to solve the problem the Prime Minister has caused. I think it is clear. Let us be very blunt about this. If I am not prime minister in the next two years, there will be a large sucking sound of Canadian businesses, entrepreneurs and workers leaving this country to go anywhere on Planet Earth and escape the doubling housing costs, the quadrupling carbon tax and the devastating economic policies that are pricing the people out of their own country. That is the reality.

It is happening already. Canadians are fleeing the doubling housing costs that the Prime Minister has caused by printing cash to inflate costs and by funding bureaucracy that blocks homebuilding. Canadians are leaving the country to avoid the massive tax increases that have shut down businesses and pushed, according to one Liberal former governor of the central bank, \$800 billion of Canadian investment more abroad than has come home.

With all of the suffering and misery, the 256 homeless encampments that have popped up in Toronto, the 35 homeless encampments in Winnipeg, the two million people lined up at food banks, the one in four Canadians skipping meals because they cannot afford the price of eating, and the 76% of young people who say they will never own a home, for God's sakes, can Canadians not at least enjoy a merciful vacation from the taxes?

That is why common-sense Conservatives not only want to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime when we form government, but also in the meantime are asking for a tax holiday on fuel that would save 35¢ a litre and allow families to get in their car, go on the road, do some camping and support local tourism businesses.

Let us bring our money home. Let us bring a vacation for long-suffering Canadians. It is common sense. Let us bring it home.

● (1045)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very specific question for the Leader of the Opposition, and I would ask that he listen and try to provide a direct answer to this. I think it is really important, and it pertains to the substance of his motion.

The member's motion says that the average Canadian will save \$670 between now and Labour Day. Now, if we look at the carbon tax, it is 17.6¢; the federal gas tax is 10¢. If we put GST on there, it is 29¢. In order to save \$670 for the average Canadian, they would have to drive 25,842 kilometres between now and Labour Day. To put that in perspective, if we were to drive from the North Pole to the South Pole, we would still have over 5,000 kilometres left over. We would have to drive 272 kilometres per day between now and Labour Day.

Can the member explain where he plans to travel that would account for 272 kilometres per day, starting today, between now and Labour Day?

● (1050)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I think the member got confused. He was actually looking at the manifest that lays out the Prime Minister's international island-trotting vacations, and that is where he got all these numbers. It is his leader who travels those distances to vacation on private billionaire islands in the Caribbean and who loves to globe-trot around the world to various tax havens where he can enjoy a vacation.

We are talking about Canadians enjoying a camping trip and saving 35¢ a litre on diesel, on gas, by getting rid of the carbon tax and then the tax on the tax. The one thing he did not even acknowledge is that not only do the Liberals tax gas, but they also have a carbon tax, and then they have the GST on those two other taxes. The compounding effect of those taxes drives up hundreds of dollars in taxes that Canadians pay every single year. The member thinks it is not enough. He wants to quadruple the carbon tax. We will decide what happens in the carbon tax election.

Business of Supply

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has been an enthusiastic cheerleader for the oil and gas industry. He fills his fundraisers with its lobbyists and CEOs, so it is not surprising that he has no climate plan. He is not concerned with the fact that many Canadians will have a road trip this summer in which they flee wildfire evacuation zones, worrying about whether their home will still be there when they get back. On top of that, he has been going around the country saying that he would also scrap the north coast oil tanker moratorium. This would ignore municipalities, first nations, anglers, commercial fishermen and the majority of the people in the District of Kitimat, among many other communities in the north, who wholly reject any plan to bring crude oil supertankers to the north coast of B.C.

Can the Leader of the Opposition confirm that he would scrap that moratorium?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I will acknowledge that the member and her party have been enthusiastic supporters of the oil industries in Russia, in Saudi Arabia and in Venezuela. They love the oil industries in countries where they have ideological allies running socialist governments. They also do not have a problem with tankers. They support bringing in Saudi and Nigerian tankers to Port Saint John in New Brunswick.

I find it very interesting that they are against putting Canadian energy products on ships and sending them off to market, but they are delighted to have dirty dictator oil arrive at our shores in the amount of 130,000 barrels every single day. It is interesting how wacko one has to be to support dictator oil while shutting down the paycheques of unionized Canadian workers. We stand on the side of bringing home powerful paycheques for our union workers in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find this to be the most extraordinary opposition day we have ever had. It is a bunch of hot air. This is a horrible show of populism.

These taxes represent \$1.3 billion for the three months during which the Leader of the Opposition wants them waived.

How would he make up for this \$1.3-billion shortfall? Would he make cuts, or would he simply add to Canadians' debt?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I think it was René Lévesque who said, "Beware of those who say they love the people but hate everything the people love." That is my response to his aiming to collect money here in Ottawa. I find it interesting that a member of the Bloc is opposed to us taking money away from the federal government to leave it in the pockets of Quebeckers

Where will I find the money to reduce taxes on gas? We will reduce the amounts spent on hiring consultants. Note that \$21 billion was spent to hire consultants. That is an increase of 100%, which represents \$1,400 for every family in Quebec. The Bloc Québécois voted for this increase in federal consultants and we voted against it. We will wipe out this centralist spending to put money in the pockets of Quebeckers.

• (1055)

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a little intimidating to speak after the Leader of the Opposition, but I will give it a shot.

The motion is a really important one for all members of Parliament to show they have a bit of a heart, caring and understanding of what Canadians are going through. It made me reflect on my childhood, growing up, and this time of year, approaching the end of school in June. There was excitement that I would have the freedom to do all the things that I liked to do in the summer, such as ride my bike and all the stuff I would do with my friends. The summers seemed to last forever back then.

One thing my family would do was summer road trips. My parents struggled each month to decide which bill to pay or not pay, but they always found the money to take the four kids on a holiday. Sometimes, we would simply go across the Annapolis Valley from our house in Halifax and stay at my grandmother's house in a place called Paradise. It was paradise as a kid. Other times, they would have enough to take us to Toronto on a car trip. We would stay at my aunt's, go to the CNE and do great things.

Once in a while, we had enough money to go to the United States; we would go to Washington or visit Disney World in the summer, believe it or not. Those are great memories, and we were fortunate enough to do those things; we did not understand that our parents may have been struggling a little with money.

However, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the dream of doing that for millions of Canadian families is gone. Canadians are going hungry and having trouble even paying their rent or mortgage. Last year, food banks had to handle a record two million visits, and they are projecting an additional million this year. Can members imagine? There were three million visits, a record number, to food banks in Canada. Feed Nova Scotia estimates that, in my province, food bank usage went up 27% last year alone; the record for every number it tracks has been broken.

Last weekend, I went to the Souls Harbour Rescue Mission, which provides meals for the homeless in Bridgewater in my riding. They did not have to do that two years ago, and now they have to cook meals for the homeless. The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac met with the folks there who are doing that great work. Last year, 36% of food banks had to turn people away because they ran out of food. Canadians are homeless because they can no longer afford the cost to own or rent a home under the NDP-Liberals.

Business of Supply

Rent has increased 107%, and now it takes Canadians 25 years to even save for the idea of a down payment on a house. We know homeless encampments have grown everywhere, in small towns and large towns; there are 35 of them in Halifax. In 2015, there were only 284 homeless people in the city of Halifax. Today, there are over 1,200. That is a 326% increase under the NDP-Liberals. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that, since 2018, the number of people who have been continuously homeless has increased by 38% nationally. They have been homeless for more than a year. For those who are recently homeless, the increase is 88%.

After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is not just low-income families that are suffering. Middle-class families are now both working and using food banks because all their income is going to pay the mortgage. Why did this happen? It is not something that happened because of Europe, as the government claims. It is a made-in-Canada, NDP-Liberal creation. Years of inflationary debt and taxes led to Canada's record inflation rate, which reached 8.1% at one point in the last two years, with the fastest growth in inflation in Canadian history.

These inflation hikes have hit countless Canadians who are now facing mortgage renewals. They are already facing historically high debt and a cost of living crisis. Over the next two years, 45% of outstanding mortgages in Canada will be up for renewal. These represent homes built at record-high prices and at record-low interest rates. The homeowners could see a 30% to 40% uptick from the interest rate they received only a few years ago. For a \$500,000 mortgage on a home over a five-year fixed term for 25 years, this will mean an increased payment of nearly \$1,000 a month.

In addition to that, we know that food costs are up 23% since 2020; gasoline costs are up 30%. The years with the greatest decline in food purchasing power for Canadians were 2022 and 2023.

● (1100)

Unfortunately, for Canadians, these records are not records they seek from their government, but their government nonetheless brags that inflation has come down to 3%. The government is bragging that prices are still going up, and these are shocks that Canadians cannot afford.

As Canadians are struggling, the NDP-Liberal government increased taxes by increasing the carbon tax by 23% last April. That means the average Nova Scotian family will now pay \$1,500 more in the carbon tax than they get back in fake carbon rebates according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It is estimated that in 2024, the average Canadian family will have to pay \$700 more for food than they paid last year.

Canadians cannot afford these increases. Despite the dangerous misinformation that the NDP-Liberals spread about how great Canadians have it, they are not better off because of the government. They are suffering dramatically. That is why premiers in almost every province of this country have asked for the government to get rid of the carbon tax. The government says it care about provinces, but it ignores every request from them.

A poet named Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds". The foolish consistency of the NDP-Liberal government is continuing to spend money,

which is driving up inflation, driving up interest rates and driving up food costs. The government thinks that somehow, after nine years, that is going to result in an outcome other than having poorer and poorer Canadians. That is the foolish consistency of the government. I will let members judge the issue of little minds.

I will also leave it to members to consider that Canadians are demanding a break. The number one question we all get is, when are we going to get an election? It is not because Canadians love elections. It is because they want to get rid of the government. Canadians need a break from the hurt, the pain and the hunger caused by the NDP-Liberals.

We are proposing to give Canadians a temporary break so that the great privilege that some of us had in our summers in our youth of getting into the family car, going on a vacation and having a great adventure can happen this summer too. What is the best way to do this? Our motion today says the following:

That, in order to help Canadians afford a simple summer vacation and save typical Canadian families \$670 this summer, the House call on the NDP-Liberal government to immediately axe the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, and the GST on gasoline and diesel until Labour Day.

That is a reasonable request. It would save Nova Scotians \$542 this summer. Some in this place may not think \$542 is a big deal, but \$542 will help someone pay the gas to drive from Halifax to Toronto to take their kids to a Blue Jays game or visit the Hockey Hall of Fame. That would be a great treat for many of the struggling families in my province. They could even go to the Canadian National Exhibition and watch the fantastic air show that it has on Labour Day.

However, that is out of reach for families in my community in Nova Scotia, with an average income in my riding of \$30,000. The \$542 is tax that the NDP-Liberals will keep taking from their pockets while they suffer and try to put food on the table. This would be the difference between taking a vacation and what unfortunately has become normalized under the government, which is the staycation. The staycation means someone cannot afford to take a holiday, so they just stay at home. That is not a vacation for families.

We are asking the government to show a little compassion and a little heart. We would not be in this situation if the government just followed our common-sense plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Particularly, this summer, the Conservatives want the government to axe the tax on all fuel costs and call a carbon tax election, if it believes in it so much, so that we can deliver what Canadians are asking for. I challenge the government to do one of those two things. If the Liberals do not have the guts to remove federal taxes this summer to give a break to Canadians, at least they should have the guts to call an election and let Canadians decide.

• (1105)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a bit much. The Conservative policy guru in Alberta, better known as Premier Danielle Smith, increased the gas tax by four cents. If we take a look at the weird Conservative calculation and think about it, the Conservatives say they are going to save \$670. That is a joke. Their calculator is way off, as the deputy government House leader just pointed out. To get that, the average driver would have to drive from the North Pole to the South Pole. They could almost do it twice.

I do not know what is going on in the Conservative Party. It is going further right than Premier Danielle Smith and the MAGA Conservatives. Its calculator is broken. Where do Conservatives get that \$670 from? I do not understand it.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, forgive me if I do not believe the math of the Liberals, who have not met a single budget target at any time and have said the budget will balance itself. Maybe when the previous member, the member for Kingston and the Islands, who brought it up, did the math, the kilometres were based on the \$150,000 Ford Lightning he drives. He should try using a normal vehicle, like most Canadians drive.

I understand why the member is embarrassed by that fact, but the Liberals made the carbon tax go up on April 1, April Fool's Day, by 23%. They are continuing to do that and plan to make it go up by 65¢ a litre by 2030. The Liberals have no compassion for people who are suffering because of their tax policy.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel that my colleague's intervention was not entirely accurate in some of the information he shared, and I want to give him some perspective.

We just heard from one of the members of the Liberal Party about Danielle Smith and the taxes that she has put on gas in Alberta. In Alberta, we have Trevor Tombe, who is an economics professor at the University of Calgary. He is quite renowned for being very smart with regard to carbon economics. He writes, "A clear majority of households do receive rebates that are larger than the carbon taxes they pay for." He also says, "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." The Business Council of Alberta has said that the carbon tax is the "simplest, clearest, cheapest, and least interventionist way to achieve Canada's climate goals". These are experts who have been doing this work and have been doing research.

Business of Supply

I am wondering why the information the Conservative Party of Canada is trying to put out today completely contradicts the information of experts like Trevor Tombe and those within the Business Council of Alberta.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, why does it not come as a surprise to me that the NDP continues to speak for the elites at universities rather than ordinary blue-collar working people?

I know this is inconvenient for the NDP-Liberals, but looking to the experts, the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer says the tax will cost families \$1,500 more a year than they get back in fake rebates. This is a convenient way for the NDP-Liberals to ignore experts. They choose their elite university economists as the group they believe in.

I would ask the member to take another read of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report so that she has a fuller understanding of the effect of this tax on families.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has just set himself up as a defender of the people in the struggle of the academic elite against the people. The Conservatives want to defend what they call ordinary people.

However, the Conservative Party's policies benefit the western oil companies. Does my colleague really believe that western oil companies need help and that they are ordinary people?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, the government's policies have caused 78,000 ordinary people to lose their jobs in the oil patch, which has driven investment per employee in this country down and our productivity to 40% less than that of the United States, making the cost of living for everyday individuals much more difficult.

It is literally crazy that despite our competitive advantage as a nation with natural resources, the NDP-Liberal government says we should shut them all down and hope that somehow fairy dust in other industries with government taxpayer money, which is raised by the oil industry, by the way, will somehow correct or change how our economy operates and how we lead families to a successful life. The great policies they enjoy in Canada have to be provided by profits from businesses, which create jobs and innovation.

I would ask the hon. member to take another look in the mirror.

• (1110)

The Deputy Speaker: As a reminder to all hon. members, try to keep the answers and questions short so that all members who want to participate and ask questions get an opportunity to do so. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has tried to be recognized on a number of occasions, and I will see if I can put her up first in the next round.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Business of Supply

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 like to thank the opposition for putting forth another opposition day on one of Canada's most successful tools to reduce our carbon pollution. Carbon pricing works, and that has never been clearer.

Before I go on, I would like to say I fully support the Speaker's idea to have the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands take the first question so we can talk about how we fight climate change, not whether we fight climate change. The Conservatives seem hell-bent on letting our planet burn.

Carbon pricing works at the business level, and carbon pricing works at the personal household level as well. In fact, it increases the success of all other emissions reductions policies because it builds in a powerful incentive for energy efficiency right across the Canadian economy. We might call carbon pricing the sixth player on the ice in Canada's emissions reductions plan. ECCC's modelling shows that carbon pricing alone accounts for around one-third of the emissions reductions expected in Canada between 2005 and 2030. Other independent experts have calculated it to be even more effective in cutting Canada's carbon pollution.

The Conservatives do not need to listen to experts, whom they have said are so-called experts, but they should heed the advice of William Nordhaus, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, who just recently said that Canada is getting it right on carbon pricing, that we are getting it right on carbon reductions, that our pollution is going down as a result and that our economy continues to be very strong. Let me summarize quickly how our department calculates emissions reductions.

We use a program called EC-PRO. It is a computable general equilibrium model that allows us to perform complex statistical calculations. We begin by preparing a reference scenario that includes all current federal, provincial and territorial emissions reductions policies and calculates the total emissions expected by 2030. Then we prepare a second hypothetical scenario that excludes carbon pricing altogether. We also exclude all provincial carbon pricing policies, including those from Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec, which are not covered by the federal system. Finally, the difference is used to estimate the effect of carbon pricing on emissions. This results in a difference of 78 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent, which represents about a third of the total reductions that Canada plans to make between 2005 and 2030. This is according to our commitments under the Paris Agreement, which we reaffirmed when we formed government in 2015.

Our modelling also shows that the effect of carbon pricing is very rapid. It is one of the least expensive, least intrusive and quickest ways to reduce carbon emissions. By 2023, just the fourth year of this plan, our emissions would have been around 24 million tonnes higher without Canada's national minimum carbon price. It has the same effect as taking more than seven million internal combustion passenger cars off the road.

I will remind my colleague from the Conservative Party, who earlier asked a member about the calculations he used for the \$670 savings the Conservative Party is boasting about and asked if he was going to drive his electric car, that electric cars do not require

fuel. It seems to be lost on the Conservatives that they are an innovation that do not require the input of fossil fuels.

In short, putting a price on pollution works, and our data proves it. It is not just our data. It is also the data of 300 independent economists from across this country, renowned people who work at universities and whom the Conservatives continue to call so-called experts. If they have any experts, Conservative experts, who would like to come forward with some data, economic analysis or anything that indicates carbon pricing is having a negative impact on the real affordability challenges that Canadians are experiencing, I am here for it. I asked them for it back in December and have not seen anything since.

Carbon pricing continues to be the most efficient, simple and cost-effective way to meet our targets. It is a measure that encourages the whole population, every household and every business, to find ways to cut pollution, whether and however they would like to. It sends a powerful message forward of confidence to businesses to invest in cleaner technologies and be more energy efficient in the future.

It is truly mind-boggling to see all of the misinformation out there being spread especially by the Conservative Party of Canada. Carbon pricing does not raise the cost of living. Economists from across this country, people who are experts on these types of analyses, indicate that, yet the Conservative Party chooses to continue to toe that line, which is based on absolutely no factual data.

In provinces where the federal fuel charge applies, it represents a tiny fraction of inflation and of the increase in the price of groceries. As my colleague from the NDP pointed out, Trevor Tombe, from the University of Calgary in Alberta, said that it adds to the price of groceries a very negligible amount. We are talking about pennies on a full cart of groceries.

• (1115)

I would also just point out that there is a 10% supplement for people living in rural and remote areas, who do not have access to things like active transportation or public transportation. They might be more reliant on propane or natural gas, as other forms of heating are less available in rural Canada. We proposed increasing it by 20%, but the Conservatives have been delaying Bill C-59 for months now, withholding that money from Canadians.

For provinces under the federal pricing system, with the Canada carbon rebate, 80% of Canadian households receive a refund that is greater than what they pay. In fact, if carbon pricing were abolished, not only would clean energy investment, innovation and job creation all grind to a halt, but our low- and middle-income families would have less money in their pockets.

Business of Supply

I would like to expand on another piece of false information that is being driven by the Conservative Party of Canada, with respect to how carbon pricing has an impact on our economy: No, carbon pricing does not hurt businesses, and it does not hurt the economy.

In other countries similar to Canada, cold ones that also get warm in the summer, we see that pricing systems like ours offer the stability to build more prosperous economies. Sweden, which put a price on carbon over 30 years ago, has managed to cut its emissions by a third and double its economy.

The same is true for us, such as in British Columbia, which has had its own system for more than a decade. Many members of the Conservative Party of Canada served in the B.C. legislature under the Liberal Party when it was instituted. They seem to have forgotten that it has been lowering their per capita emissions and per GDP emissions in the great province of British Columbia for decades now. They have also seen, over the exact same time, rapid economic growth and innovation. Congratulations to British Columbia. On that piece of policy, the federal government is proud to follow in its footsteps.

We also must consider the demand for clean innovation, which is growing worldwide. We have seen investments in Canada. In fact, foreign direct investment in Canada is at an all-time high, and that is because people want to invest here. It is a great time to invest in Canada. We have the green energy and the great ideas that the world really depends on when it comes to innovation and a green revolution. That is why they are coming here to do business.

Because carbon pricing attracts investment in clean energy technologies and low-carbon industry here in Canada, it allows Canadian companies to take the lead. If we abolished it, we would lose our position in the global race toward carbon neutrality and we would sacrifice all of the jobs that come with it. It would do serious harm to Canadian companies that are exporting to other countries with carbon markets that will impose carbon adjustment mechanisms at their border. That includes the entire European Union, for example. It also includes the U.K., and other countries plan to do so soon.

Canada has already made so much progress. As a result of the suite of climate change-fighting, emissions-reducing policies implemented since 2015, Canada is set to exceed our 2026 interim climate objective of a 20% reduction in emissions from 2005 levels. There goes another Conservative talking point up in smoke.

It is amusing when opposition members accuse us of missing climate targets, when they do everything in their power to kneecap the policies that are, in fact, getting us to achieving our targets. The most recent projections, published last December, suggest that Canada should achieve a 36% reduction by 2030. We are getting there. The latest national inventory report confirmed that emissions are consistent with our forecast and remain below prepandemic levels.

Canada's emissions, with the exception of the pandemic, have never been so low in 25 years. This is a great achievement, something that the entire House of Commons ought to be proud of and ought to be looking for ways to make even better. Electricity and heat production in the public sector has become less polluting due, in part, to further reductions in the use of coal and coke in those ap-

plications. Fugitive emissions from oil and gas extraction have also decreased.

The numbers are very clear. Carbon pricing works, and it will make it possible to achieve one-third of Canada's emissions reduction targets by 2030. It also helps ease the cost of living for families that need it the most. It is good for business and it is good for the economy. The revenue-neutral nature of our carbon pricing system is less costly than offering subsidies or adopting regulatory measures.

With respect to the Conservative motion today suggesting that we drop all levies and tax on fuel over the course of the summer, the suggestion that it would save a family \$670 is obviously false. They would have to drive over 25,000 kilometres in those few months. It also really ignores the fact that Canadians who really need it receive an HST refund four times a year. They receive a rebate.

• (1120)

I remember, when I was growing up, that my mom really looked forward to that. There was usually a trip to Swiss Chalet when my mom received the HST rebate. It was really, really helpful for our family. At that time, I think it was about \$90 four times a year, and it is more now.

However, more than that, the Canada carbon rebate is really supporting families, particularly those on the lower and modest income scale, not because they receive a bit more, as with the HST refund, but because everybody receives that incentive. Everybody receives the same amount. A family of four in Alberta receives the same as another family of four. The Conservatives have shamelessly called this some kind of a trick. It is not a trick; it is a rebate, a refund. The Canada carbon rebate is just like the Canada child benefit and just like all of the services and the programs we have implemented to lower poverty in the last eight years. The Canada carbon rebate really works and, like I said, it is less costly and less intrusive than offering subsidies or adopting strict regulatory measures. We absolutely must maintain it.

I do not need to remind members of the urgent need for action. It is, unfortunately, wildfire season once again. Our country is very vulnerable to climate change. I read this statistic just recently, and it is absolutely alarming. Canada is 0.5% of the global population, about 41 million people on a planet of more than eight billion people. However, over 40%, I think it was 45%, of families displaced from their homes as a result of wildfires in 2023 were Canadian. Canada is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We warm faster and we dry faster. When it is dry, as is forecasted for this summer, we get more wildfires, and more intense wildfires, and that means more Canadians will be driven from their homes.

Business of Supply

Every day, Canadians see the costly impacts of climate change, from droughts to wildfires and floods. Climate change costs average Canadian households about \$720 a year. The costs of climate change are not spoken about enough in this House of Commons. Climate change is one of the leading causes of grocery inflation. People go to the grocery store and say, “Hey, why is lettuce \$3.50? Why are tomatoes all of a sudden \$1.99 or \$2.99?” It is because of climate change. It is because those crops are grown in places that are vulnerable to climate change and the extreme weather that has an impact on drought and on all sorts of important measures. It really speaks to the need for a more fulsome food strategy in Canada, and I support that as well.

For families that are having a difficult time paying for groceries, the Canada carbon rebate really supports them, and it is important to note that it supports lower- and modest-income families even more. The next rebate is coming on July 15 and, for many families, it will be more than the average because if they did not submit their taxes by April 15, that rebate will be quite a lot higher than it was going to be alternatively. July 15 is the next installment for the Canada carbon rebate. Whether families live in Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, as your family does, Mr. Speaker, P.E.I., Newfoundland, New Brunswick or Ontario, they all will receive the Canada carbon rebate on July 15.

Over the same period of time that we have seen all of these changes, household revenues could decrease by as much as \$1,900 just because of climate change. Climate change is having a really negative impact. There was actually an op-ed in the National Post by a former Conservative MP talking about how climate change might actually be good for Canada. What a cynical, pessimistic, horribly misguided viewpoint that would be. Climate change is costly, and Canadians are more vulnerable than average citizens around the world.

That is not to mention the physical and mental health problems it causes. Not that long ago, only about a year ago, the skies in Ottawa were completely turned orange from wildfire smoke, and members in this House had a difficult time breathing. How quickly those Conservatives forget.

The recently announced 2024 federal budget was named “Fairness for Every Generation”. Generational fairness means that we cannot saddle our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren with cleaning up our climate mess. Indeed, it is our obligation to make changes to our emissions behaviour so that we leave the planet better than we found it, like a good campsite. We are currently in the century of climate impact, and we cannot kick this can down the road: never again. Previous generations have been talking about climate change, global warming and other impacts on our natural environment, on our country and on our economy. I will not be one of those who ignore it in favour of other priorities, like higher oil and gas profits, as the Conservatives seem so committed to do.

Carbon pricing gives us a much better chance of success than virtually any other policy. It is also important to recognize that our carbon-pricing protocol is just one measure in a suite of protocols.

• (1125)

As I said, Canadians are on the front lines of the climate crisis. Climate change manifests itself in our lives on a daily basis, whether it is with respect to air quality or, in the unfortunate scenario that many Canadians have experienced in the last year, an evacuation order. It has already forced us, and will continue to force us, to adapt and change the way we manage our businesses, organize our lives and interact with nature.

Warmer temperatures come with more intense and frequent weather events everywhere on earth, but especially here at home. On a global level, it has been estimated that between 2000 and 2019, extreme weather events have caused damages averaging around \$143 billion. That is \$16 million per hour throughout the entire year for the last 20 years. Climate change is a real threat to our economy, to our livelihoods and to our very lives.

Here at home, Canadians have experienced first-hand the severe weather events, such as hurricanes, storms, flooding, extreme heat and wildfires, which are now common, severe and more disastrous than ever. That is why I was actually very disappointed to hear the previous speaker on this from Nova Scotia talking as if climate change and extreme weather were not connected. They indeed are. We need not look any further than to some of our great Canadian paleoclimatologists and amazing economists. People research this, and members of this House ought to lean in on some of that economic and paleoclimatic data for insight.

These kinds of weather events have had major impacts on property and infrastructure. They cause environmental damage. They threaten our very lives, and our food and water security. The impact of extreme weather events on Canadian communities is not limited to one given place. We see those changes across our country and severe weather from coast to coast to coast.

When we are looking at the financial impacts of extreme weather, six out of 10 of the costliest years on record in Canada were in the last decade. Indeed, 2023 was the hottest year on record, and 2024 is slated to be even hotter. January of this year had the highest temperature ever recorded in a January on record. February was the hottest February ever on record. March was the hottest March ever on record. It is staring us right in the face. The climate crisis is not an optional thing that we must act on; it is 100% mandatory. Future generations are depending on us.

If the Conservatives want to continue to use their slogans and their misguided approach with absolutely no data, to further inflame the conversation around the affordability crisis without offering any solutions, I would just ask that over the course of the summer they travel to a university or ask a climate scientist for a little bit of insight so they can come back to this House in September with some data to back up their claims on either one of these two things: They are suggesting that carbon pricing is ineffective in reducing our emissions, or they are suggesting that the Canada carbon rebate is not supporting affordability right across this country.

Both are true. They are facts. It is hard to argue with facts when economists point to them and say, “Hey, what you just said is actually not controversial; the math works out. We did the math, and we agree. That is actually supporting Canadians.”

Speaking of poverty reduction, I came to this House because I was concerned that poverty in Canada was legislated. I am a strong believer that we can just decide as a country to implement some policies to reduce poverty. I also know that poverty and climate change are linked. Climate change actually impacts poorer, more modest-income Canadians more significantly. When we have a heat wave in this country, seniors without air conditioning suffer more than wealthy people with a swimming pool in their backyard, who can take a dip and cool down.

Communities that are mostly paved, without a lot of canopy, are a lot hotter than communities with a nice canopy and lots of trees. Having grown up in a co-op with lots of nice trees, a co-op that had the forethought 40 years ago to plant a bunch, I knew that. We could hang out in the park in our little co-op and play softball. When it got hot, we could hang out underneath a tree. That is not the same in every community. A lot of those lower-income apartment buildings have a lot of concrete and not a lot of trees. Climate change impacts more modest-income Canadians worse.

Just to close up, the motion in question here is to reduce gas prices over the course of this summer so that Canadians could save money, according to the Conservatives. However, what they are ignoring, as they always do, is the Canada carbon rebate. The Canada carbon rebate will send, in Alberta, \$450 quarterly, four times a year, so \$900 over the next six months or so, to Canadians. That is actually more than the amount the Conservatives are saying folks will save.

The Conservatives want to axe the Canada carbon rebate. They want to take that money away from lower- and middle-income families and make sure that oil and gas companies can profit. I will say it once again: Who needs an oil and gas lobby when we have the Conservative Party of Canada?

• (1130)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for endorsing the Speaker's generous impulse, because I do get up and down a lot. Then again, I am an Anglican, so I am used to it.

I want to ask my hon. friend, the parliamentary secretary this. I know the topic of this debate is about the summer tax break, which I oppose for many reasons, and he has admirably summed up most of my reasons, but I have been wanting to get on my feet all morn-

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ing because I was surprised at how uncomfortable I was with the speech by the leader of the official opposition. I do not think he intended to do that, but I want to ask the parliamentary secretary this. It made me uncomfortable because it seemed to suggest that Canadians would be better off packing up in droves and moving to the United States. The United States remains a more expensive place to live. Its health care is more expensive.

Our health care system is in some crisis, no doubt. Our cost of living has gone up, it is increasingly difficult to pay rent and there is no question that Canadians are facing increased costs. However, as a Canadian, as the only member of Parliament who has been honoured to receive the Order of Canada and as an officer of the Order of Canada I can say that the slogan of the Order of Canada is that we “desire a better country”. However, that means this country. It does not suggest there is a better country somewhere else. This is the best country in the world to live in. It was 20 years ago, it was 50 years ago and it remains so today. We have a health care system that is universal. Our education costs are lower. As we face the climate crisis, I want to be in a place where neighbours take care of each other, where we are, in the words of the Right Hon. Joe Clark, a former prime minister, “a community of communities” and we can pull together.

I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary could find ways within his party to reach across party lines and remind each other that we must not ever accidentally run down our own country. We are proud Canadians and we fight for Canada. We stand on guard for Canada.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, before I start, I just want to say that the Order of Canada designation could not have been invested in a more hon. member and better friend. Therefore, I want to thank my friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her intervention today.

Really, I think what we are talking about today is the Canada that we collectively envision for the future. I have had the luxury of travelling as a member of team Canada. I went to 70 different countries on every continent and got to see them first-hand. I was there for federal elections. I read the local news. I sat in coffee shops and got to know people from other places. Indeed, I shopped for groceries and paid rent in countries like Sweden, Norway, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, and in some of that experience I was very lucky—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what Conservatives are heckling about now.

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The reality is that we have an obligation to continue to ensure that Canada is the greatest country in the world. Canada is the greatest country in the world and Conservatives continue to talk it down. When they do that, they are talking down Canadian innovators, Canadian scientists, Canadian students and Canadian workers. Better is always possible, but this far-right nonsense from Conservatives, that more resembles the Trump Republicans than the good old days of Erin O'Toole or reasonable Conservatives back in the day like Brian Mulroney, is a Republican effort that seeks to exploit fear and anxiety rather than address the real concerns and issues that Canadians face.

• (1135)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning I heard the Conservative leader on his nonsense plan and the fact that the Conservatives want to axe the facts. First of all, we heard an attack on media, one of the pillars of democracy, and then we heard an attack on academic institutions.

We know that climate change is real, for those who actually believe in science, and we know that the Conservatives' plan is just to prop up big oil and give big oil companies a wonderful summer of profits instead of going after big oil, which they are friends of. However, at the same time, the Liberal government is still allowing fossil fuel subsidies.

It is not that I question the sincerity of my hon. colleague, but I want to ask him a couple of things.

Does he support his government's continual support of the fossil fuel industry and propping up big oil?

Also, the member was talking about the cost of living, and I have a private member's bill coming forward, Bill C-223, to put in place a guaranteed livable basic income. He said that one of the reasons he ran was to change legislation to tackle poverty head on. We know, in terms of facts and leading economists, including Evelyn Forget, who got an Order of Canada, that this is the way to do it.

Could the member respond?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, yes, indeed, this morning we saw the Conservative leader stand in this House and once again attack the media and question the expertise of scientists. He decided to take it upon himself to suggest that, once again, the media in Canada is not doing their job. They do a great job, and I want to thank every journalist in Canada who stands up, whether they are writing an opinion article, an editorial, or presenting news. We cannot take that for granted. We have a free media. We have great journalists in Canada, and I want to thank every single one of them. His negativity towards them and his anger towards them is just evidence that he has no respect for institutions.

The member's question was with respect to a universal basic income, which is something that I truly endorse. I also want to point out that our government was the first oil- and gas-producing nation to phase out oil and gas subsidies. However, they are not all created equal, and some oil and gas subsidies ensure that diesel can get to the far north for remote communities that rely on it disproportionately.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask my colleague, whom I respect and whose sincere commitment to the cause I recognize, a very simple question.

On one hand, we have the Conservatives, who are moving very populist motions that are very easy to swallow for those who do not ask questions beyond the headlines. On the other hand, we have a government that continues to blithely finance the oil companies and dirty oil operations in the west. Given this situation, can we not imagine the big oil bosses in their offices slapping their thighs in laughter, telling themselves that life is damned good?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague to say that the leader of the Conservative Party is not reporting the facts. Here is another example of that. While there are many MPs in the House, there is only one party in the House that does not believe in the fight against climate change.

Once again, as I said in my response earlier, yes, we should continue to support industries in Canada.

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question. Why will the government not tell Canadians whether it is going to increase the carbon tax beyond \$170 a tonne beyond 2030?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, we have answered that question a number of times. We have no plans to increase the price on pollution beyond that. I do just want to take this time to mention to the member's constituents that in Manitoba on July 15 they will be receiving a quarterly Canada carbon rebate of \$300. Families of four will receive \$1,200 in 2024 in Canada carbon rebate and that supports affordability in Manitoba.

The Deputy Speaker: Now I am going to say it again. Let us keep our questions as short as possible. Let us keep our answers as short as possible so that everyone can get to participate in this debate. Everybody should be a little more like the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa with a short question and short answer. It was awesome.

[Translation]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their presence. If I may, I will be sharing my time with the member for Jonquière.

Earlier, in his speech, the leader of the official opposition quoted René Lévesque, who said, “Beware of those who say they love the people but hate everything the people love”. Obviously, it is hard not to seize on this expression. It is hard not to reflect on it. Indeed, people like the truth. People like facts. People like political leaders who have had a real job. We are talking about people, like the member for Jonquière, who did not arrive here at 22 years of age. The member for Jonquière had real jobs. Quebeckers like people who do not insult their intelligence, who appeal to their intelligence.

Quebeckers and the people do not like those who hide from debates, people like the leader of the official opposition who refuse to debate. Quebeckers and the people do not like people who want to shut down local media and defund the CBC in the regions. People do not like that. People do not like official opposition leaders who, for years, hid the fact that they spoke French in order to be more popular in their agricultural riding in Ontario. Quebeckers and the people do not like that. People do not like it either when politicians move stupid motions. That brings us to the agenda. Obviously, the adjective applies to the motion.

I think this is the 42nd speech I have heard about the carbon tax. I am at the point where I start the clock and wait 10 minutes. That is what I usually do when the Conservatives are talking. This time, the Conservatives are trying to reinvent the wheel, talking about a break over the summer. When one likes what the people like, summer vacation is more important than Christmas vacation or Easter vacation. That is what love for the people looks like to the Conservatives.

They are reinventing the wheel and, every time they do, it gets more and more square. We have another example right here. They found another way of undermining the tax on pollution, which all of our economic partners have. It is once again a way of trying to convince people that fighting climate change is not in their best interest. Above all, it is a populist, ineffective approach that goes against the most basic Conservative values. They actually think people will believe that the Conservative Party cares about the purchasing power of middle-class and poor Canadians.

First of all, there has been inflation in Canada over the last two and a half years, just as there has been in the other G7 and G20 countries. A number of ad hoc measures were taken to support those most affected by inflation and the increase in the cost of living. The Conservatives voted against them consistently. All of a sudden, they feel the need to help people go camping. That is exactly what is happening.

For example, we wanted to help taxi and truck drivers facing higher fuel prices after they had already signed contracts and made commitments. These are people who burn fuel. We can agree that it is in the Conservatives' DNA to want to help them, but they opposed that measure. We wanted to increase the GST credit. The GST credit is a cheque sent to the least fortunate Canadians so that they can buy groceries. The Conservatives said that the measure was inflationist, and they blew off the poorest people in Canada.

All of a sudden, we should be helping Conservatives by removing a tax, which would be extremely expensive. I will come back to that later. All of a sudden, the Conservatives are concerned about

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people. The member for Shefford is working hard to increase OAS and abolish the two classes of seniors. Supposedly, the Conservatives are against anything that costs a penny, but, when it comes time to put forward a stupid motion, they are concerned about what the people like. It is a real dog and pony show.

The people care about health transfers. The people care about wait times. The people in the regions care about access to a family doctor. For them to get these things, we need unconditional transfers. All the Conservatives will say is that they will cut funding, so, yes, we need to beware of those who say they love the people and then spit on them. We especially need to beware of those who say they love Quebec and then spit on it.

● (1145)

Now, I want to talk about student grants. We believe in research and science. Under the Harper government, we had a science and technology minister who was a creationist. We hope for better days ahead. For 20 years now, students have been leaving Canada because there is not enough funding for research. Not only did the Conservatives refuse to help these young people get through the period of their careers when they are most affected by the cost of living, but they also submitted a dissenting opinion against the proposal by our colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques on this subject. All of a sudden, these people have the nerve to quote René Lévesque. That is what I call the art of failing to grasp what they are reading.

Now they are saying that, if they form government, they will save a penny for every penny spent. Yesterday, during question period, the Leader of the Opposition told the Prime Minister that every penny spent was an inflationary expense. Lifting this tax would be an expenditure of hundreds of millions, even billions of dollars, but that does not bother them. What they propose is equivalent to writing people cheques. It is a tax expenditure. It is just less obvious. Suddenly, tax expenditures are okay. This party runs on slogans. What is its slogan? Is it, “Axe the homes”? I cannot recall.

A member is answering. I am pleased to see at least one Conservative member is listening to me. I take that as a compliment.

Suddenly, these expenditures are no longer inflationary.

Then there is the issue of red tape. They want to cut the red tape, omitting that housing transfers must go to Quebec. The federal government cannot deal directly with municipalities. There is the Conservative leader's housing bonus and penalty program, supported by his Quebec cronies, who understand almost nothing of how this works in the province, even though some of them have sat as MNAs or been chiefs of staff in Quebec. They have no consideration for people.

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The GST cannot be lifted willy-nilly. It must be understood that it is part of a value-added tax system. A business that sells a product collects the GST and remits it to the government. When a business buys goods and services that it uses to create others, it requests a GST tax credit. It is a chain. It is an effective tax in that creates little distortion, less distortion and economic damage than other taxes, but it is a tax that is levied in developed countries and is burdensome to administer.

It is a chain, a process. The Conservatives want to lift this tax for four months. That means that every accountant of every small business in Canada, from coast to coast to coast, will get a holiday. I am not sure whose camping trip they want to pay for, but it will certainly not be our small business owners, whose lives will suddenly get a lot more complicated. Sending cheques would be easier. However, for purely ideological reasons, they do not want to do this. They do not want any programs, and they do not want to help people. All they can say, again and again, is, "Axe the tax".

Why is this? It is because they have absolutely no substance. They are showing us today that they do not even have a basic grasp of how the business tax system works.

He may be full of ambition, but let me conclude by saying this: The leader of the official opposition does not give a fig about people's vacations. That is the least of his worries. He does not care one whit whether people can go camping. He does not care one whit about getting rid of the tax. What he wants is a summer tax break so that he can have the pleasure of becoming a hatemonger again in the fall when the tax is reinstated. That is what he wants to do. It is pure electioneering. What he wants to do is say that we are going to enjoy a break from paying taxes and, when we come back in September, when the tax is reinstated—at his request—he is going to rise and harass people all fall because the tax was reinstated. Another false scandal will be created with this, but his proposal will have added management costs to every business in Canada.

It is irresponsible, because the main thing the official opposition leader is doing is fostering detestation, hate and the loss of confidence in the institutions that we vow to leave because we are separatists, but that we respect because we are democrats. I think that these people, their sloppiness aside, should be deeply ashamed of themselves today.

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was an entertaining speech, to say the least.

I grew up on a farm in rural Saskatchewan. The Bloc largely represents rural Quebec. My family's personal vehicles would usually have a combined amount of about 115,000 kilometres a year on two vehicles. That did not include our farm vehicles, farm machinery and all the other stuff.

If we wanted to go on a family vacation to Jasper National Park, it was 1,000 kilometres from my place to get there. If I wanted to stay in my home province and go to Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan, for example, that was 650 kilometres from where I grew up. Even if we wanted to just go camping at the landing where we would always go, it was about 250 kilometres to get

there. Those who live in rural Canada have to drive a long way to get places.

I know they say that they do not pay the carbon tax, but there is still a federal tax and GST. Would the members of the Bloc not at least agree that the federal tax and the GST being removed for the summer would be a good idea?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit fed up with some Conservatives who rise and think that since they grew up on a farm, they can say anything they want and get away with it. Me, I grew up 1,000 kilometres north of Montreal, in the Far North. To go to the hardware store, I had to travel 200 kilometres to Val-d'Or. I know what life in the regions is like. I know that the dairy producers in my riding work so hard they probably will not take a vacation this summer.

Our identity is always under attack, as if we were elitists. Just now my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets literally told the House which car the member for Kingston and the Islands drives, while Conservative members—we could name them—travel here by private jet and a Quebec member pulls up in a Cadillac. Members cannot say whatever they want just because they claim they grew up on a farm.

In reality, the measure the Conservatives are proposing is inefficient, costly and of little help to people. Its purpose is to manufacture a scandal in the fall. If the aim is for people to have more money, we must develop green technologies, engage in the economy of tomorrow and stop living in the 19th century.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciated the remarks of my colleague from Mirabel because he summed up the issue before us today. It is not at all about affordability or the fight against climate change. I always have to scratch my head when the Conservatives talk about a price on pollution. They want no price. They imagine it does not cost anything. In Quebec, we have long understood there is a cost.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on this. If the Conservatives so despise the idea of a price on carbon, why do they not adopt the carbon exchange?

• (1155)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, this is part of the nonsense that the leader of the official opposition told us today. He told us that if we were against the oil industry and against the development of the domestic oil industry, we were for foreign regimes, including Saudi Arabia, a socialist country. He told us this. We can tell that this is a very serious man.

As for the carbon tax, it will happen and here is why: Beginning in 2035 or 2040, if we ourselves do not tax carbon, the European Union and most of our major trade partners will do so at the borders. There are adjustment mechanisms at the borders.

According to the Conservative leader, more oil should be produced here so we can buy our own oil, but he wants to develop policies that will see Canadians, in the years to come, pad foreign countries' pockets with carbon taxes, meaning that Canadians will pick up the tab.

This is the type of chronic incoherence the leader of the official opposition is known for.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. This is a strong take.

If the Conservatives really wanted to help people with their cost of living and help them save some money, they could back the initiatives we in the NDP are advancing. I am speaking here about better access to dental care to lower their bills, and pharmacare for things like diabetes drugs or contraceptives. No, they continue to rail against the carbon tax and the gas tax.

Getting back to what our colleague from Kingston and the Islands said, he did a great job crunching the numbers just now. He calculated that, to arrive at a savings of \$670 per family, people would have to be driving around 25,000 kilometres during their vacation. That means that after going from the North Pole to the South Pole, they have to drive another 5,000 kilometres.

Speaking about the planet, I would like to ask my colleague this question. What planet do the Conservatives live on?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, to respond to the first part of my colleague's question, we favour universal health care and pharmacare, but just as the measure involving the GST, we want it to be done efficiently. For that to happen, the money must go to Quebec City. We must not sell ourselves short. Unfortunately, that is what some people do occasionally.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer said so himself on the air. However, I would point out that these are pseudo-journalists. That is obviously what happens when there are facts. Nevertheless, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said so. The Conservatives cherry-pick from all sorts of reports in an effort to doctor all sorts of things. They are betting on the fact that the average person will not spend their entire day studying the motion.

We, on the other hand, have a responsibility as parliamentarians. We must debate ideas and policies. We can propose different solutions to the problems, but ever since they changed leaders, the members of that party seem to think that the earth is flat. This saddens me, and I hope that they change course.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Mirabel. I am his confidant, so I know his secrets, which I will not reveal, but which explain to some extent his candour this morning.

As we can see, it is another opposition day marked by rank populism, another demonstration of how the Conservative Party takes liberties with the truth. My colleague from Mirabel offered the perfect illustration just now. The Conservative Party is a bit disconnected from political reality.

I will try to demonstrate this quickly by stating a few facts and claims that involve the Conservative leader. Two or three days ago,

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while discussing the Bloc Québécois, the opposition leader tweeted, "Under the previous Conservative government, which respected Quebec's jurisdiction and had a decentralist approach, [the Bloc] went from 51 to 4 seats. The Bloc is a dependence party. They defend those on whom they are dependent."

I would like to deconstruct this with the members in the House. The opposition leader claims that it is thanks to the Conservatives that the Bloc Québécois collapsed in Quebec when they formed the government in 2011. I would like to set the record straight and remind the opposition leader that, in 2011, there were five Conservative members in Quebec. That is one fewer than the six housing units the leader of the official opposition managed to build when he was minister responsible for housing. There were five Conservative members in Quebec, but there were lots of NDP members. We called that the orange wave.

Why am I talking about that? It is because Quebeckers are no fools. Since Brian Mulroney left the scene, the Conservative Party has never made a dent in Quebec. That is because the Conservatives have never engaged with Quebeckers.

Today's motion demonstrates yet again that the Conservative Party is not engaging with Quebeckers. Quebeckers do not care for social conservatism. Quebeckers do not care about Canada's much ballyhooed multiculturalism. Quebeckers want us to defend the French language, which the Conservative Party does not do.

To reprise the opposition leader's play on words in his tweet, indeed, the Bloc Québécois is an independence party, but it is also a dependence party. The only thing the Bloc depends on is the Quebec nation. The only thing the Bloc depends on is Quebec's interests. The only thing the Bloc depends on is the motions that pass unanimously in the Quebec National Assembly.

We could flip the question around and ask who the Conservatives are dependent on. When we examine the motion being studied today, I think it is clear enough that the Conservative Party is dependent on big oil. That is what I would like to demonstrate.

The first thing the motion talks about is axing the carbon tax. Since the carbon tax does not apply to Quebec, there would be significant inequity if, heaven forbid, people voted for the motion.

The second thing the motion talks about is axing the GST, but only on gasoline. Why did they choose gas? There are other things we pay GST on when taking vacations, including hotel rooms. There are a number of things for which the GST could be waived. Why only on gas? Is it not to give oil companies the chance to play with refining margins and raise prices? What is the Conservative Party's interest in this?

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Allow me to give a demonstration. A few days ago, there was an article that presented the views of Derek Evans, former CEO of MEG Energy, who is now the executive chair of Pathways Alliance. Pathways Alliance is the largest consortium in the oil sands industry, representing 95% of all oil producers in Canada. A few days ago, Derek Evans had something to say about the leader of the official opposition and carbon pricing. What he said is worth hearing. He said it would be very helpful if the leader of the official opposition could “provide greater clarity”. The man who represents the biggest oil sands consortium in Canada thinks the Conservative leader's position on carbon pricing is not clear enough. Not only that, he says the advice he would give the opposition leader is that “carbon policy is going to be absolutely critical to maintaining our standing on the world stage”.

● (1200)

The largest oil consortium in Canada told the Leader of the Opposition that it was doing more than he was on carbon pricing. That is astounding. Oil industry representatives are taking the Leader of the Official Opposition to task on the carbon tax. Let me offer an analogy. In my opinion, that would be like Maxime Bernier telling Greenpeace that they are not doing enough to protect the environment. It would be like a separatist saying that the Canada Day celebrations in his riding are not festive enough. It is completely counterintuitive.

Why do I say this? I say this because it clearly shows that the only thing the Conservatives are dependent on is big oil. I will go a step further, because the facts back me up. If we look at all of the Conservative opposition days and all of the Bloc Québécois opposition days, we can see that theirs focus on the oil companies, while ours focus on the Quebec nation.

What did our party talk about on our opposition days? We talked about the representation of Quebec in the House of Commons. We talked about the fact that the changes to the electoral map will reduce the representation of the only francophone nation in Canada. We devoted a whole opposition day to this topic. What did the Conservatives talk about on their opposition day? I will give my colleagues the answer: the carbon tax.

The Bloc Québécois devoted an opposition day to the use of the notwithstanding clause to ensure that laws passed by Quebec's National Assembly are respected, as is the case for Bill 21 now, as was once the case for Bill 101, and as will be the case for Bill 96. What did the Conservatives do around that time? They devoted an opposition day to the carbon tax.

The Bloc Québécois devoted an opposition day to immigration thresholds and the Century Initiative, and we called on the Prime Minister meet with the provincial premiers to set immigration targets. What did the Conservatives do with their opposition day around the same time? They moved a motion on the carbon tax.

We devoted an opposition day to climate change. What did the Conservatives do around that time? They devoted an opposition day to the carbon tax. We devoted an opposition day to the federal government's interference in areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. What did the Conservatives do? They devoted an opposition day to the carbon tax.

In my opinion, it is clear that the pro-independence Bloc Québécois is dependent on just one thing, namely the interests of the Quebec nation, and that the Conservative Party is dependent on just one thing, namely the interests of big oil. Even the big oil companies think the Conservatives are over the top. That is astonishing.

The Leader of the Opposition is presenting a caricatured view of the world. I would go so far as to say that it is no longer a caricature, it is becoming a Disneyesque, cartoonified imaginary world. When I listen to the leader of the Conservatives, that is what I think. Why? It is because, as the Conservative leader recently admitted, it is as if Jiminy Cricket could become an electrician and capture lightning to illuminate the room in which we are sitting. If we follow the logic of the leader of the Conservative Party, it is as if Tinkerbell could weld two pieces of metal together with her bare hands. It is as if Pinocchio could build houses by chanting “common sense” two or three times in a row. It is as if Cinderella could jump in and fix the budget.

Every day, we see this imaginary world the Conservatives have created. The sad thing is that, in the Conservatives' imaginary world, climate change does not exist. It is not a reality for them. The worst thing is that the Quebec members of the Conservative Party are buying into this insidious logic. None of the Quebec members are willing to defend the specific interests of the Quebec nation. This will become obvious when we debate the state secularism law.

I will conclude by quoting wise words from the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, who recently said, “The Liberals refuse to say that they will respect the state secularism law enacted by the Quebec government. We all know that they want to challenge it using [our] money. As nationalists, we must stop them.” That is what is happening in the real world. That is what the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord said not so long ago. I wish he would say it again.

● (1205)

He went even further, saying that we know that most Quebecers agree with Bill 21, that they agree that religious symbols should be prohibited for people in authority, and that the Prime Minister should take note of what most Quebecers want.

Before the member for Carleton became Leader of the Opposition, the Quebec members of the Conservative Party still defended the Quebec nation at least once in a while. Today, they only defend big oil.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed hearing my colleague from Jonquière's point of view, especially what he said about the oil industry, which supports and is still working on carbon pricing. Its representatives are saying that it is important to the future of the industry. In Quebec, we have the agriculture industry, among others, that is working to reduce the impact of climate change.

Business of Supply

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

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I wish my Liberal colleagues were also aware that fighting climate change means not buying a pipeline for \$34 billion. I wish my Liberal colleagues were aware that fighting climate change means not giving \$83 billion to greedy oil companies by 2035.

Unfortunately, I get the feeling that when it comes to the interests of the oil and gas industry, the Liberals and Conservatives are on the same page.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great remarks. They were very funny and entertaining.

I have a brief question for my colleague. In Alberta, Suncor pays just one-fourteenth of the carbon price. Is that fair to Canadians? Why does he think the government allows that?

• (1210)

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague.

The government's complacency when it comes to the oil industry is boundless. We were supposed to get clear direction on the elimination of the fossil fuel subsidies, the elimination of inefficient subsidies. However, this government cannot even tell us what the word "inefficient" means.

The oil lobby is so well represented here that the oil companies do not need anything at all. That is telling. They are so well represented in the House of Commons that they have to take the Leader of the Opposition to task for not acknowledging climate change. This is how bad things are.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, members keep telling us that, during the Harper era, there was such open federalism that it undercut the separatist movement. However, a certain premier of Quebec, Jean Charest, who later became the darling of the Quebec wing of the Conservative Party, said that it was not as open as all that, that our choices were being dictated and that we were not happy.

We have an aspiring prime minister who says he is very concerned about the provinces' jurisdictions and autonomy, but he is still incapable of saying whether he would impose a pipeline without the provinces' consent.

Is that open federalism?

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, that is precisely it.

We all remember the 2019 election. The Conservatives had an energy corridor project, where they tried to shove a dirty oil pipeline down our throats, a pipeline that would transport the dirtiest oil in the world all the way to Quebec. We remember that. We remember all the candidates waffling over Bill 21 during the last Conservative leadership race. That is the only thing they agreed on. They all agreed that it should be challenged in court.

A Conservative champion who defends Quebec is as rare as something I will not name here.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is my first full speech since the IDF air strike on a camp for displaced persons. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the horrors taking place in Gaza. We must do everything in our power to stop genocide.

I think of the families that were burnt alive in their tents in a place they were told would be safe. I urge the government to immediately implement a two-way arms embargo, to uphold the rulings from the International Court of Justice, to support the call for arrests from the International Criminal Court and implement sanctions now.

The Conservatives and the Liberals continue to oppose the recognition of the Palestinian State. This is a dehumanizing position that undermines those working for peace and it undermines the safety of Israelis and Palestinians.

I will continue to the motion that the Conservatives have put forward today.

It is not surprising to me that, yet again, the Conservatives are ignoring the role of big oil and gas CEOs in driving up gas prices, while fuelling the climate crisis. They have mentioned wanting to support Canadians in taking road trips, but they ignore the fact that, for many Canadians, the road trip they will be forced to take this summer is when they flee wildfire evacuation zones.

The Conservatives have no climate plan and they do not care about Canadians who are struggling with affordability. If they did, they would support dental care, they would support medication for people with diabetes, they would support contraception for women and they would support a national school food program, so kids do not go hungry and can focus on their studies.

For many Canadians, road trips are a summer tradition that goes back generations. It is the chance to explore our beautiful country and the nature we are grateful to have in Canada. I have enjoyed road trips in the past, but when thinking about road trips this coming summer, which I think is on the minds of a lot of Canadians, I wonder if we will be choking on smoke. Will my community be safe?

Communities are already facing wildfires. Homes have already been burnt to the ground. Communities within the past couple months, while they face multi-year droughts, have had to be evacuated for extreme flooding. We are facing a climate emergency.

The Leader of the Opposition is fooling himself if he thinks that pausing taxes on gas and diesel will save summer for Canadians. In 2021, the B.C. heat dome took the lives of 619 individuals. Those 619 people had loved ones who miss them. Predominantly, those people were low-income folks, seniors and people on fixed incomes who were in homes that did not have cooling.

Business of Supply

We have solutions that will make life more affordable, that will bring down our emissions and that will save lives. The heat dome would have been virtually impossible without the added effects of climate change. It is disturbing to me that we have members of Parliament sitting in the House who continue to question whether climate change is real.

While the Conservatives deny the reality of the climate crisis and deny the fact that we have to address the intersecting crisis of climate change and biodiversity loss, the Liberals tell us that they believe in climate change and that there is a biodiversity crisis, but refuse to take the action that would match the scale and the urgency of the crisis.

Climate denial and climate delay are not good options. Both of those options leave us in a scenario where the climate crisis is costing us the lives of Canadians.

● (1215)

I think about the conversation I had this week. I spoke to members from the Mikisew First Nation. They said that if there was a wildfire near their community and if the smoke was too dense in the air, they had no way to evacuate. They are a remote community with fly-in service. If the wind is blowing in a certain direction and if there is too much smoke in the air, they have no options.

They also shared with me that numerous members of their community had a rare form of bile cancer. Each one told a story about the numerous loved ones who had been diagnosed with cancer, because they were in such close proximity to the tailings ponds. Their water has been poisoned. For decades, they have been calling on the government to fund a health study, at the bare minimum, to find out and to prove what is going on, why their loved ones are dying.

Consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed the Mikisew Cree First Nation. While the Liberals like to say that at least they believe in climate change, that does not excuse the fact that they refuse to hold the oil and gas companies accountable for polluting the water, for driving up emissions. In fact, they not only refuse to hold them accountable, they are handing out taxpayer dollars to these same companies, giving them tax breaks.

At a time when Canadians are calling on the government for bold climate action, what we get are watered down policies. What we get is the Liberal government inviting oil and gas CEOs to help them craft their climate plan. I have said it before and will say it again, that is like inviting the fox to help us design our hen house.

The consequences are dire for Canadians. They are dire for the Mikisew Cree First Nation. I call on the government to fund the health study for which this community has been asking for decades. I call on them to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and ensure they have consent from the nations that are directly impacted by the pollution of these greedy oil and gas CEOs.

I think about the low water levels in their community as a direct result of the climate crisis. Climate change continues to impact access to fresh water.

Western Canada is in a multi-year drought, with no end in sight. Ecosystems that have been in place for hundreds of thousands of

years are breaking down, because there are increasing emissions affecting our atmosphere. If the Conservatives do not like to admit that there is a climate crisis and they do not like to accept the international experts, the climate experts, who are telling us that we are in a climate emergency, I am just at a loss as to how they face their constituents; how they face constituents who are fleeing from wildfires; how they face constituents who are seeing their farms flooded, their livestock stranded.

How can Conservative MPs look young people in the eye and tell them they do not deserve a climate-safe future? When I speak to young people, they tell me how worried they are about their future. They tell me they are fed up with governments that fail to act, that talk the talk but will not walk the walk. For the first time in generations, the younger generation will have a lower quality of life than their parents. Government after government has failed to address the systemic problems that have bubbled up.

● (1220)

It is not just the climate crisis; we are also facing a cost of living crisis. It is surprising to me that Conservatives and Liberals do not get how the climate crisis and the environmental crisis are intersecting with the affordability crisis. We have solutions that can drive down costs and drive down emissions. We have solutions that can support young people, like a youth climate corps, where we can employ young people in the green, sustainable jobs of the future, support them in getting training and ensure there is a skilled workforce for the kinds of jobs we need in a low-carbon economy.

Wildfires cost Canada a billion dollars every season. Those costs are only going to go up. Families in areas at high risk for flooding and wildfires are finding it impossible to insure their homes or pay for their extremely high premiums. It is not just the astronomical costs of the climate crisis that we should be concerned about, but we should also be concerned about how the government is bankrolling the oil and gas industry.

In 2023, the Government of Canada provided at least \$18.6 billion in financial support to fossil fuel and petrochemical companies. Over the last four years, the federal government's total financial support for the oil and gas industry was at least \$65 billion. This is at a time when oil and gas companies are making record profits and when their CEOs are getting over a million dollars in bonuses.

Doing nothing about the climate crisis has cost Canadian taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars, and watering down key climate policies and delaying the needed action continues to cost Canadians. It costs them their taxpayer money, their livelihoods, their homes and their lives.

There are also the long-term impacts on our economy.

Business of Supply

If the leader of the official opposition, or the Prime Minister himself for that matter, cared about the Canadian economy, they would support strong climate action, and not the watered-down climate action that we have seen from the government, not the delays and not the broken promises. The government would stop implementing incremental changes and stop cozying up to their friends in oil and gas. Enough is enough.

It is clear to so many people, especially people in my community, that the CEOs of oil and gas giants need to be forced to clean up their acts. They are threatening our future. They are poisoning our waters. They are driving up emissions, and they are threatening our coast. There is no way that these companies that are making record profits and polluting at an all-time high will willingly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, but the Prime Minister and the environment minister seem to believe that if we are nice enough, if we take small steps towards progress, then everything will be fine, like if we buy a pipeline to fund climate action, somehow that is going to help us avoid the worst outcomes of the climate crisis.

The government is misleading Canadians, but nothing compares to the level of misleading Canadians that we have seen from the Leader of the Opposition. I would be open to a conversation to hear, if they are going to roll back climate policies, what policies they are going to put in place to reduce emissions to the same levels or, even better, to get greater emissions reductions, but that is not the conversation we are having.

• (1225)

The conversation that the Conservatives continue to have is one where they ignore the fact that we are in a climate crisis. What will it take to get the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister to take this crisis seriously?

The Liberals think that they are climate leaders because they have implemented a carbon tax. The consumer carbon tax makes up between 8% and 14% of their emissions reduction plan. This is while they are letting the biggest polluters off the hook. This is while their industrial carbon price, which is doing the bulk of emissions reduction, has allowed loopholes such as allowing Suncor to pay 14 times less than everyday Canadians.

The Liberals have turned the carbon tax into this silver bullet of climate policy, while they refuse to implement a strong, robust emissions cap, to transform our economy with a green industrial strategy, to centre indigenous voices on climate action and to adequately fund watershed security in my home province of B.C.

If we invest in climate resilience and climate adaptation, in supporting our communities, our farmers and indigenous communities to adapt to the coming changes, we will save billions of dollars and we will save lives.

However, it seems like the Liberals and the Conservatives do not actually care that thousands of people are going to be evacuated from their homes again this year. Instead of showing concern and compassion for the people who are going through this unimaginable disruption, we have one party that denies that there is actually a problem and another one that continues to delay and to break promises.

How will Canada uphold its international commitments and its international climate agreements? How will we prevent wildfires, floods and heat domes? How are we going to protect Canadians from the worst impacts of the climate crisis?

Canadians are seeing elected leaders who ignore some of the most serious problems that we are facing. They should not have to pick between denial and delay. They should not have to pick between no plan and watered-down policies.

Canadians are facing a climate emergency and a cost of living crisis. We know that a huge piece of this is corporate greed. These two major parties refuse to tackle corporate greed. They lack the courage to take on the biggest corporations and the CEOs making record profits while Canadians suffer, while our planet burns, while Canadians are struggling to get by, while they are choking on smoke and while they are being evacuated from their homes.

New Democrats are the only ones who have the courage to take on corporate greed, who will name the oil and gas CEOs responsible for fuelling the climate crisis. We are going to continue to fight for Canadians. We are going to continue to fight for bold climate action. I will continue to hold the leaders of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party to account for their failures.

• (1230)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the motion from the Conservative Party is about making life easier for Canadians, because they are struggling.

That member should certainly know that, being a representative for Victoria. As someone who is also a British Columbia MP, I can say first-hand that all I am hearing from young people and others is that they are finding it a challenge just to make ends meet, whether it is housing or gas. That is what this motion is about.

Is the member not aware that three-quarters of the money that is being collected by the carbon tax in British Columbia, by the NDP government, is actually just going to general revenues and not helping climate initiatives at all? Those are her brothers and sisters in the NDP Government of British Columbia. I wonder if the member could speak to that.

Business of Supply

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, young people are struggling, and they are worried about their future. They are worried about both the climate crisis and the cost-of-living crisis. I wish the Conservatives had put forward a motion today that would tackle that to ensure that young people are not going to face ecosystem collapse, their food systems threatened and disaster responses overwhelmed. I wish they had put forward a motion that would tackle the housing crisis. Unfortunately, all we get from the Conservatives is more propping up of oil and gas CEOs, rich real estate investors, big pharmaceutical companies and the big grocery stores. They continue to have the back of the richest Canadians—

Mr. Randy Hoback: She should talk to her leader about his brother.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind members that if they have questions and comments to wait until the appropriate time and not to interrupt members who already have the floor.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened very closely to what the member was saying.

The member comes across as having very strong convictions in wanting to see our environment protected. The question I have for her is in regards to the price on pollution and how important it is that the policy remain, not only for today, but into the years ahead of us. Can she give her solid commitment that she will continue to support the carbon rebate along with the carbon tax or the price on pollution? Will she give that commitment today?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I am very firmly committed to carbon pricing. The industrial carbon price makes up between 20% and 48% of our emissions reduction. The consumer carbon price makes up between 8% and 14%. My commitment is that we reduce emissions in Canada to meet our international climate targets. Honestly, I am not married to any particular policy, but I am committed to ensuring that we have a credible climate plan, and right now, that means including carbon pricing.

The fact is that the Conservatives are saying to scrap the carbon tax, but they have not been clear about whether that means the industrial carbon price as well, which could be about half of our emissions reduction in Canada that all of a sudden would no longer be happening. However, the Liberals, unfortunately, have failed to close the loopholes in the industrial carbon price. They failed to hold big polluters accountable. It is no wonder that people are questioning the Liberal government and its commitment to climate action when it waters down its policies on the emissions cap, fails to implement bold climate policies and buys a pipeline.

• (1235)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I always love hearing my colleague from Victoria speak in the House. She speaks with sincerity, conviction, love and sensitivity. She should be held up as an example for some of our colleagues. I will throw something out to her. In my opinion, if we adopted this Conservative motion, it would mean that, from now on, it would be

legal and free to pollute in English Canada. What does she have to say about that?

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his kind words.

However, this is what we have been seeing from the Conservative Party time and time again. Conservatives would like to see there be no consequences for the biggest polluters. They are not committed to climate action. When they voted at their convention, they could not vote in favour of a resolution that said climate change was real. This is the level of debate that we are at right now.

I call upon Conservative members to look at the science and to listen to the international climate experts who are telling us that we are in a climate emergency, that we need to come together as elected officials and create and ensure a climate-safe future for Canadians today and for future generations.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke in her speech about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Conservatives talk a good game about economic reconciliation, which I will translate: “We will support your free, prior and informed consent if you support our economic and resource agenda and, if not, we are going to brush you aside.” It is a clear position that does not respect yes, no or yes with conditions.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague supports free, prior and informed consent without qualification: yes, no or yes with conditions?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her constant advocacy not only for bold climate action, but also for upholding indigenous rights. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is very clear: free, prior and informed consent. That means yes. That means no. That means yes, with conditions. Every member in the House has a responsibility to uphold that declaration.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked quite a bit about damaging the ecology. She talks a lot about having to pay for pollution. The member's city, the city of Victoria, has historically been one of the biggest offenders of dumping raw sewage into the ocean without having to pay for it. Port Alberni, B.C., in 2018, dumped nearly 47 billion litres of raw sewage. Richmond, B.C. also dumped 42 billion litres of raw sewage in 2018. Port Alberni is represented by an NDP member, as well.

Conservatives have previously actually tabled a bill to make it illegal to dump raw sewage into the oceans so that we can protect our ecosystems, yet she voted against it. Why on earth would she vote against that?

Business of Supply

• (1240)

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, just as a point of clarification so that the Canadians watching are not misinformed by Conservative rhetoric, Victoria actually has a sewage treatment centre and is treating its sewage. I have attended many meetings to ensure that Victoria treats its sewage.

I am also putting forward a motion, which I put forward in the past Parliament and in this one again, to stop the cruise industry from dumping sewage as well as effluent into the oceans. I am going to continue to stand up to protect our water and to stop the dumping that happens, and I am going to continue to stand up against the oil and gas industry, whose CEOs and lobbyists are flocking to the Conservative fundraisers because they know that the Conservatives are going to continue to let them pollute.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are many who say that because our emissions are so small compared to global emissions, we should not do anything. How does the member respond to that logic?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I want to say that Canada should be a leader. We have a responsibility, as a country who has one of the highest per capita emissions around the world, to do our fair share to reduce our emissions. It is our responsibility as Canadians to ensure that we are tackling the climate emergency head-on.

I want to thank the member for his work on the environment committee and for his commitment to freshwater. I do just want to put forward a quick plug that he push his government to fund a B.C. watershed security fund. There have been investments on the east coast, or at least in eastern Canada, but unfortunately, B.C. is struggling with multi-year droughts and with unprecedented wild-fire seasons. A B.C. watershed security fund would make a world of difference in adapting to climate change.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to split my time with my colleague from Oxford, who I promise will deliver a barnburner in his speech.

Today is another day, yet another occasion, that we are hearing in this place how the Prime Minister and his NDP enablers are just not worth the cost. After nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, it is no longer a stretch to say that Canadians are being robbed not only of the luxuries they used to enjoy, but also of their hard-earned money and the bare necessities of life. We all know that the biggest thief of all is this costly coalition's tax-and-spend regime, a regime that takes from the poor and gives to the rich, that does nothing to help the environment and that leaves Canadians with less and less money at the end of every month.

The out-of-control Liberal taxes already stole Christmas by putting up the cost of home heating and groceries, not to mention Christmas presents, which were simply out of reach. Ruining Christmas vacation was not enough for the Liberal Prime Minister, for his cabinet or for his NDP enablers. Now, they are coming for one's summer vacation too. Thanks to the Liberal-NDP government, it is simply too expensive to take a holiday with one's family, to go on a road trip somewhere or to enjoy everything the nation has to offer. There is not even anything left to spend, to begin with, because the cost of rent and mortgages are all up. They have doubled. Grocery bills have skyrocketed, and life, everywhere we turn,

is just getting more expensive. Members do not have to hear it from me. They can just talk to anybody in their own neighbourhood, which I think the Liberals have stopped doing.

Some of my fondest memories from my childhood involve packing up the car, hitting the road and exploring someplace new with my parents. For me, seeing the beauty of Canada from the car window started this love for Canada that I still have to this day. We came to this place and so many others, stopping along the way, anywhere an old book would tell us there was something to see. As an immigrant family, there was an innate sense of pride for my family to be able to explore freely the land that was now ours to explore.

Fast-forward to the world today, where these days, families will not be able to have that experience. In fact, we hear about that every single day. This is all because of a greedy government that cannot keep its hands off our wallets. Sacrificing holidays with families, much-needed time off, even things like meals or just the things we used to have, seems like a new norm in this country. Canadians from coast to coast have just one message for the Prime Minister, which is to just stop.

Today's motion would do exactly that. It would stop the Liberal regime's, forgive the pun, highway robbery from taking place at the gas pumps across the country. On average, the government takes 30¢ at the end price of a litre of gas in the form of the GST, the carbon tax and the excise tax, not to mention all the hidden costs because of the resource zealots and their anti-resource laws, and the red tape at every step of the way to drill oil, to refine it, to ship it and to sell it. On the docket today, we are calling for the government to give Canadians some temporary relief, to help save them 30¢ on every litre of gas they pump by axing the GST, the carbon tax and the excise tax, charged every time drivers fill their cars.

In just a few months, this would save the average family over \$650. That is what it could do. This is money that could pay for one of those hard-earned summer vacations people have been dreaming of, after a long year of work and after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government.

Imagine the relief not only for families, but also for small businesses and for communities right across the country, as we unleash a new wave of tourism in places like the beautiful B.C. interior, northern Ontario and New Brunswick, which are all places where people have told me just how much this would help.

These are places that suffer not only during the summer, but also all year round with the carbon tax. We know that, particularly on the east coast because the Prime Minister actually gave the east coast a break. He actually admitted his carbon tax was costing too much by giving relief to those on the east coast, to those the Liberal minister said that we should have voted in more Liberals if we wanted to see those tax breaks given elsewhere in the country. The Prime Minister actually did that.

Business of Supply

• (1245)

These are places where people have no choice but to drive to work, to buy groceries transported by a truck and to heat their homes with oil. All year round, they are punished by the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government, just like people everywhere, from coast to coast, 80% of whom the PBO says pay more to the government than they get back in their so-called rebates.

That brings me to my next point. What happens after the summer holiday? It is hard to believe that in just a few months, which I do not really want to talk about, we will be turning in our shorts and going back to coats. If the Liberal-NDP government has its way, it will carbon tax until the cows come home, with no chance of relief. In fact, the tax will go up again on April Fool's Day 2025. However, with a common-sense Conservative majority government, Canadians would have relief not just this summer but also all year round. We would axe the carbon tax so that families could afford to feed, to heat and to house themselves.

Conservatives would axe other taxes and clawbacks, too, so workers could keep more of their hard-earned money. They could spend it, instead of having the government spend it for them. We would cap the inflationary, out-of-control borrowing and spending here in Ottawa so that grocery bills and mortgage payments could finally be within reach and so that somebody without rich parents or a trust fund could take a summer vacation.

Every day, Conservatives stand in the House of Commons, as the only party of all the parties that advocates for ordinary, hard-working Canadians whose government takes more of their money each and every day. Every day, we take that message to Canadians, but every day, the Liberal government and its NDP partner in crime stand and say no. They stand and vote for more taxes on every single Canadian. They do not just say no to us; they say no to any common-sense agenda. They are saying no to millions of Canadians who stand with us, too. They are actively thumbing their noses in the faces of so many who just want to get by, like the two million every month who use a food bank, the mother who puts water in her kid's milk or the carpenter who fixes his boots with duct tape.

The show of arrogance and incompetence is striking. It tells us just how out of touch the Liberals have become after nine years in government. They stand and promote a big, fat tax on almost everything that Canadians do and buy as not only an affordability measure but also the centrepiece of the Liberals' ideological crusade. If we ask Canadians, they would tell us that they are not better off. In fact, I have not run into anybody who is better off today than they were nine years ago.

On this side of the House, we have a real agenda. Conservatives are going to axe the tax. We are going to build homes. We are going to fix the budget, and we are going to stop the crime. It is a common-sense plan to fix what the Prime Minister has so broken after nine years of being here. That plan starts right now and right here this summer. Liberals could vote for this today. We will continue the fight for everyone being left behind after nine years of the Liberal government. The choice is clear. It is for the only party that would axe the tax for Canadians, that would build homes for Canadians, that would fix the budget for Canadians and that would stop the crime for Canadians. We are the only party, out of all of the par-

ties in the House, making any sense at all. If anyone does not believe me, they can go outside of this place and ask nine out of 10 Canadians. They would say that they are not better off.

Today, tomorrow and every single day, in government or in opposition, Conservatives are going to continue to stand up for Canadians. All we want, for once, is for the Liberals to have some compassion, even some courage, to have a free vote, to vote for this motion and to give people the summer vacation that they want and that they deserve.

• (1250)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague is very articulate and eloquent, but she missed a few points. With the kind of tax cut that Conservatives are talking about, somebody would have to burn almost 1,300 litres of gasoline over the next three months for that to really make sense.

There are a couple of other things. We could do without the rebates, which is a consequence of axing the tax, but what a lot of people do not remember is that 40% of the excise taxes collected in Canada go back to municipalities to help them with infrastructure. I know this from my days in metro Vancouver at the transportation authority because we benefited from that. Is that also something she would give up?

Would she be prepared, as well, to contemplate somebody doing a “Danielle Smith” or the big oil companies just simply raising their prices to take up the space left when she cuts the tax?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, imagine telling Canadians that 30¢ a litre is somehow punishing and that taking 30¢ off a litre by taking off the carbon tax, the excise tax and the GST would somehow be a bad thing. Imagine telling them that they cannot take a summer vacation.

In the case of Alberta, and we all know this and have said it in the House hundreds of times, the cost of the carbon tax is \$2,943 while the price of the rebate is \$2,032. That number, the amount of the rebate, is less than the amount that people pay. In fact when the government raises the carbon tax by quadrupling it, like it wants to, the number is going to cost families over \$5,700 while the rebate will be \$2,900.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of my challenges is that when the member talks about Alberta and about the carbon tax, she is not listening to experts, expert economists. I brought this up in the House today, but I will read it one more time: “A clear majority of households do receive rebates that are larger than the carbon taxes they pay for...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.”

Business of Supply

In fact what the Conservatives are proposing would hurt the people who need the rebate the most. The statement came from an economics professor at the University of Calgary, Trevor Tombe. He is very well known in Alberta and should be very well known in the House as well. He is a very smart man. What the member is saying is that people who are wealthy are the people the Conservatives are most interested in helping.

• (1255)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, we are listening to ordinary Canadians. We are listening to premiers across the province, 70% of whom want the tax gone, as well as 70% of Canadians who want it gone. They know, despite being lectured otherwise by the government, which continues to tell us the opposite of what the PBO, another expert, told the House, that Alberta families actually get less. I guess the government picks and chooses its experts.

I would suggest that the member opposite listen to her constituents and to people right across the country who are telling the government to axe the tax. If the government does not, they will finally have a government in place after a carbon tax election that will.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was a great intervention from my colleague. I have a quick question.

One of the numbers that she brought up was how much the average family would save by having the carbon tax, excise tax and GST rebate over the summer. We also know that there are reports that the average family will be spending \$700 more on food this year, so the costs just keep going up.

How big a difference would the tax holiday make to families?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I think that of all the parties in the House, there is only one party that ever talks about tax cuts. That is the Conservative Party. If Canadians want a party that is going to put more money in their pockets and less money towards feeding the obese government, then they have a clear choice in the next election, the next carbon tax election, when Conservatives will go to the people.

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want first of all to thank my hon. colleague, the deputy leader of our party and great member for Thornhill, who has been a tireless champion in the fight for working-class Canadians.

“Choose forward”, “forward for everyone”, “sunny ways” and vote for “real change” were the slogans of the Liberals' campaigns year after year, and we have seen some real change. After nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, we are seeing two million visits to a food bank in a single month last year, with a million more expected this year. We see a historic high cost of living for Canadians. Families are now paying more for food, gas, housing and rent.

There is an absolute crisis in our country. Canadians are looking on Facebook pages trying to get tips on how to dumpster dive to get food to feed their family. That is not the Canadian dream, but after nine years of the government's reckless policies, we are seeing the damage it has done. That is the real change with the government.

In my riding, there are 22 encampments all across Oxford County. I was in Halifax recently, and there are 35 new encampments there. In Toronto and B.C., tent cities are now popping up, as well as right across our country. We have never seen that before, but that is the real change after nine years of the government.

There is a single parent in my riding, in Tillsonburg, who is a mother of an autistic child. I met with her in Tillsonburg and she told me that she is having trouble driving her son to London for treatment because she cannot afford the gas anymore. Can members believe that? We live in a country where a single mother cannot go to the hospital to get treatment for her autistic child. In Thamesford, there are grandparents who want to meet with their grandkids and spend time with the next generation but are clawing that back because of the cost of living crisis.

The scary part is that working-class Canadians, people who have decent jobs, who have worked hard, done everything right, gone to school and saved money are barely getting by. Fifty per cent of Canadians are now only \$200 away from going bankrupt. That is very scary. Food banks are at capacity and are begging for help and relief.

In my own riding, a lot of great charities are stepping up. An individual named Jayna has put together a Facebook group to help our seniors put food on their table and to provide rides when they cannot get to doctor's appointments. Our communities are starting to step up, as are the food banks, the Salvation Army in Woodstock and the Helping Hand Food Bank in Tillsonburg. Operation Sharing has set up in Woodstock. Organizations are going above and beyond to help wherever they can. Churches are coming together and offering some hope for our communities. The Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs have all been stepping up when the government has been failing to support Canadians.

Canadians wanted relief in the budget. We were all hopeful that maybe in the budget there would be some chance of relief for Canadians after the government increased the carbon tax by 23% on April Fool's Day, which has punished Canadians, including our farmers and working-class Canadians who just want to get by. The budget failed to provide any relief. Instead of the government's getting its spending under control, it spent an additional \$60 billion on inflationary spending. We are now paying \$55 billion of our hard-earned taxpayer money to service its interest payments on its debt. Canadians make it and the government takes it.

Business of Supply

• (1300)

That is why the Conservatives have been very clear that we will axe the tax once and for all for everyone everywhere, for good. However, to get relief for families this summer, we have brought forward a motion to give them a summer break. We all need a break sometimes, like the deputy leader mentioned, and some of my best memories growing up were spending time with my family during the summer. We would go from place to place, checking out amusement parks and just having time to spend with family.

We are not seeing that anymore, and that is why our motion would give an average Canadian family \$670 of relief. That money could be invested in buying more food, in doing an activity or in supporting a charity of one's choice. Much could be done with the money.

On average, because of the carbon tax, Canadians are paying almost \$1,700 more in Ontario. I have been listening to the Liberals, and despite their claims, the Parliamentary Budget Officer himself has said that Canadians pay more in the carbon tax than they get back from the so-called rebates. If we look at the raw numbers, the break would give Canadians almost 36¢ off a litre. That is not a small number; it is huge. It would be a huge amount of relief that would go to families.

However, for some reason the Liberals talk a big game about compassion. They talk a big game about being the party for the working class. We have not seen one policy that puts the working class forward. The slogans that the Liberals campaigned on are just empty promises. They are all words, no action. That is all they are. While the Liberals brag about their so-called experts, Conservatives go on the ground. We go to our neighbours, to our friends and to the working-class Canadians, who tell us every day that the carbon tax is punishing them. The premiers are telling us the same thing, that it is punishing Canadians.

Every policy the government has put forward is hurting Canadians, so we are asking the NDP, the Liberals, the Bloc and the Greens to come together and do what is right. Give relief to Canadians, and give them a break just for the summer. Let them enjoy their summers and axe the carbon tax on gas, the federal fuel tax, and also the GST.

The great thing is that ridings like mine are amazing when it comes to tourism. I encourage everyone to come visit Oxford. It is a great community. We are the dairy capital of Canada. There is a great cheese trail for those who love cheese. I am a big fan of dairy. As members can tell, I have gained almost 18 pounds since being elected to office. It is kind of scary, all the cheese I have been eating.

Oxford is a great place to be. It has a ridiculously great dairy for everyone to try ice cream at. It has amazing campgrounds like the Willow Lake Campground in my riding. It has great restaurants like The Mill and cafés like Kintore Coffee. It has the agri-tourism sector in our community where we bring together our strong farmers and showcase to the world the greatness of our community.

That is what Canada is all about: giving Canadians the chance to explore our great nation. We need to restore Canada's promise that if someone works hard, follows the laws and plays by the rules,

then they will get ahead, save some money, buy a dream house and go on a vacation. However, because of the Liberals' reckless policies, we do not see that anymore.

I ask members to please have a free vote, give Canadians the relief they need, axe the tax, and give Canadians the relief they need to enjoy this summer.

• (1305)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have three questions for the member.

First, the Supreme Court has said the price on carbon is not a tax; does the member agree or disagree with the Supreme Court? Second, I would like to know why the Leader of the Opposition will not state his view on the output-based pricing system. Why is he hiding? Third, I would like a comment from the member about the PBO's retracting the report he published, which the Conservative caucus has been repeating ad nauseam for the last few weeks. Will the caucus apologize for spreading that misinformation?

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Madam Speaker, I understand that the member is having a tough time going back to his riding and explaining why they keep raising taxes time and time again, over and over. I absolutely understand that it will be difficult for them when they hit their doors this summer. I get that they are desperate and divided. They are trying to throw everything they can at everyone else.

My response to them is this: It is your responsibility. You have been in government for nine years—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member to direct questions and comments through the Chair.

There seems to be some going back and forth as well, so I would just ask members to please keep their thoughts to themselves until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Oxford.

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Madam Speaker, they are desperate. They are running scared, and when the election gets called, they will get a strong response from Canadians. Their reckless path, which raises taxes on our farmers, on our working class and on our families, will be rejected once and for all. If they want to go to the polls, we are ready. Let us do it now.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, the motion moved by the Conservative leader is yet another very populist gimmick. It is easy for the Conservatives to tell people they are going to demand a summer tax break so people can go on vacation. I do not think it is as simple as that for Quebec and Canadian families, but the idea, as far-fetched as it may seem, would still come at a cost.

Can my colleague tell me how much it is estimated that Quebecers and Canadians will save thanks to the measure proposed by the Conservatives, but more importantly, how much it will cost SMEs, Quebec and Canadian businesses and the administration of the system in general to suspend a tax for a limited period of time?

What will it cost in terms of operating costs, and what will it cost the public purse in lost revenue?

[English]

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Madam Speaker, in Oxford County, we are a farming community. I know much of rural Oxford is also similar to that. When it comes to our farmers and travelling long distances, it will provide a big relief to Quebec families as well. On average, it will save \$670 per family just this summer alone. We will find savings by cutting the reckless expenditure on inside consultants that the government has been spending. They have spent \$21 billion on inside consultants. They have been feeding their own Liberal elites instead of Canadian families.

We are going to bring that money home, put it toward Canadians and provide relief to Canadians across Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario and the west.

We will work hard to put that money back in the pockets of Canadians.

• (1310)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. It was great.

What I find interesting about the Parliament is this: If the NDP and the Liberals are so adamant and so confident in the carbon tax, and if they are so confident that people want this and are willing to live with the pain that they are experiencing, to forgo things like food and housing so that they can pay a carbon tax, why will they not go to the polls?

Can the member give me an idea as to why the Liberals or the NDP would not say take it to the people and let them decide?

Why will they not do that?

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Whenever we are going across the country, especially in NDP-held ridings, people feel as though the party has sold them out and betrayed their values. The NDP was once known as the party of hard-working, union, blue-collar workers, but it has now abandoned them with Versace bags, Rolexes and champagne socialism.

Absolutely, we are ready to go to the polls. They will be seeing, in the next election, that Canadians will give a strong response to their reckless policies.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleagues are asking me to skip the speech and go straight to questions. If the Speaker would allow me to take 30 minutes of straight questions, I would absolutely love the opportunity to do that, but I do not think she will. If there was unanimous consent from the House, I would even take them up on that offer—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

That is on both sides of the House. I would ask the hon. member not to engage until it is the proper time for questions and comments. I ask members to please hold on to their thoughts; they will have time for questions.

The hon. deputy government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, there is nothing quite like slapping around the misinformation in the questions and answers portion. I like that best, but we will save it; that time will come shortly.

I have had the opportunity to sit here today and listen to three speeches from Conservatives. I have listened to the Leader of the Opposition; his deputy leader, the member for Thornhill; and now the member for Oxford. All I can say is that it is a ton of misinformation, hyperbole and inaccurate information. Whenever I ask the question to please explain to me where their information and data are coming from, nobody stands up and explains.

For starters, the member for Oxford just said that the motion would save people 36¢ a litre; the previous speaker, the member for Thornhill, said it was 30¢ a litre. Which is it? It is really important for the math on their own issue to work. The reality is that, if we look at the federal carbon tax, it is 17.6¢ per litre; if we add the 10¢ per litre, which is the gas tax, that brings us to 27.6¢ per litre. If we put GST on that, we are just shy of 29¢. That is what they are talking about.

I want to explain why I think it is so important to point out that number. If we take the 29¢ per litre and accept that as fact, which I hope we all do, because it is a fact, and we look at the motion—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, they are laughing at it. I guess, to them, it is not a fact; however, it is literally a fact.

The motion says that the average Canadian would save \$670 between now and Labour Day, basically three months. I extrapolate how many litres one would have to use in order to save that at 29¢ per litre, and by the member for Oxford's math, we get to 3,293 litres.

Business of Supply

The Conservatives are saying that the average Canadian is going to consume 3,293 litres between now and Labour Day. That is important to know; let us see what somebody can do with 3,293 litres. Using the average vehicle in Canada, that would get someone 25,842 kilometres' worth of travel. That is a lot. To put that into perspective for people who are watching this, the distance from the North Pole to the South Pole is 20,000 kilometres. I could drive from the North Pole to the South Pole and still have over 5,000 kilometres of distance before I meet the objectives of what the Leader of the Opposition is saying.

Put another way, I could drive from Ottawa to Florida and back five times and still have kilometres left over. I could drive from Ottawa to San Diego on three return trips and still have kilometres left over. The member for Oxford invited us to go to his riding, and I would love the opportunity. I do not know if I need to go 60 times between now and Labour Day, which I would have to do in order to get the savings that the Leader of the Opposition, his deputy and the member for Oxford are talking about—

• (1315)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Provencher is rising on a point of order, and I hope it is in conjunction with a standing order.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, I am sure it is, because I did a quick calculation with my calculator—

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

The hon. deputy government House leader has the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I hope that the member does not go anywhere, because I want to hear his question. He will have an opportunity to ask me, and I would love to hear his math. The truth is, at least he is attempting to answer it.

I asked the question of the Leader of the Opposition after his speech today. I said, "I just want to understand the math; explain the math to me." Of course, the Leader of the Opposition would not even remotely come close to answering my question. He just skated around and said that the Prime Minister does this and that I travel here. He did not answer my question. I just want to understand who did the math and how they calculated it. The reality is that it is just not true.

This is the problem: Conservatives get so outraged when we say that they are providing misinformation, which they are, but they should at least be able to substantiate the claims that they are making. The motion specifically says that \$670 for this summer would be saved by the average Canadian family between now and, presumably, Labour Day, when the summer unofficially comes to an end.

I could go on about the data around this, but I think I have made the point in that there is a ton of misinformation coming from the other side. Why are the Conservatives providing this misinformation? Why do they continually and repeatedly do this? It is because the Leader of the Opposition wants to fundraise. He is using this venue, the democratic centre of our country and the chamber where we have debates over policy, as an opportunity to fundraise. He wants to give a speech, talk about these things and then go and send

out an email blast, saying, "Donate to me and we are going to make life more affordable." Does it sound like anybody familiar? It sounds a lot like that guy with the red tie in the United States, Donald Trump. He seems to do a lot of that, does he not? It is the same outrage, the same—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I want to remind members, if they have comments or questions, that they should wait until the appropriate time and not be interrupting members who have the floor. When the Speaker is speaking, again, it is inappropriate for members to still be making comments.

The hon. deputy government House Leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, this happens a lot. Whenever I talk about the Conservatives and compare them to the MAGA Republicans in the south, they get outraged like this. The Conservatives do not like it.

• (1320)

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The member is supposed to be talking about Canadian politics. He referred to the Speaker—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member knows full well that, when it comes to speeches, there is some flexibility. I would ask members to please allow the member to make his speech, and I am sure that they will see that it is very relevant.

The hon. deputy government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is why he must have voted against Ukraine. He thinks we should only be talking about Canadian politics in this room. What an outrageous statement to make, on a point of order no less. The reality is that the Conservative Party is the equivalent of the Republican alt-right in the United States. It is a reality. It comes from the neoliberal concept of having absolutely no involvement in making life better for Canadians and, more importantly, using faux outrage whenever they can find an opportunity to use it.

Let us look at who the Leader of the Opposition hangs out with. He goes to camps set up by members of Diagonol, an organization in Canada that has ties to some pretty shady activity. It is the reality. The Conservatives keep heckling because they are upset about it, and maybe some of them even ask why he did that, why he participated in this. Those are good, fair questions. However, this is what the member for Carleton has transformed Brian Mulroney's Conservative Party into. They have the same colour, the same shade of blue, and they call themselves Conservatives, but they are not. They are the former Reform Party of Canada. Why they are ashamed to call themselves what they are is beyond me. They should just change their name to accurately reflect what they are.

They are following the same playbook as Donald Trump. They do the exact same thing. They try to find ways to outrage people. They try to tap into people's anxieties. They try to tap into the fears that people are experiencing right now and the anxieties they are experiencing in their lives. That is what they are doing with this motion.

Business of Supply

Once again, we have a motion before us on the issue of the carbon tax. I have a whole binder here from every single time they have brought it up. Of course, they never talk about the fact that people get more money back. They will never even talk about the fact that people get money back, never mind how much. The Conservatives treat the carbon tax as though they know they can rage farm more if they just talk about it. This is what we continually see from Conservatives, over and over.

I pointed that out when I started my speech by talking about the math and about how they came to the conclusion that the average Canadian is going to save \$670 per month. I want to know how they came to that conclusion. By my calculations, someone would have to drive 272 kilometres every day between today and Labour Day in order to realize the savings they are talking about.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I know some members were in the chamber a while ago when I indicated that there will be an opportunity for questions and comments, but some may not have been. Again, all of these points of order and interruptions that I have to rise on mean that hon. members may end up losing a spot because it is taking too much time for them to do their speeches.

Members should hold on to their thoughts. There is still a little under 10 minutes for the hon. member to finish his speech. Members will have 10 minutes of questions and comments, so they should jot down their thoughts.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I just talked about the average Canadian. However, Alberta MPs, presuming they are purchasing their gas in Alberta, would get 37,000 kilometres of driving out of the potential savings that their leader is talking about.

All that is to say that it is absolutely ludicrous what the Conservatives are suggesting and trying to sell to Canadians. I am sure an email will go out later today to their base saying they would save Canadians \$670, so please donate \$1,000. I am sure that will happen later today, because that is what they do. However, the reality is that they are misleading Canadians by suggesting that the average Canadian would save \$670. It is an outright falsehood. There is absolutely nothing true about it, unless the member for Dufferin—Caledon plans to drive from the North Pole to the South Pole, and then still have over 5,000 kilometres left afterwards to continue driving around. That is the only way he would ever save the kind of money they are talking about.

I find it incredibly concerning when we see, time after time, the Conservatives get up with their fake outrage and try to mislead Canadians and sell them something that is not true. In reality, if we stop and think about it, if we were to remove the price on pollution, the carbon tax, we would also have to remove the rebate. Even if what they are saying is true and we could somehow come to the conclusion that we would be saving \$670 at the point of sale, even if we could wrap our heads around all that and accept it, their math still would not work because people would not be getting the rebates.

The whole point of the rebates, the whole point to pricing pollution, is to incentivize people to make different decisions when it comes to their purchasing power, what they are buying and how they are going about their days. For some people that will be easier than for other people. That is why we have set up various programs to help people transition to cleaner options, transition to doing things differently that do not have a large carbon footprint. That is what this is all about.

For somebody who studied economics in university, I understand this. However, what baffles me the most is how Conservatives do not understand it. Conservatives are the ones who will tell us they know everything about how an economy works. They know how to save people money and know what is in the best interests of growing our economy while saving money. They sell people a fake bill of goods all the time on that narrative. However, for some reason, recently, they have lost the ability to look at things from a macroeconomic perspective to understand what the implications are on the micro level. That is exactly what is happening. It is exactly what we have seen time and time again from Conservatives.

It was not always this way. This is a new-found passion. To the Conservatives who continue to heckle me right now as I speak, guess what. They ran on pricing pollution. They ran on the concept of pricing pollution and a carbon tax. It was not even Liberals who first floated the idea of pricing carbon. It was Stephen Harper, in 2008, who said that he wanted to price pollution, because as an economist, he understood that changing market behaviour is easily accomplished by putting a price on something. We just took it one step further by saying that not only will we change behaviour, but we will also give all the money back through rebates.

I know that Conservatives are going to say the PBO said this and that, but my colleague just raised the point that the PBO recently issued a retraction on the numbers that it had done previously, which are the basis for all the Conservative misinformation. The reality is that eight out of 10 Canadians get back more than they put in. More importantly, 94% of Canadians who have a household income of less than \$50,000 a year absolutely get back more.

● (1325)

The people who are not in favour of this program are the wealthiest, and surprise, surprise, it is the Conservative base, the people who Conservatives go after all the time for fundraising, the people they will fundraise off of later on today. These are the people who Conservatives are insistent on trying to please because they know the more they appease their rich friends, the better off they will be as a party and, in particular, the better off the party's coffers will be.

Business of Supply

I will conclude with that. I am looking forward to taking questions from my colleagues, but I really hope that the member for Provencher or the member for Dufferin—Caledon, when they stand up, address specifically where they are getting \$670 from. I want to understand who did the math and how they got there. I am willing to be proven wrong. I just want to understand the facts. Every time I have asked so far today, I have not been given an answer, including from the Leader of the Opposition, who completely avoided my question.

I would like Conservatives to explain to me how they conclude that people will save \$670 between now and Labour Day. Based on the way that I have calculated it, in the best case scenario with the lowest amount, it would be around 25,000 kilometres, which would allow a person to drive from the North Pole to the South Pole and get a significant way back home as well.

● (1330)

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for wanting to speak in facts. Given his speech, we can all agree that we know the shopping cart is the most expensive vehicle in Canada to operate for all Canadians.

Speaking in facts, my riding of York—Simcoe does not qualify for the 20% rural top-up. I cannot even see the CN Tower from my riding. The Chippewas of Georgina Island, in the middle of Lake Simcoe, are 70 miles from Toronto, and they are classified as rural and remote by the federal government. We know, based on facts, that the government has rolled back the CMAs for certain ridings. It knows there is a problem. Houston, there is a problem. It even said so in the budget, but it has done nothing to address this.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am not going to avoid the member's question. I am not going to do what the Leader of the Opposition or the member for Oxford did earlier when they were asked a question. I am going to answer the question directly.

I think the member has a really good point. When I think of his riding, I do not think of downtown Toronto. It genuinely makes me question why his riding does not have the rural top-up as well. It is a good question. I do not have the answer to it specifically, but I certainly think it is should be looked at.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I am trying to agree with their colleague and the Conservatives are heckling me. It is unreal.

I think there should be a good assessment of this to understand why the government came to this conclusion. I am very happy that the government doubled the rural top-up to continue to help more rural Canadians, who are experiencing the impacts even more. Why it is not impacting his riding, to be honest, is something that I have questioned as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech and for his efforts to deliver a speech that makes sense, relatively speaking, while ignoring all the attempts to distract him. I wanted to point that out. There could be a little more decorum in this chamber.

In Quebec, for every litre of gas, the carbon tax is estimated to add—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for York—Simcoe on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member for Kingston and the Islands if he would sign my petition.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not a point of order. The hon. member got some direction from someone in his party a while ago addressing points of order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I was just talking about decorum in the House. These rather ridiculous interjections do nothing to lend credibility to our work.

As I was saying, with the carbon exchange in Quebec, gasoline costs 9.9¢ more per litre, while in the other provinces, gas costs an estimated 14.3¢ more per litre because of the federal carbon tax.

Obviously, when we see that, it seems much more advantageous to have a carbon exchange like Quebec and British Columbia. Not only does it encourage people to pollute less, but we are always hearing good things about it. However, Canadians in other provinces seem to prefer the carbon tax approach because of the rebates.

Could my colleague tell me the average rebate that Canadians in the backstop provinces get? That way, we can see whether the Conservatives' proposal makes sense in terms of the rebates that are paid out.

● (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that comment. I always feel as though it is a bit of a set up when Quebec MPs ask me about pricing mechanisms in Quebec, because I think they know how I feel about it. I believe it is among the best in the world. Ontario, my province, used to be involved in that pricing mechanism as well, but unfortunately our premier was short-sighted and got out of it. At the same time, he started pulling charging stations out of locations, only to start reinstalling them five years later, but I digress.

Business of Supply

The member made a really important point when he questioned how much the average Canadian would get back. It is different between each province, as he would know, depending on the jurisdiction and how it is being impacted. What I can tell him is that the last time the Conservatives brought up this issue in the House in an opposition day motion, I stood up. This was after I went through the math of my own personal finances, looking at what I was paying on heating and what I would be paying if I was driving a gas vehicle. Then I looked at what was actually deposited back into my bank account, and I ended up ahead.

When the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that eight out of 10 Canadians are better off, then I have no problem believing that because I know the math worked for me.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the last comments by the member for Kingston and the Islands. He talked about the fact that he got more money back. That is great for him, but unfortunately that is not the reality for the vast majority of Canadians, particularly those in rural and northern areas across the country where they are paying the carbon tax. They are using more fuel for essential things. People in northwestern Ontario, as members well know, need to travel great distances for essential travel for things like health care, which is not available in their community. It is not a luxury to drive; it is essential.

Why is the government so determined to tax Canadians just for living their lives?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, how is it possible for the hon. member to have listened to the first half of my sentence and not the second half of it? The second half of my sentence, after I said that I knew I was better off, I said that I had no problem believing the PBO when he said that that eight out of 10 Canadians were better off.

To member's point, that is why we have a rural top-up. It is why the rural top-up was doubled in the last fall economic statement. The reality is that eight out of 10 Canadians are better off. More important, as I indicated at the conclusion of my speech, 94% of households that make \$50,000 or less are better off.

The member is on a crusade to fight a price on pollution and to fight the carbon rebates that come along with them. He should know that his crusade is not with the least fortunate in our country. His crusade is with the best and the most well-off in our country.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, when I asked the Leader of the Opposition about industrial carbon pricing, he said that the industrial carbon price did not exist, which is a new level of misinformation.

However, I am critical of the Liberal government's loopholes that have been left in the federal backstop that allow companies like Suncor to pay 14 times less than average Canadians. The government could close the loopholes in industrial carbon pricing, strengthen our emissions reduction plan, get greater emissions reduction and also hold the biggest polluters to account. It could also enshrine industrial carbon pricing in law so that if, in the future, there were another government that wanted to scrap it, it would be much more difficult to take away this vital policy, which is doing the bulk of our emissions reduction.

I am curious if the member is pushing his government to close the loopholes and enshrine industrial carbon pricing in legislation?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am always pushing my government, whether in the House or in our caucus meetings, to do as much as we possibly can as it relates to reducing GHG emissions. A model that incentivizes people to make different choices, such as pricing pollution, whether it be at the retail or industrial level, will benefit tangible results in the future. This is not just me saying this. A vast majority of economists are saying this.

The joint signed letter of economists throughout Canada has over 400 signatories now. They believe that pricing pollution is an effective way to deal with GHG emissions and reduce them, and that more people are better off under the carbon rebate program.

It is only the Conservatives, with their rhetoric and their misinformation, who are informing people otherwise. If we were to ask the vast majority of people, they would agree that there are certainly benefits to them and, in particular, the least fortunate.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could my colleague address the issue of hypocrisy when the Alberta Conservative government increases its gas tax by four cents a litre and then the national Reform Party proposes that we get rid of the gas tax? Does he have a thought on that?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, believe it or not, I have a thought on that. The exact same day the carbon tax increased by three cents in the country, Alberta increased its own gas tax by four cents. I did not hear one bit of outrage from Conservative MPs about what Danielle Smith was doing. They know that the information they are providing is false and that they are doing it only for political opportunity. If it were genuine, they would have gone after Danielle Smith, just like they went after the Prime Minister.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time this afternoon with the member for Langley—Aldergrove.

It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to our opposition day motion on removing the fuel tax until Labour Day. While many of my colleagues may focus on the immediate economic benefit that this proposal would have on every single financially strapped Canadian listening today, I would also like to complement the conversation with an element of mental health.

As we all know, mental health has been declining in Canada. A piece in the Queen's Gazette succinctly states:

Business of Supply

A 2023 report from Statistics Canada has revealed that despite over half of Canadians reporting very good or excellent overall health, mental health is on a concerning decline. Anxiety and mood disorders, particularly among vulnerable populations, have surged, with a notable impact on adults aged 18 to 34 years. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, in any given year 1 in 5 people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness...

I do not think this is news to anyone. This is a real problem.

While the pandemic certainly played a large role in this worsening public disaster, it is not the only culprit. The mental health of Canadians is declining, nearly in lockstep with their financial health.

Two months ago, the Canadian Institute for Health Information issued a press release, suggesting “Canadians increasingly report poor mental health, cite growing economic concerns as a contributing factor.” Compared to the Commonwealth Fund average, Canada had higher percentages of its residents who worried about affording rent, about food security and about having a roof over their head at all. Its message is clear: Canada is lagging considerably behind its Commonwealth allies when it comes to economic stressors on mental health.

I know the other parties here today care about mental health. In its 2021 platform, “Forward. For Everyone”, the government had a page and a bit of its 89-page platform dedicated to mental health. It opened with:

In a typical year, 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness or addiction problem. And we know that over the last 18 months, nearly half of Canadians reported that their mental health worsened during the pandemic. Mental health is health. This is why we have made mental health a priority.

Our friends in the NDP had very similar overtures in their “Ready for Better” platform.

What I find troubling and confusing is that the Liberal government would engage in such dramatic inflationary spending and impose crippling tax measures onto cash-strapped Canadians. It is even more confusing as to why the NDP would play the role of the enabler for the Liberal government. It turns out that mental health as a priority in 2021 has given way, in 2024, to excessively taxing Canadians to the brink of financial ruin; mental health consequences be damned.

The fact remains that while, yes, mental health is health, economic stability contributes to mental health. Financially stable Canadians do not have the same economic stressors on them that non-financially stable Canadians do. Subsequently, there are less stressors on our already straining health care system, particularly on our mental health.

We only need to turn to the government's own numbers to validate the relationship between finances and mental and physical health.

In March 2019, the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada released a report that showed financial concerns were a greater source of stress than relationships, workplace performance or their own personal health. Nearly half of Canadians have lost sleep worrying over which bills they will be able to pay. Forty-four per cent of Canadians say they would be in dire financial straits if a paycheck were late.

This is all part of a vicious feedback loop. Mental health issues make it more difficult to earn and to seek help, resulting in financial distress. Then people start to worry about where they will go to get their next meal or what valuables to sell to pay off their past-due Internet bill so that their service is not cut off or what side hustle they will find, adding additional stress and anxiety onto already existing mental health issues.

● (1345)

Rinse and repeat is the reality of too many of the constituents in Hastings—Lennox and Addington and people across this country. The absolute last thing they need is the government adding on to that financial burden.

This is an opportunity to alleviate the burden the government has placed on Canadians when it hiked the tax on gas. Vacations, road trips, a time to step back are all great ways to reduce stress, spend family time and come back to the workplace motivated, inspired and recharged. This is absolutely true. However, the reality here is that far too many Canadians may not be able to even consider taking a vacation because they are so destitute. This common-sense Conservative motion would put money back into their pockets, not necessarily to go on road trips, but to use for their grocery bill or for all the other pressing issues Canadians are facing.

A recent survey by Ipsos shows that while nearly 80% of Canadians really need a vacation, two-thirds are scaling back due to inflation and economic uncertainty, and three out of five Canadians are scrapping vacations entirely. Canadians are not thinking about Disney; they are thinking about dinner. A clear indicator of the government's failure is that not only is it not providing for Canadians, but it continues to take what little they have.

Today, we have an opportunity to provide a temporary measure of relief for Canadians over the summer. This would help families, single parents, students, seniors and everyone in between. Pausing the tax on fuel would provide benefits to all Canadians. If they choose to use those extra dollars for a road trip and support local tourism, that is great. If instead they want to use the dollars to pay bills and get groceries, that is okay too. The real kicker here is that we are not proposing to give tax dollars to Canadians; we are simply asking the federal government to stop taking from them.

Business of Supply

I think this last point will really illustrate a dangerous mentality that far too many governments have. They view themselves as entitled to the money of taxpayers, as though it does not belong to Canadians, but to them, and they are going to collect it. This reminds me of a comment made by a former Liberal cabinet minister when he served as the CEO of the Mint. I think it encapsulates the mentality of the current Liberal-NDP government. He stated, “I am entitled to my entitlements.” This time I think even David Dingwall himself would have to agree that it is the taxpayer footing the bill.

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member started her speech by talking about the importance of mental health and how environmental issues can hurt one's mental health. It begs the question why we the Conservative Party is voting against the support programs that are there for Canadians. In particular, I am thinking of fixed-income people, seniors or children and the dental and pharmacare programs. These are all constituents she would represent. We are not talking about hundreds, but thousands of constituents who she represents, yet she continues to vote against these vital programs that I would argue are also good for mental health.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, I will assure the member across the aisle that every single day I am listening to and working for the ordinary, hard-working Canadians in Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

I will also remind the member that, with respect to mental health, we should address the cause. The cause is the issue. If the symptoms are always the focus, we need to re-evaluate how we are looking at this. How did we get here? Where did these issues come from? People are in dire straits right now and they need serious help. People are hurting. People are dying. Conservatives are offering a bit of a solution.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a very simple question for my colleague.

First of all, we are talking about \$1.4 billion in government revenue, which is a truly astronomical sum.

Can my colleague help me understand why the Conservatives claim that axing this tax will be better for poor people than for rich people, who obviously use more oil and gas than other people?

[English]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, I would suggest that our middle class is shrinking for a number of reasons. We have become a country of high taxation, dwindling revenues, big government, massive social programs and massive deficits. High inflation and high interest rates are making it so the middle class no longer exists. We need to move forward. We need solutions. We cannot continuously just say damn. The government is not working. Conservatives are offering a solution.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wanted to ask the member about the mental health crisis of young people who are concerned about the climate crisis. Climate anxiety is at an all-time high. When young people are seeing communities evacuat-

ed because of wildfires, multi-year droughts, heat domes that kill hundreds of people and extreme flooding, they are worried about right now and they are worried about their future.

Can the member speak to young people and tell them why the Conservatives have no climate plan?

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, I would like to start by saying that perhaps caring is not always convenient. How people care and how people find solutions come in different silos. How they are interpreted is different for everyone.

Members across the aisle will probably agree with me that youth are the future of this country. Youth need to ask critical, informed questions. I know on this side of the aisle, we are giving them accurate, positive solutions.

• (1355)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to stand up to talk about the Conservatives' motion for an axe-the-tax summer vacation road trip. I had a very happy childhood, spending many hours in the great outdoors in Edmonton, Alberta, all seasons of the year, even in the winter when everything was frozen solid, but the highlight of our family's year was always planning the summer road trip.

We started the planning as the snow started melting, usually around this time of the year, in late May. I know with global warming it is happening a couple of weeks earlier, but that was something that always bound our family together. We were always very excited about it. It was usually a three-day trip as we made our way from Edmonton in Alberta to the west coast of British Columbia. We took our time, camping along the way. The first night was often in Jasper, maybe in Banff, and the second night somewhere in the Okanagan Valley. We never took the shortest route because there was so much to explore and so much to see in this great land of ours.

By the third day we arrived at beautiful Cultus Lake in Chilliwack, where we camped for usually two or three weeks. Along the way, we always camped. There were no motels for us and no restaurants for us. We did not have money for that. It was too expensive, but the one thing that we never had to worry about was the price of gasoline for our Chevy with a big V8 engine.

I wonder what the story would be like today, if we were to relive that. To stick with my personal example for a minute longer, there was not a lot of extra money to cut out of our travel budget. Motels and restaurants were already out. Maybe we could have cut the mini-golf at campgrounds or the comic books that kept us quiet sitting in the back seat for hours on end or maybe we could have cut some of the excursions like taking the airtram down to Hells Gate in Fraser Canyon. Every Canadian should see our amazing nature and the engineering around building the railroad through the Fraser Canyon.

Statements by Members

The decisions that families have to make these days are much more difficult and much more challenging than that, because after nine years of the Liberal government, Canadians are being forced to cancel their summer vacations altogether, as the Liberals' ill-conceived tax-and-spend agenda has made even a simple road trip unaffordable.

Parents can barely afford necessities, much less a summer road trip. Families will pay \$700 on average more for food this year than they did in 2023. Last year, food banks had to handle a record two million visits in a single month, with a million more expected this year, as food inflation continues to be such a challenge for people.

Let us talk about housing inflation. This is what I hear from people in my community of Langley. Tanya wrote to me and said, "Youth in high school and university don't even dream of owning a home now. They simply hope to one day be able to afford to rent their own place. The inflation is stifling the hopes and dreams of Canadian youth."

Similarly, Fred and Elaine wrote to me and said, "We are in our mid 80s. We can't leave B.C. because all our family live here and it's getting harder for us, and many of our friends are feeling frightened the way things are going. Rent prices are terrible, how are our grandchildren and great grandchildren going to live?"

I thank Fred and Elaine for that comment.

I get a lot of comments like that, and here is another one from Anthony, who is a business person. He is talking about the cost of housing and the effect it has. He said, "I am having trouble retaining and attracting young employees as the cost to live in Metro Vancouver is simply unaffordable. I had a great apprentice leave last summer and move to Calgary, he took a pay cut but was wanting to start a family and saw no chance of that happening here in B.C."

That is good for Calgary once again. Someone else leaving is British Columbia to go to Calgary where things are more affordable, but it is a real challenge there as well.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Nedia El Khouri, a gifted artist, dedicated arts activist and dynamic entrepreneur, who is a 2024 recipient of the Montreal Council of Women's Woman of the Year Award. Past recipients of this prestigious award include Sheila Goldbloom, Chantal Hébert and Margaret Trudeau, among others.

In 2009, drawing on her passion for art and art education and on a strong belief in art's transformative power, Nedia founded the Viva Vida Art Gallery in Pointe-Claire village in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis. The gallery features exhibitions on important themes, but also supports artist development and offers art education for youth and adults. Both the gallery and Nedia's own explorations as

an artist have brought a new dimension to life in Montreal's West Island.

I thank Nedia, and once again, congratulations on this well-deserved honour.

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END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a big congratulations to all the grade 8 and grade 12 students who are graduating this year in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and beyond. We are all proud of them for reaching this significant milestone in their educational journey. Their hard work, dedication and resilience have paid off, and they should be proud of their achievements.

This year's ceremony is extra special for our grade 12 students, who were denied a proper grade 8 graduation because of the pandemic. I hope their high school graduation ceremonies are made even more memorable to mark overcoming such a challenging time. As they move on, whether to high school, post-secondary education, trade or entering the workforce, I remind them to embrace every opportunity, continue to strive for excellence and never stop learning. They are the future of Canada. Celebrate this momentous occasion with joy. Best wishes for continued success and happiness, and congratulations again to the class of 2024.

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CANADA-WIDE SCIENCE FAIR

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week I had the opportunity to visit students from Waterloo—Wellington and others from across Canada at the Canadian Museum of Nature. They are participating in this year's Canada-Wide Science Fair, hosted by Youth Science Canada.

Every year for the past 11 years, talented youth from across the nation have had the opportunity to present their science and engineering projects that will transform the future of Canada's science and technology landscape. Some of our nation's brightest young minds come together to share their passion for STEM and innovation. The next generation of our country's scientists and innovators are bright with promise and curiosity, and I look forward to seeing what they will accomplish next.

Congratulations to all the national winners, who will be announced today.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

WORLD MILK DAY

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday is World Milk Day. From skim milk to lactose-free milk to chocolate milk, this beverage will always be a comfort food. However, because of market share surrendered in past agreements, about one in five pints of milk will eventually be imported from abroad.

That is why the Senate must pass Bill C-282 as soon as possible. Our dairy farmers do not want to beg for temporary compensation for permanent losses. They want to work hard to make a decent living and provide us with quality milk. Our public policies must be designed to serve the interests of the public and safeguard our own food security, not please foreign interests.

It is time to stand up. Our farmers are passionate about dairy production, committed to a sustainable future and proud of what they have achieved together, and they are calling on the Senate to act quickly. Let us all celebrate World Milk Day together.

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SEIGNEURIALES DE VAUDREUIL-DORION

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, oyez, oyez!

Lords, ladies, nobles and all the good folk of Vaudreuil-Dorion will gather on June 6, 7, 8 and 9 for the 32nd edition of the Seigneuriales de Vaudreuil-Dorion. At this festival honouring the history of New France, they will eat, drink, play and sing as they celebrate the rich cultural heritage of our community, Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

Thanks to the extraordinary work of the Musée régional de Vaudreuil-Soulanges, the City of Vaudreuil-Dorion, and Christiane Lévesque and her team, the people of Vaudreuil—Soulanges can explore the local artisan fair all weekend long and be charmed by period costumes and an atmosphere worthy of New France.

I want to take this opportunity to invite all the gentlefolk of Vaudreuil—Soulanges to join me at this festival. There will be activities for the whole family, local artisans and, of course, everything our seigneurie has to offer.

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● (1405)

WORLD MILK DAY

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, June 1, we are celebrating World Milk Day.

To the nearly 10,000 dairy farms and the more than 500 processing plants in Canada, I say thank you. These men and women get up at dawn every day, put on their work boots and do an incredible job to feed Canadians with the quality products we are celebrating.

My riding is home to many of these businesses, which never fail to offer top-notch products that are among the healthiest and most nutritious in the world. These farmers not only provide the best products in the world, but they also play an important role in achieving our country's environmental goals.

I speak for all parliamentarians when I thank them for their hard work. As Conservatives, we will continue to support our agricultural sector, which is an essential economic driver in this country.

On the eve of World Milk Day, and in honour of the Canadians who work hard in our dairy industry, I invite all my colleagues to stand up and raise a glass of milk.

The Speaker: I would just like to remind members once again that they are not to use props to make their point. What is more, they are only allowed to bring water onto the floor of the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

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[English]

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS AWARDS

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like, once again, to launch my Community Champions awards, for which we are now accepting nominations. Each year, we recognize everyday leaders who work hard to build a better community for everyone. A community champion is an outstanding neighbour, such as a volunteer, frontline worker, parent or unsung hero, who demonstrates leadership. Through their leadership, they create a better society by fostering a culture of kindness and generosity. They inspire others to step up and be part of positive change. To nominate a community champion, please email my constituency office. Nominations are open until July 14. I look forward to honouring this year's outstanding community champions in Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

*Statements by Members***MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS AWARENESS DAY**

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 12 was international myalgic encephalomyelitis awareness day. I would like to acknowledge the approximately two to three million Canadians now living with this debilitating illness. ME, formerly known as chronic fatigue syndrome, is a devastating, chronic, complex, multi-system illness. It occurs in children, adolescents and adults of all ages and backgrounds, and three-quarters of people living with the illness are women. Up to 75% are unable to work, and one-quarter are consistently bed-bound or house-bound. ME is an urgent health crisis, with research showing that 50% or more of those with long COVID go on to develop ME. People with ME are suffering and desperately want their lives back. There is currently no cure or approved treatment for it at this time. It is therefore crucial that Canada take action, increase funding for ME research and provide resources for national education and training.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis is reaching an unsustainable level for Canadians. La Presse reported that it takes 610 days to obtain a building permit in some parts of Montreal. That is almost two years.

Quebeckers are suffering and the leader of the Conservative Party sees that. He is taking concrete action to alleviate Quebeckers' suffering. His legislation to build homes, not bureaucracy requires cities to build housing quickly, with rewards for cities that do and penalties for those that put up bureaucratic hurdles.

The Bloc Québécois voted against this solution yesterday, just as it voted against Quebec's fundamental interests when it voted in favour of \$500 billion in spending. The Bloc Québécois refuses to make housing more affordable. This housing crisis requires common-sense solutions. Canadians need them badly. Not only does the Bloc Québécois refuse to meet Quebeckers' needs, it also opposes solutions aimed at making their lives better.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

ANTI-SEMITISM

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the Second World War, our country held Japanese, German and Italian Canadians responsible for the actions of their heritage or origin countries. That was wrong. With the rise in anti-Semitism today, too many Canadians are repeating that mistake. It is wrong to hold Jewish Canadians responsible for the actions of Israel. The vast majority of Jewish Canadians feel a deep connection to Israel. That is called Zionism. It is the same connection that many people in the House feel to their heritage countries or countries of origin, but we do not and we should not hold anyone to account for the actions of another country, and we should never question their loyalty to our great country. Let us all stand up against anti-Semitism. It is dangerous and it needs to stop.

CARBON TAX

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at every door, in every conversation and in every phone call, it is the same comment over and over again: life is too unaffordable. How did it get this way in Canada?

We know that it is the inflationary spending, the taxes and the deficits of the Liberal-NDP government that have driven up the cost of literally everything, and that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Canadians are crying out for some relief. That is why, in our motion before Parliament today, common-sense Conservatives are calling on the government to suspend all gas and diesel taxes for the summer, until Labour Day. That would be \$670 in savings for a typical Canadian family, enough to take a road trip, to go camping or take a day trip to one of the many outstanding local attractions across our country, which is the stuff that memories are made of.

It would give some relief and some hope, until a new common-sense Conservative government, under the leadership of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, can axe the tax on everything, everywhere, for good.

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CARBON TAX

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, the Calgary Herald confirmed how hard the people in my city are struggling as a result of the fiscal incompetence and arrogance of the Liberal-NDP government.

Since 2019, shelter and food costs have gone up 26% for Calgarians, while electricity and natural gas are up over 70%. Alberta used to be a province of opportunity and economic prosperity, but the Prime Minister has done everything he could to change that. His ideological carbon tax and his irresponsible spending have my constituents feeling desperation, dread and lost hope. Young adults cannot afford to have the children they dreamed of. Parents have to pull kids out of organized sport. Seniors are embarrassed that they have to rely on food banks.

Today, we asked the Liberal-NDP government to immediately axe the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax and the GST on gasoline and diesel until Labour Day. I hope the other members in the House will do the right thing, and vote to help Canadians who need and deserve a break.

*Statements by Members***CANADIAN DENTAL CARE PLAN**

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, dental care is health care, and I am proud to be part of a team that is making dental care more accessible and affordable for millions of Canadians, including so many in my riding of Brampton East.

More than two million Canadians have successfully signed up for the Canadian dental care plan. Over 10,000 dentists and oral health providers have signed up to participate in this plan. In three weeks, over 120,000 seniors have visited their oral health providers under our federally funded plan, saving seniors hundreds of dollars in dental care costs.

I find it hard to believe that the Conservatives across the way stand against these vital supports for seniors. The Canadian dental care plan is a significant achievement by our federal government. It will not only alleviate major financial barriers and burdens, but also improve the quality of life for many Canadians.

As the initiative continues to roll out in phases, our plan will help improve dental health not only for the seniors in my constituency, but also for seniors in communities across Canada.

* * *

AVIATION INDUSTRY

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, big airlines are raking in billions of dollars of profits off the back of unpaid work. In Canada, flight attendants, who are disproportionately women, work an average of 35 hours for free every month.

There is no reason that big airlines who make huge profits should be making their staff work for free, yet the Liberals have allowed big airlines to take advantage of workers.

Today, flight attendants are in Ottawa, fighting for their right to be paid for the work they do. They want the government to change the laws, to correct this unacceptable status quo and to ensure that when flight attendants are at work, in uniform, performing their duties, they are being paid. It is only fair. New Democrats agree.

The government must stand up to corporate greed and protect workers. Flight attendants deserve better, and today, I raise their voices here in the House of Commons by saying that unpaid work will not fly.

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• (1415)

*[Translation]***RÉGINALD CHARLES GAGNON**

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the great Acadian country singer Cayouche has passed away at the age of 76 after a battle with cancer.

Réginald Charles Gagnon, his real name, lived a very full life and had an outstanding career. Far from the spotlight, he built a loyal following by telling stories about his friends, his heartbreak and his travels.

For those who were not fortunate enough to know him, we can say that he was a cross between Willie Nelson and Willie Lamothe. For those who did know him, we can say that those two singers both had a little bit of Cayouche in them.

With his guitar on his back, he played everywhere, in small towns and at big festivals. The inimitable Cayouche was truly unique. Some of his songs include *La chaîne de mon tracteur*, *Le frigidaire de mon chum*, *Mon bicycle*, *ma musique* and *C'est ça mon Acadie*. He is one of the most successful Acadian artists, with more than 100,000 albums sold.

We would like to extend our condolences to his family, friends and fans. We join all of our Acadian friends in hoping that he is met at heaven's gates with a nice, cold Alpine.

I say goodbye to Cayouche.

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*[English]***LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here they come, and there they go. The race to replace the Prime Minister is under way, and Mark “carbon tax” Carney is out ahead of the pack. He has been seen jet-setting across the globe, sliding into ballrooms, sipping on champagne, eating caviar and trying to win favour with global Liberal elites, and all the while, hard-working Canadians are struggling to afford to pay their rent and buy groceries.

The finance committee has called for Mark Carney to come and answer questions. Will he have the guts to appear, or will he keep campaigning from his private jet? Canadians need to know just how much carbon tax Carney will jack up the Prime Minister's carbon tax or if there is even one dollar of inflationary spending that he would do away with. The reality is that he has never met a hard-working Canadian's tax dollar that he is not prepared to take away from them, and he is not prepared to do away with one cent of Liberal waste. Carney will do anything to make a buck. He is after Canadians. Will he come to committee and finally testify to answer questions?

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NORTHERN SUPER LEAGUE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S SOCCER

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on August 9, 2012, Canada's women's soccer team played France for Olympic bronze in London. In the dying seconds of the game, Oakville's own Diana Matheson scored the winning goal, a goal that changed the trajectory of soccer in Canada and inspired a whole generation of young Canadian female soccer players, like Sophia Stevens from my office.

Matheson and Team Canada would go on to win Olympic bronze in 2016 in Rio. She is more than just a Canadian Olympic hero, she is a trailblazer and an extraordinary leader.

Oral Questions

Canada is the only top ten women's soccer team in the world without its own professional women's league. In 2022, Matheson launched Project 8 to change that, with the goal of creating a league that would see Canada's best soccer players play in front of their hometowns instead of moving abroad. This week, that dream became a reality when Project 8 announced the Northern Super League.

I congratulate Diana Matheson on her hard work and dedication.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, and Canadians are suffering through his inflation and high interest rates.

For many families, the best hope for a summer vacation will be a modest road trip. Parents will sketch out a budget based on meals and hotels, and a big expense will be fuel. The GST, excise tax and carbon tax have helped push fuel prices to near record levels, with many families unable to afford a vacation at all. Conservatives have proposed taking the tax off of gas and diesel for the summer, saving Canadians 35¢ a litre.

Will the Prime Minister vote for our motion, or will he force more Canadians to stay home this summer?

• (1420)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a prime cut of Conservative baloney. I know what I am talking about; my dad was a butcher.

The savings that the Conservative Party of Canada claims for Albertans is based on people travelling 37,000 kilometres during their holidays. For 37,000 kilometres, someone can go from the North Pole to the South Pole and still have kilometres left to achieve the savings that the Conservatives claim.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just not true. Everybody knows that the carbon tax costs more than the rebate. That is why the Prime Minister was humiliated into granting a carve-out for just some people in some parts of the country. That is all we are asking for today: a carve-out on federal taxes on fuel and diesel for the summer.

For the average family in Ontario, that would mean almost \$600 in savings. To the Prime Minister's wealthy friends, that might not seem like a lot of money, but to struggling Canadians, that can make the difference of being able to say yes to kids when they ask for some summertime fun.

Will the Prime Minister have an ounce of compassion and help more Canadian families afford a vacation?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know math is not the forte of the Conservative Party of Canada. Let me walk its members

through it. By their math, Albertans would have to use 3,293 litres of gasoline over a three-month period. At an average of 8.9 litres per 100 kilometres, that is equivalent to 37,000 kilometres. Someone would have to drive for 10 consecutive days, nonstop, and after two weeks of vacation, they would have two days left, or maybe three, to enjoy that vacation.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think math is the forte of someone who brags that he does not think about monetary policy and who thinks that budgets balance themselves.

Maybe the reason the Prime Minister is being so cruel about this issue is that he has long forgotten the thrill of the family road trip. He has wealthy lobbyists who invite him to their private islands where he does not have to pay for the villas, and he gets to stick taxpayers with the bill. Canadian workers have to pay for all the inflation, all the interest rates and all the tax hikes themselves.

Will the Prime Minister have an ounce of compassion and take fuel taxes off for the summer so that Canadians can have a road trip this year?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think Canadians' idea of summertime fun is being locked in a car for 10 straight days. I also do not think their idea of summertime fun is having their dental care taken away, taking away their diabetes medication or losing their child care.

For their definition of summertime fun, I think they should have a conversation with kids about what they want to do with their summer. I think they care more about getting dental care and having good teeth than being locked in a car for 10 straight days.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister and his Bloc Québécois supporters are not worth the cost. Their \$500 billion in inflationary spending is forcing parents to skip meals so they can feed their children. While the leader of the Bloc Québécois and several of his members are campaigning to radically increase gas taxes, Quebecers in the regions are paying the price because they do not have access to public transit.

Talk about being completely out of touch. Will the Liberal Bloc set aside its ideological agenda to raise taxes on Quebecers and vote in favour of our motion to suspend federal taxes for the summer?

Oral Questions

• (1425)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada's calculations and purported savings are hogwash. To save as much money as the Conservatives claim, an Alberta family would have to travel 37,000 kilometres on its vacation. Folks could go from Montreal to Mexico City, back to Montreal, back to Mexico City, back to Montreal, back to Mexico City, back to Montreal and back to Mexico City and still not have racked up enough kilometres—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where they are pulling their numbers from. As usual, they are making things up. We know full well that Quebecers who will be paying at the pump every week are going to notice the difference at the end of the month.

That is the reality facing Quebecers, who pay too much for food and rent, cannot make it to the end of the month and are lining up at food banks. They have no problem understanding Liberal math. It is costing them too much. Will the Liberals listen to common sense and put gas taxes on hold for the summer?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that math is not a strong suit for members of the Conservative Party of Canada, so let me help them out. To achieve the savings that the Conservatives are suggesting, a family would have to burn through 3,293 litres of gas over three months in one summer.

If a vehicle uses 8.9 litres per 100 kilometres, that means it would have to travel 37,000 kilometres. A person could drive from the North Pole to the South Pole and practically all the way back to the North Pole at that rate, and of course, they would have to do so over just a couple of months. What nonsense.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, and then there was light. The Liberals from the Outaouais have finally clued in to the fact that the health care system is in crisis. They have written to Quebec asking for more money for health care. Where were these visionaries when Quebec was warning of a \$28-billion annual shortfall? Where were they when the Prime Minister, their boss, was fighting the provinces to not increase transfers by a single penny? Where were they when their boss imposed a cut-rate agreement on Quebec? Why did those visionaries personally vote against our motion for a sustainable increase in health care funding? The Liberals have been underfunding health care since 2015. Are they at least a little embarrassed about that?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is proof once again that it takes a Liberal member from Quebec to stand up for Quebecers and defend the interests of Quebec voters in the House of Commons. Obviously, we fully respect Quebec's jurisdictions. I did

not intend to bring this up, but thanks to the Bloc Québécois, I am reaffirming that the Quebec government must urgently address health care needs in the Outaouais region.

Any objective person looking at this situation will realize that action is needed on health care in the Outaouais.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal members from the Outaouais are right. There is not enough money for health care in the Outaouais, but they have no one to blame but themselves. There is not enough money on the north shore. There is not enough money for Quebec as a whole. That is their fault. They voted for it. They did not speak out against federal underfunding of health care. They did not go against their boss, who refused to increase health transfers. They did not stand up for citizens who were told to go to the private sector for treatment. They were too busy looking for jobs as ministers and chairs. Now they are waking up. They need to look in the mirror. Should these visionaries really be lecturing people?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is voting against pharmacare. The Bloc Québécois is voting against health care budgets. The Bloc Québécois is voting against all our efforts to provide dental care, and the list goes on.

If we were to take the Bloc's desired ratio, or if we were to compare the Outaouais with any other region in Quebec, we would see that the Outaouais region is underfunded. The number of doctors, nurses, surgeries and hospitals has fallen in the area. The Outaouais needs urgent action on health care.

* * *

• (1430)

HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the lack of housing, higher rents and the higher cost of living are the reasons why there are more and more homeless people in the streets of Montreal. We need social and affordable housing.

Under the Liberals, homelessness across the country has only gone up. Despite the promises, people do not have access to housing. The Conservatives lost 800,00 affordable housing units when they were in power. As for the Liberals, they have lost another 370,000 housing units.

What good are Liberal MPs in Montreal when they are not even able to ensure that Montrealers have a roof over their heads?

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, I thank my colleague for the question. One thing my colleague and I agree on is that, on this side of the House, and I include him in that, we truly believe that a government must address homelessness and must work on fighting chronic homelessness. The people across the way do not believe that.

Oral Questions

The housing plan has given more money to the municipalities to help them put a roof over the heads of everyone who needs it. We will continue to work with the municipalities on that, instead of insulting mayors.

* * *

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a landmark report this week exposed that women with disabilities are more likely to visit the emergency room during pregnancy, because reproductive care is not accessible. It is impacting their mental health during pregnancy and postpartum. People with disabilities have had enough of the Liberals' half measures. The Liberals are all talk, no action, just like their Canada disability benefit that is nowhere near enough to live on.

What is the government going to do to address the unacceptable barriers to care for pregnant women with disabilities?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with every province and every territory, we have signed agreements to improve health care in this country, and that absolutely includes care for persons with disabilities. Specifically on sexual and reproductive health, we are making sure that we are there for women with the sexual and reproductive assistance that they need and making sure that they have the contraception they need to have control over their sexual and reproductive lives and their futures.

Absolutely, we are going to continue to work with provinces and territories to increase access and resist the cuts and the reductions the Conservatives want to bring.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister is not worth hunger or homelessness as one in four Canadians skips meals. Edith is a single mom in my community who cannot afford to feed her kids because the Prime Minister doubled the cost of groceries and gas. His bright idea was to jack up the carbon tax 23%. Common-sense Conservatives are calling on him to axe all federal fuel taxes this summer to save the average family \$670.

Will the Prime Minister vote with us, or does he want more families like Edith's to go hungry and broke?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe I need to go through the math again to make sure it is understood. The savings that the Conservative Party are claiming, based on the member's assertion, are based on use of gasoline over the summertime of 3,293 litres. Do the math; it is not complicated. At an average consumption of 8.9 litres per 100 kilometres, a family in Alberta would have to drive 37,000 kilometres to be able to benefit from the claimed savings.

This has nothing to do with reality. It would be nice for the Conservative Party of Canada to come down to earth and leave la-la land for a little while.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal math used by the anti-Alberta minister says that jacking up the carbon tax 20% is somehow going to fix forest fires and reduce the—

Some hon members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member to start from the top again and just rephrase it slightly.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Speaker, Liberal math says that jacking up the carbon tax 23% is going to somehow magically fix forest fires and reduce the cost of groceries like those that Edith cannot afford. Do the Liberals think we are gullible and incompetent like the NDP, which blindly supports policies that have made two millions Canadians go to a food bank in a single month and one in four Canadians skip meals?

Why will the government not do everyone a favour, give Canadians a break and finally end their misery? The government should call a carbon tax election so that common-sense Conservatives can scrap the carbon tax scam and Canadians can kick the costly carbon tax coalition to the curb.

• (1435)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there they go again. The Conservatives want to ruin the rebate for Canadians, a rebate that disproportionately impacts the middle class and lower-income Canadians working hard to join the middle class.

I also noticed that throughout the past few weeks, they have been quoting from reports from Food Banks Canada and The Salvation Army, and those reports are important. We thank the organizations for the reports. What they point out are challenges faced by Canadians. In those recommendations, which the Conservatives ignore, they point to programs that the government has continued to support, such as the Canada child benefit, for example, but that the Conservatives have voted against every single time.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the hunger and homelessness that it is causing so many Canadians across this country. Many Canadians just simply look forward to a small summer vacation, a road trip perhaps. It is normally a time when they can camp in the mountains, go to a national park or visit loved ones, but this year, many Canadians cannot afford this simple delight because the government has made life too expensive.

Oral Questions

On Monday, the House will have the opportunity to vote on a common-sense motion to save Canadians 35¢ per litre on gas. Will the Prime Minister vote with us, the common-sense Conservatives, so that Canadians can afford a simple vacation, or will he force them to stay home?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is good news for kids. They can take a summer fun-time vacation where they are locked in a car for 10 consecutive days non-stop, with no bathroom breaks, and the Conservatives have a plan for them to have that summertime fun. What is the cost? It is to give up the future of the planet.

Kids do not have to worry about climate change. They do not have to worry about taking action on the planet. They can enjoy their 10 hours in the car and let the planet burn.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the out-of-touch Prime Minister might be able to take a \$230,000 taxpayer-funded vacation to some fancy island, but that is not an option for most Canadians. In fact, most Canadians just simply want to be able to get in a car and drive a few kilometres to enjoy a national park or the mountains for the day, but even that is out of reach for so many of them because of the Liberal government's out-of-touch policies that are driving up the cost of everything.

On Monday, the House will have the opportunity to vote on a very common-sense motion that would take the federal tax off fuel. It would make life affordable for Canadians and allow them to enjoy their summer. Will the Prime Minister vote with us so that Canadians can afford a simple road trip, or will he force them to stay at home while he enjoys his luxury vacation?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are having a lot of fun with figures because the Conservative AI machine suddenly broke down and did not quite supply them with the right math. They do rely heavily on it for mathematics.

I do note that the member fights against a regime that sends eight out of 10 Albertans more money than they pay in, but she was a little sheepish, a little quiet, when her own premier, Danielle Smith, hiked gas taxes 13¢ on fuel and increased government spending in Alberta. She did not talk about that. I wonder why.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians know that the Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the homelessness, is not worth the hunger and is not worth the tent cities that are popping up everywhere. However, there is a plan to give some relief. A Conservative motion would take the carbon tax and all federal taxes off gas from now until Labour Day. It would save 35¢ a litre and maybe give Canadians a road trip. The only road trip the Liberals know is their ministers' driving around in their limousine with their chauffeur.

Will the Liberals support the motion to axe the tax, yes or no?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative motion is written on the same napkin as their housing plan.

The reality is that whenever it comes to serious issues of the day, all they have are hollow slogans. What happened in the House of Commons yesterday? Every single party in the House, minus the Conservatives, voted against their initiative because it would tax homebuilding and says nothing about homelessness.

Finally, most of the Conservative caucus is made up of rural members. Do they know that the housing plan applies only to a certain number of cities and not to the entire country?

• (1440)

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable. This would save 35¢ a litre on gasoline. That does not mean much to ministers, who get driven around by chauffeurs in their limos and probably have not pumped gas nor known the cost of gas in about 10 years. However, for the average Canadian family, it would mean everything, and the Liberals could do something about it. I know they do not take road trips, but Canadian families do, and it would make a difference.

The Liberals have a choice. They can vote to take those taxes off and save Canadians 35¢ a litre so they can take a road trip, or they can continue to punish Canadians with this damn carbon tax.

The Speaker: I am going to ask members to be very careful about the use of language in the House.

The hon. Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to talk about numbers today, so let us talk about a few of those numbers: four, the number of consecutive months that we have seen inflation decrease in this country; 750,000, the number of families benefiting from our affordable early learning and child care; 1.3 million, the number of Canadians who have been lifted out of poverty with our policies; and 400,000, the number of kids who will receive access to food at school.

This is what our government is doing on this side of the house. Why will the Conservatives not get onside and support Canadians?

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's French language commissioner is sounding the alarm.

Oral Questions

Quebec is unable to ensure that such a high number of immigrants learn French. It is well and good to invest hundreds of millions of dollars, but there are currently 642,000 people in Quebec who do not speak French. Only 70,000 of them have been able to join French language classes, which is a record, but that is nowhere near enough.

When will the federal government ensure that asylum seekers are spread out among the provinces and temporarily reduce immigration in collaboration with the Government of Quebec?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what we are doing in the task force with Minister Fréchette and other provincial ministers. The member across the way seems to forget that Bill 101 has been around for a long time. He also seems to forget that we have been transferring \$5.2 billion since 2015 to Quebec, without accountability, for francization.

Obviously, if Quebec needs more francophone immigrants, we are here to help.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals themselves do not respect Bill 101.

Quebec's French language commissioner is clear. There are currently 20,000 people coming to Quebec every month who need French classes. Only 8,000 of them register with Francisation Québec, which cannot keep up. We simply cannot maintain our current immigration levels without weakening the French language in Quebec. In fact, that is the purely mathematical observation of Quebec's French language commissioner.

Will the federal government finally respect Quebec's integration capacity?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, it appears that the member opposite is asking the question of the wrong legislature.

It should be noted that under the Canada-Quebec agreement, Quebec holds the majority of the power to select francophone immigrants. It has the power and the ability to do so. Considering the \$5.2 billion it has received in transfers since 2015, it also has the financial capacity to do it all and without accountability, either.

When it comes to accountability, Quebecers are the ones who need to demand answers.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, financial resources are a key aspect of our integration capacity. However, it is hard to ask people to learn French when they cannot even manage to feed themselves.

In Drummondville alone, the food bank has seen a 97% increase in use this year. It has to turn people away. That increase includes asylum seekers and foreign workers. A disappointed immigrant told the organization, "I didn't think it would be like this in Canada". He is right.

Will the minister finally take action and understand that exceeding integration capacity means being responsible for a humanitarian crisis?

• (1445)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, he is going to blame immigrants for rising food prices. Come on, we have to be reasonable.

It is clear that Canada is going to play a role, and it must bear some responsibility in all this. That is why we are working closely with Quebec to send asylum seekers to other provinces. There is work to be done at several levels. It is a job I look forward to working on with Ms. Fréchette.

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, and Canadians are fleeing Canada and moving south in record numbers. Tens of thousands, the highest number in 10 years, are escaping the Prime Minister's economic ruin, fleeing so they can afford to live, afford to buy a home and stop paying for the government's bloat. This is an inconvenient truth from the Prime Minister's very own media machine, the CBC, this morning.

How many more Canadians have to leave their country before the Prime Minister realizes that his government is just not worth the cost?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there it is. I wondered, as they continually put down our country, who they want us to be and what they want to emulate. Now we know that they prefer to have a United States model, for example, of health care.

I was down south a couple of months ago with my partner, and an individual fell over. When they came conscious after I called 911, their concern was not their health; their concern was money, that they did not have the money for care. I do not want to live in that country.

On this side, we will fight for public health care, we will fight against the cuts the Conservatives want to bring to our health care system and we will make sure that every Canadian gets access to the care they need.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, their plan is driving Canadians out of this country in droves. More than 126,000 Canadians left to go stateside in 2022. That is a 71% increase from the year before. It is doctors, nurses, mechanics and young Canadians with university degrees. Do the Liberals not get why they are leaving? The Prime Minister's policies are hurting them.

When will the Prime Minister realize that Canadians are just not that into him?

Oral Questions

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, families like mine chose to come to Canada from places that were difficult and where there were challenges. Canadians are proud of the country we have. Conservatives keep talking this country down, but there are people around the world who would choose to come to this country and who are choosing to come to this country every single day for freedom and for the capacity to be who they are, to love who they love and to be proud of their traditions. They are able to do that in this country.

We have health care. We have the things that Canadians and all those around the world are desperately seeking. We will keep fighting for that on this side of the House while the Conservatives keep talking this country down.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, Canadians know how unaffordable life has become, and the facts speak for themselves. They are so glaringly obvious that even the CBC of all places is covering the record surge of Canadians moving to the United States. Some 126,000 Canadians moved to the U.S. in 2022 alone, a 70% increase in the last decade. There are Facebook groups, some as big as 55,000 members, that are finding ways and sharing tips on how to move out of Canada.

If things are so great, why are a record number of Canadians moving to the United States?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we are talking about the United States, let us just take a moment to reflect on what women in that country are going through: a lack of access to reproductive choice. I read an article in The New York Times yesterday about the number of women who are dying because they cannot access abortion care in their states. That is the kind of future that the Conservatives want for Canadian women, and we will fight for their freedom.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every year, hundreds of festivals light up communities across Canada. In Edmonton, the internationally renowned Fringe Festival supports thousands of artists, volunteers and visitors, generating \$16 million in economic benefits. Despite this, the Fringe Festival and other festivals have had their federal funding significantly cut. This is devastating for our festivals and for our communities. These are already-promised funding agreements.

Why is the government cutting funding and hurting Canadian arts and culture?

• (1450)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, since it gives me an opportunity to talk about budget 2024, in which we reinvested \$31 million in festivals. The Fringe Festival should also benefit from that.

We know how important culture is to all communities across Canada, especially after the pandemic. Festivals are truly fantastic occasions for communities to come together to share cultural events that bring people closer and tell Canadian stories.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives will vote against that in budget 2024, just as they will vote against all other support for the cultural community across the country.

* * *

[*English*]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 523 people in Toronto died last year from toxic drugs, and still the Liberals rejected the City of Toronto's request to take a health-based approach to tackling this crisis without offering any other solutions. Then there are the Conservatives, who keep yelling out harmful disinformation and attacking real people. People are dying, and Canada needs to take a compassionate approach: treatment, housing and health care.

Will the minister reconsider Toronto's proposal to tackle this crisis and save lives?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are guided by the lens of public health and public safety. We refused the Toronto Public Health request because it did not adequately protect public health and maintain public safety. We follow science. We listen to families, doctors and people with lived and living experience because we know what works: a full continuum of support, from prevention and harm reduction to treatment.

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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I believe in something, I defend it. Our government firmly believes in a woman's right to choose, which is why we are unwavering in our defence of abortion rights in Parliament and in our communities.

Conservative caucus members demonize abortion and would rather ban it from Canada. The Leader of the Opposition outright refuses to defend abortion. Why is he so silent? Canadians have a right to know where their leaders stand on abortion.

Can the Minister of Justice please let us know the government's position?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this day in 1990, members of Parliament passed a Conservative bill that would sentence doctors to jail for providing abortions. Thankfully, that bill died in the Senate.

Oral Questions

Abortion is health care. Canadian women should always have access to abortion. Recognizing this constitutional right to abortion, Liberal Bill C-75 removed abortion from our Criminal Code entirely in 2019. That is the exact same bill the Conservative leader keeps promising to repeal.

While Conservatives speak at anti-abortion rallies and venerate American restrictions on abortion, this Liberal government will always stand up for women's rights.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Ville-Marie, where the mayor of Montreal was elected, it takes 540 days to get a building permit.

What is more, the Bloc Québécois voted against the bill to build housing. That is called incompetence. It is absolutely ridiculous that this Liberal-Bloc government is not demanding that the cities speed up housing construction.

Why is the Prime Minister rejecting common sense and still protecting the incompetence of the mayors who support him?

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, I would like to go over some math concepts today.

There is a basic concept in math called magnitude. The number one is smaller than the number ten. Therefore, six is smaller than thousands. One plan is much greater than zero plans.

The only thing the party across the way wants to do is make cuts to infrastructure and insult mayors. That builds zero housing units.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this government that is not worth the cost, the CMHC is saying that Canada needs 5.8 million housing units to address the housing affordability crisis.

This Liberal-Bloc government is building fewer homes than in the 1970s. It is truly scandalous.

The Conservative act to build homes and not bureaucracy is a logical solution. Why is the Prime Minister protecting the incompetence of Liberal mayors instead of building housing?

• (1455)

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, I think my Conservative friends really need to learn some math.

Zero is a lot less than 179 agreements with municipalities across the country, 200,000 is less than 240,000, and zero housing units is still zero.

Their plan is zero. That simply does not work.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebeckers are paying

the price for this Prime Minister's nine years in power. The housing crisis is hitting them hard.

In Ville-Marie, the mayor of Montreal's administration takes 540 days to get a building permit. That is quite a number: 540 days. Given the unrelenting housing crisis, that is sheer incompetence.

Quebeckers are suffering, yet the Bloc Québécois is voting in favour of \$500 billion in spending and against common-sense solutions to this crisis.

Can the Liberal-Bloc government get down to business and help build housing in Montreal and across Quebec, once and for all?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about math. There is one small number that is easy to forget because it is so small: six.

Six is the number of affordable housing units that the Conservative leader, the champion insult-hurler, built from coast to coast to coast during his tenure as housing minister. He built six small housing units. In contrast, the Government of Canada funded the construction of 134 affordable housing units over the past few months in the riding of my colleague who spoke moments ago.

Nevertheless, the insult-hurler-in-chief continues to insult Quebec municipalities.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nine is more than six. For nine years, under this Prime Minister, more and more Quebeckers have been living on the streets because of the lack of affordable housing across Canada.

The Liberal-Bloc government has doubled the cost of rent. In Montreal alone, it takes two years to get a building permit on a good day. Once again, the incompetence is on full display. Quebeckers need solutions, yet the Bloc Québécois voted against our Conservative leader's affordable housing plan.

Can the Liberal-Bloc government help Canadians across Canada once and for all by helping to build housing?

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, let us put the math aside and steer the discussion to something they love to talk about: common sense.

Building a house involves certain essentials called infrastructure, like water, electricity, sidewalks and roads. However, one of the areas that Conservatives want to cut back on is infrastructure, which municipalities need so they can build housing.

Again, there is plan one, which provides for three million housing units, and plan zero, which provides for zero housing.

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's justice minister informed us in March that there had been 109 stays of proceedings for unreasonable delays in Quebec alone last year.

How can we expect the public to have confidence in our justice system when the course of justice is being impeded? We have been sounding the alarm for years now about this government's careless attitude when it comes to appointing judges. There is still a shortage of nearly 60 judges, and it is a recurring problem.

Does the Minister of Justice think it is acceptable for trials to be cancelled because he did not bother to appoint judges?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the Bloc Québécois member's question.

I have appointed judges to the bench at the fastest rate in Canadian history. Some 113 judges were appointed in my first 10 months. However, there is always more to do. We are in the process of getting it done.

With regard to delays in the criminal justice system, we have invested \$700 million to improve access to legal aid, which will help speed up trials.

• (1500)

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of holding trials within a reasonable time, but when people charged with murder or other crimes against the person escape justice due to the backlog in our courts, we are not on board.

The minister's statistics aside, releasing violent, dangerous people because there happens to be a shortage of judges has serious consequences on public safety and trust in the justice system.

Will the minister support our bill so that people accused of violent crimes will no longer be released simply because the courts ran out of time to try them?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, the bill that the Bloc Québécois tabled today proposes using the notwithstanding clause under section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The opposition leader opened the floodgates last month when he stated that he would use the notwithstanding clause to trample on the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the charter.

Now we see another federal party deciding that the charter is optional. Nevertheless, our government will always protect the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the charter.

* * *

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today in the health committee, we heard powerful testimony from indigenous leader Earl Thiessen, executive di-

Oral Questions

rector of Oxford House, who said that safe supply was akin to pharmaceutical colonialization.

Will the Prime Minister listen to indigenous leaders, like Earl, and put an immediate end to this dangerous government drug trafficking program?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that there is not one perspective on the best way forward to this toxic drug supply that is facing the country. That is why this government is focused on providing tools that meet the needs of communities. In fact, if communities are not comfortable with safe supply, then they are not using safe supply. To allege that this approach writ large across the country would not have detrimental effects is false.

We, on this side, are focused on saving the lives of our friends' children, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions said that the Prime Minister's deadly experiment of hard drug legalization in B.C. was a success. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, drug overdose deaths are up 380% in B.C.

The minister refused to rule out expanding the drug legalization in Toronto, or Montreal or anywhere else in Canada. The message is clear: The NDP-Liberal government will import death, disorder, crime and chaos caused by this deadly experiment.

Why will the Prime Minister not abandon his deadly hard drug policies?

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have been hearing from the Conservative side is dehumanizing. They are basically saying that we need to clean up the streets because these people are a bother.

On this side of the House, we are here to help people who use drugs. They did not choose to become addicts. They did not wake up one morning and say that they were going to start using drugs. The important thing is to give them a range of options so that they can find their way forward and overcome their addiction, which is not a criminal law problem. It is a mental health problem.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions doubled down and said that her deadly experiment of legalizing hard drugs in British Columbia was a success. For the minister, success means a 380% increase in the number of drug-related deaths.

Oral Questions

In 2023, the mayor of Montreal reiterated her radical request to legalize hard drugs like heroin and crack. This morning in committee, Montreal's regional director of public health very clearly said "yes" to replicating the B.C. model, even though it has been a dismal failure.

Can the minister reassure Quebeckers and tell them that she will never replicate her hard drug experiment in Montreal?

The Speaker: Before recognizing the hon. parliamentary secretary, I would like to encourage all members to refrain from speaking until they are recognized by the Chair. I am speaking primarily to the member for Courtenay—Alberni, who had the privilege of asking a question.

• (1505)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also happen to sit on the Standing Committee on Health. In recent meetings, we heard what my colleague from the other side just said. We also heard that we need to have a whole range of options, because there is more than one way of getting off drugs.

We need many options, strategies and initiatives that could potentially suit everyone. That is the direction we are heading in. With respect to the application for exemption, we have not received one from Montreal yet. If that happens, we will do what we need to do.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, taxing climate change, reducing emissions and moving to a low-carbon future is a top priority for Canadians and for our Liberal government. We are implementing an aggressive climate action plan while trying to keep costs down for Canadians.

We recently learned that the PBO has agreed to do a revised analysis on his report on the costs of carbon pricing to Canadians, as he acknowledged some errors in the original analysis.

Could the Minister of Environment update the House on the benefits of the Canada carbon rebate to Canadians and comment on the PBO's recent publication?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, on April 17, put an update on his website, saying that the last estimate he had done was based on faulty premises. We thank the PBO for doing that. In fact, it confirms what we have known all along and what economists and independent organizations in the country are saying, which is that eight out of 10 Canadians are better off with the federal pricing on carbon. It helps fight climate change. It helps Canadians with affordability. We thank the PBO for doing that.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government is once again hiring foreign mercenaries to shoot deer on a B.C. island. This will cost taxpayers over \$12 million to cull less than 900 invasive deer, this while local hunters had previously removed over 2,000 of the invasive fallow deer for free.

Why is the minister wasting \$12 million on a deer hunt that Canadian hunters said they would do for free?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of this issue. We will look into it and get back to the member as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have Canadian hunters that say they would even pay to hunt these deer, yet the NDP-Liberals have found a way to make it cost millions.

Scott Carpenter says, "It's a real slap in the face to Canadian hunters, and there's millions of us in this country who would've been more than happy to spend our own money to go in there and harvest some of the meat ourselves...To...invite foreigners into the country because they felt we were incapable of doing it ourselves, it's insulting to say the least."

What does the NDP-Liberal government have against Canadian hunters?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we will look into it and get back to the member as fast as possible.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it just goes to show that if it is not climate change, they do not know anything about it.

In 2015, the Prime Minister told Canadians that one did not need an AR-15 to bring down a deer, yet he has hired foreign mercenaries with semi-automatic rifles and large-capacity magazines to do just that. The NDP-Liberals are spending \$12 million to cull a few hundred deer on Sidney Island. The waste is typical; the hypocrisy is palpable.

Why does the Prime Minister continue to demonize hunters, while finding the most expensive way to do something that local hunters would have done for free?

• (1510)

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I answered this question twice in English. I know my English could stand some improvement, so I will answer in French.

We will look into this matter and provide an answer to the member as quickly as possible.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian task force on preventative health just announced its updated breast cancer screening guidelines. I am disappointed that the guidelines do not reflect concerns put forward by many Canadians.

Could the Minister of Health please share his views on the task force recommendations?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the member's concern. I was concerned and disappointed, frankly, at the recommendations that were there. They do not seem to comport to the experts who I have spoken to across the country.

That is why I have asked immediately for the chief public health officer to review this independent task force decision, to make sure we convene the best science and the best experts to be able to inform the decision that makes sure that every woman in the country gets the guidance they need to protect their health.

* * *

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are expecting this wildfire season to be devastating, and the minister has said the same.

Last summer, we had to rely on our military to help battle wildfires and support communities. This year, the chief of defence staff says that is no longer an option. We need a solution.

Canadians overwhelmingly want a dedicated national wildfire fighting force. Will the Liberals create this needed force to tackle fires, support communities and save lives?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to say that our hearts go out to the families of the eight firefighters who were killed in last year's wildfire season. Over 200,000 Canadians were evacuated last year. The important thing is that we work very closely with the municipalities, the provinces and territories that have the first line of defence when it comes to fighting wildfires. We will always be there for them. We are ensuring that we have the proper resources in place to make sure we are ready for this year.

* * *

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I had the great honour of participating yesterday in a symposium sponsored by Senator Marilou McPhedran, from the other place. It was attended by many brilliant young people arguing that the voting age should be 16 years. The #Vote16 movement includes a bunch of people over 70, like myself. Well, I am not over 70, but I

Business of the House

am almost 70. However, my point is, all of us, regardless of party, should get behind this.

Would the hon. Minister for Democratic Reform, responsible for the elections, let us know whether the government is prepared to listen to young people and put the voting age at 16?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question and, in particular, for young people taking part in their democratic institutions. This is precisely what we want young people to do: be engaged. The democratic process involves Canadians all across this country at every age to take part in our democracy.

PROC is studying this matter as well, and we have introduced reforms to the Canada Elections Act. We are going to continue to listen to Canadians to ensure that everybody can take part in the democratic process.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RÉGINALD CHARLES GAGNON

The Speaker: There have been discussions among all the parties in the House and I believe there is consent to observe a moment of silence in memory of Réginald Charles Gagnon, who was known as Cayouche.

I invite hon. members to rise.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

* * *

● (1515)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the usual Thursday question, but for the last few days, if not weeks, the government has been having a hard time sticking to a schedule. It keeps moving more and more time allocation motions and muzzling parliamentarians on a lot of important bills.

Can the government House leader tell us what business is planned for tomorrow and next week? Can we be certain that the schedule he shares with us today will be the same we will see next week?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my daily attempts to reach out to opposition members and improve the efficiency of the business of the House are always rebuffed out of hand. The Conservatives would rather filibuster, raise totally fake questions of privilege, and use all sorts of delay tactics in the House to prevent the government from passing measures that are going to help Canadians in their daily lives.

Privilege

Despite it all, I will continue to reach out to opposition members to make sure that the business of the House takes place efficiently.

[English]

This evening, we will deal with report stage of Bill C-64 respecting pharmacare. Tomorrow, we will commence second reading of Bill C-65, the electoral participation act. On Monday, we will call Bill C-64 again, this time at third reading stage.

[Translation]

I would also like to inform the House that next Tuesday and Thursday shall be allotted days. On Wednesday, we will consider second reading of Bill C-61, an act respecting water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on first nation lands.

Next week, we will also give priority to Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments, and Bill C-40, the miscarriage of justice review commission act, also known as David and Joyce Milgaard's law.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today in question period, one of my Alberta colleagues, the member for Calgary Forest Lawn, in asking a question, used the phrase “anti-Alberta minister” in reference to the environment minister. You asked him to rephrase his question.

A simple Google search shows that, over the years, members of all four recognized parties in the House have used the phrase “anti-Alberta” or “anti-Quebec” in standing up for their constituents in ways that their constituents would expect them to stand up.

I think we are not better off in the House when the list of words we cannot use gets longer and longer. I think we suffer from a lack of clarity right now as we make efforts, as members of Parliament, to stand up for our constituents.

I would like some clarification on what language we can and cannot use because it seems to have changed significantly over the past several months.

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for raising this issue.

What was going through the Chair's mind on this issue is that people can have policies or they can have ideas they might characterize as one thing or the other. The thing that caught me, and I will get back to the member on this, is whether or not members should attribute that to another hon. member. That is something I will review. I thank the hon. member for raising it, and I will come back to the House on this point.

We have another point of order. I am going to ask for a very short intervention from the member for Kingston and the Islands on this point, because we are going to come back to the House on it.

• (1520)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I do agree with the member and what he said.

In particular, I would bring to the attention of the Chair that there is still a member of Parliament on this side of the House who has not spoken in about a month and a half because he accused Conservatives of being pro-Russia.

As a result, your deputy asked him to withdraw his comment. He did not want to withdraw because he believed what he was saying was correct. As a result, he has not been able to speak for about six weeks.

In your consideration about this issue, I would ask that you also consider whether or not it is appropriate to make a statement like that, because I would agree with the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin that this would be limiting the words we can use in this House.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention. I will consider that and come back to the House.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACH OF DEPUTY SPEAKER'S IMPARTIALITY

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon, my office submitted to you the necessary letter pursuant to Standing Order 48(2) to give notice to you of my intention to rise now and to speak to what I believe to be a potential question of privilege. The document that I will be referring to was just recently brought to my attention and I am bringing this forward at my first opportunity, as is required.

It has come to my attention that on October 31, 2023, the member of Parliament for West Nova and our esteemed Deputy Speaker appeared in his Speaker robes in a Conservative Party advertisement. At first sight, this constitutes an improper use of the Speaker's robes, which of course are meant to be above the partisan fray. It is also worth noting that the ad specifically mentions him as the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and not just as an MP.

As outlined in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the role of Deputy Speaker is an important one, with the Deputy Speaker's authority being comparable to that of Speaker. Page 359 reads, “Every action of the Deputy Speaker when acting in the Speaker's place has the same effect and validity as if the Speaker had acted,....”

We do have some previous examples in recent months of discussions in the chamber around the principles of impartiality and of the use of House of Commons resources, namely the Speaker's robes. On December 4, 2023, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle was commenting on the appearance of the Speaker in a partisan ad while wearing his robes and when being referred to as “Speaker”. As the member pointed out:

Business of Supply

[The Speaker] made these remarks from the Speaker's office in the West Block while dressed in his Speaker's robes. As bad as it would have been to appear at a party convention at all, it might have at least been a little different if he had been introduced as the member for Hull—Aylmer, and worn a suit or a sweater, while standing in front of a scenic backdrop in his riding, but he was not.

On the following day, the same member said:

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.

Again, the critical detail here is the use of the robes, which the member contends are meant to represent the impartiality of the office. Ultimately, the procedure and House affairs committee found that in using the Speaker's robes, the Speaker had effectively used House of Commons resources. On that basis, the Speaker was ordered to pay a fine.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, earlier this week, there was also a debate over the Liberal Party of Canada's posting of an inappropriate ad featuring the Speaker, as well as partisan messaging. The party—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon member. I am going to come back to the hon. member.

There is a conversation between the government House leader and members on this side of the House. I am going to ask them to please take their conversation behind the curtains, so that I can hear the intervention from the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, uninterrupted.

The hon. member.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I will start back at the point where I was interrupted.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, earlier this week there was debate about the Liberal Party of Canada's posting of an inappropriate ad featuring the Speaker, as well as partisan messaging. That party took responsibility and the matter was concluded.

I suspect that in the case of the member for West Nova and the ad I have raised today, the same is true. I believe an opportunity should be afforded to the member and to the Conservative Party of Canada to clarify who was responsible. Should the party prove to have made this decision without the knowledge or consent of the Deputy Speaker, then the member is owed an apology from the party and I would consider the matter closed.

However, I would think that if the Deputy Speaker did approve or direct this ad wherein he is clearly using the office of Speaker for partisanship gain, then I believe, Mr. Speaker, you would have to find a prima facie case for a question of privilege. If so, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion to have this matter referred to the procedure and House affairs committee.

• (1525)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for London—Fanshawe for rising on this question of privilege.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we would like to take a few moments before responding with our comments on this question of privilege at a later time.

[English]

The Speaker: I also see the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader rising on his feet. I am assuming it is in a manner similar to the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you are correct. I would like to be able to review the comments that have been put on the record. We do take it seriously, and we would like to provide comment back at some point in time in the near future.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SUMMER TAX BREAK

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the Conservative Party's "axe the tax for summer" motion, which seeks to make life more affordable for Canadians and, in particular, help them with their summer road trip. I have related the story of my fond memories of taking road trips as a child. This motion comes in the context of a cost of living crisis that Canada finds itself in the middle of. What is the NDP-Liberal coalition going to do? If members can believe it, they have decided to actually hike the carbon tax by yet another 23%. This is just one step in their plan to quadruple the carbon tax over the next six years, making everything more expensive at the worst possible time.

Now, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has been clear that most families will pay more in the carbon tax than they receive in the rebate. This year, the carbon tax will cost the average Canadian family \$1,963. I know that members on the other side of the aisle will jump up and say that we have it all wrong, that 80% of households are actually better off being taxed until it hurts; then the government can come to the rescue, give them some of their money back and look like heroes. However, we are saying that people should not be fooled by that sleight of hand. What the Liberals and the NDP are not telling us is that the carbon tax adds inflationary cost to everything we buy, and that has a negative impact on our economy, on our businesses and on our families.

Here is a really good example of how that works out. Last weekend, my wife, Inga, and I took a road trip down to southern Ontario. We visited with our friends Ken and Julie Wall, who are vegetable farmers and owners of Sandy Shore Farms, on the beautiful shores of Lake Erie. They related to us how it is becoming more and more difficult to compete with farmers from jurisdictions with lower taxes, such as California, Mexico, and even Central and South America, which are competing for the national North American market.

Business of Supply

This is what Ken sent to me in an email: "I'm an Ontario producer, and because of the Canadian carbon tax designed to reduce emissions, I get priced out of the market by competitors in non-carbon tax jurisdictions. The end result? The Canadian ag sector collapses and the carbon footprint of asparagus, which Canadians consume, grows dramatically. It is utter insanity." That's what they do; they're specialists in asparagus.

Now, if Ken is listening, I agree with that. It is utter insanity. This does not make economic sense at all.

What is the solution? Conservatives want a carbon tax election, and the sooner the better, for entrepreneurs and farmers such as Ken, for other businesses across the country, for all consumers and for all Canadians. After we win the carbon tax election, we will axe the carbon tax as soon as possible. However, in the meantime, for the here and now, we are calling on the NDP-Liberal coalition to give Canadians a summer break by axing the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, and the GST on gasoline and diesel fuel between Victoria Day and Labour Day. In that way, families could afford a simple summer vacation again.

To pay for this, Conservatives are calling on the government to cut back on the spending on overpriced outside consultants, which is to the tune of \$21 billion and has gone up by more than 100% since the Liberals took office in 2015. We are told that we have an excellent civil service, so why do we need outside consultants?

After nine years of mismanagement of our economy by the current occupant of the Prime Minister's Office, life has become difficult for many Canadians. While the Prime Minister is off on his government-funded vacation, ordinary Canadians are having trouble funding even a simple road trip. Canadians deserve relief, not more taxes; they should be able to afford a simple road trip like the ones I took when I was a child. Let us do it for them.

• (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives say the average Canadian will save \$670. Many of the constituents I represent might drive 10 or 15 kilometres a day, and a good percentage of them do not even drive. They take buses. Sometimes, unfortunately, they even have to take taxis.

This policy would cut the tax, but it would also take away the rebate, I assume. How does the member square that with supporting people who quite often need support from government?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, the fact remains that the government does not have money to rebate until it first collects the money. I am calling it a sleight of hand. Citizens are going to be taxed until they hurt, and then the government will give some of the money back and look like a hero, look as though it is doing something. The government members say they have Canadians' backs, but it is only after the government has taken the money out of people's pockets in the first place.

When they stick-handle around this very difficult question, the Liberals and the NDP always try to avoid the fact that carbon tax is inflationary. I gave the example of my friend Ken Wall, who is a farmer. It is hurting his business. It is not reducing the carbon foot-

print of the vegetables that he produces or that Canadians are consuming.

It is time to axe the tax. It does not make sense.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, is my colleague aware that the carbon tax does not apply in Quebec? I wish someone would recognize that at some point. He is therefore asking the government to create a major imbalance between people in Quebec and people in the rest of Canada.

If the Conservatives suspend the carbon tax and the gas tax for the entire summer, without suspending the rebates that the federal government pays to families, because we know that money is returned to lower-income people, that is the equivalent of a \$3-billion subsidy that could go straight into the pockets of the oil companies, which will absorb the rest of the price, as they usually do.

[English]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I am very sensitive to the fact that different provinces want to handle their tax regimes differently, and I respect Quebec for wanting to do that. British Columbia has its own carbon tax as well, so it is not even caught by this federal government backstop. However, I can say that the carbon tax is becoming as unpopular in British Columbia as it is in the rest of the country, particularly after the federal government started to force British Columbia to raise the carbon tax beyond what the provincial government has done.

We are in interesting times in B.C. There is an election coming up, and I would encourage my fellow British Columbians to vote for a political party that promises to axe the tax, as the federal Conservatives are going to do.

• (1535)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a relief to finally hear a B.C. MP stand and acknowledge facts. The federal carbon tax does not apply to British Columbia. I will remind my colleague that it was actually members of the B.C. Liberal Party, now B.C. United, and the B.C. Conservative Party, Kevin Falcon and John Rustad, who were in government and brought it in. In fact, until just a couple of years ago, they were patting themselves on the back for bringing in one of the biggest carbon tax initiatives in the world.

Today, we have members such as my colleague, who are saying we should axe the tax. The member for Carleton, the leader of the Conservative Party, is going to British Columbia and saying he would get rid of the carbon tax; in fact, no prime minister has authority to get rid of the carbon tax in B.C. It was brought in by the right-of-centre party.

Could the member tell me when he is finally going to talk to his leader and help his leader understand that he does not have the authority to remove the carbon tax in British Columbia?

Business of Supply

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, the member says the federal tax does not apply in British Columbia. It actually does. The federal government forced the British Columbia government to increase the carbon tax to beyond what the provincial government had ever planned to do, to match the federal level.

I would just reassert that the carbon tax has become as unpopular in British Columbia as it has in other places in Canada. Again, I would urge my fellow British Columbians to vote for a party that says it will axe that tax. It is not working. We do not need it. It is inflationary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and address yet another opposition day motion.

Those who are following the debate will find that, more often than not, virtually all the time, the Conservative Party of Canada, the official opposition, better known as the Reformers, continue to bring the one bumper sticker campaign to the floor of the House of Commons on their opposition days. The bumper sticker says, "Cut the tax."

It is interesting to hear some of the Conservative members talk about other issues. However, the leadership of the Conservative Party, which comes out of the current leader, is so focused on this one aspect. This is not only in terms of what is consistently being discussed on an opposition day but also the manner in which it is portrayed to Canadians as a whole.

We talk a great deal about AI and social media, and how we get a lot of fake news and misinformation being spread, as well as the role that social media plays in that. I sincerely and genuinely believe that this issue really amplifies the degree to which the Conservative Party of Canada believes it can fool Canadians. Conservatives have adopted the bumper sticker saying "axe the tax", they travel around the country, and they talk about that.

The Conservatives continually espouse false information, whether it is through the leader of the Conservative Party talking to a group of people in any area of the country or through social media. I will give some very specific examples. The Conservatives say they are going to get rid of the carbon tax, but how often do we hear their leader saying we are going to get rid of the carbon rebate? He does not draw that connection.

People need to appreciate and understand that, when the leader says we are going to get rid of the carbon tax, that also means the carbon rebate. We should be concerned about that. Eighty per cent of the constituents I represent actually get more money back from the rebate than they pay in tax. The concept and the sound policy of having a price on pollution benefits everyone. We all get to participate in reducing emissions.

There is an incentive through the price on pollution to reduce emissions. For example, if Canadians upgrade the windows in their house, when they have an older home; add a little more insulation; or buy a car that does not consume as much in fossil fuels, then they will have more disposable income. The percentage of their rebate will be that much higher than they would pay in terms of the carbon tax.

Everyone benefits. We can take a look at everyone in that 80%-plus. I represent many people who actually just ride a bus. They do not have a vehicle. Those individuals are actually benefiting. I would suggest that the individuals who are riding the bus are often not high-income individuals. This not exclusively true, but it refers to a very high percentage of them.

We are giving a rebate to the middle- and lower-income individuals who are actually riding the bus.

• (1540)

We are also providing an incentive for those who want to fix up their homes or make them more energy-efficient. In return, they will get more money back from the rebate than they pay in the tax. It is sound public policy, so whenever the leader of the Conservative Party and his minions go around saying they are going to axe the tax and giving the impression that Canadians will benefit from that, it is false information, because 80% of Canadians will actually receive more money back than they will pay in. They do not have to believe me—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary for a point of order from the hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I figured you would catch it, but I saw you were busy. The hon. member across the way just referred to the Conservative Party members as minions. I believe that is unparliamentary. I would ask him to apologize.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am not sure it is unparliamentary, but it is definitely pejorative. I would like to invite the hon. parliamentary secretary to be more judicious in his choice of adjectives.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would not want to offend anyone on the other side, so let me withdraw that.

The point is that the collective Conservative reformers across the way have no problem at all in misleading Canadians. When they say that they are going to get rid of the carbon tax, that also includes the rebate, which means 80% of Canadians will be worse off financially. They will have less disposable income. That is fairly significant, not to mention the environmental aspect that I just finished amplifying, but it does not end there. It does not matter where the leader of the Conservative Party goes; this is what he talks about.

Some provinces do not have the carbon tax, because this is a federal backstop program. In other words, any province can come up with a plan of its own and opt out of the federal program. The province of Quebec and the province of British Columbia are not in that program. Why is it that the Conservative leadership does not even want to recognize that? That is why I say there is misinformation or misleading information that consistently comes out of the Conservative Party.

Business of Supply

Let us take a look at the motion today. It was interesting, as I kind of enjoyed question period. I kind of wish it had been extended today, in one sense, because of the questions that were being asked. I thought we saw a little bit of shame, possibly, that was starting to creep into the Conservative benches. Think about what they are proposing. They are saying they want to get rid of the carbon tax and the gas tax for the next few months. That way, the average family would get \$670 in savings. In order to achieve that \$670 in savings, people would actually have to drive. The more they drive, the more they get back, and gas is not free. Conservatives are encouraging people to go out there and consume as much gas as they can to actually get that \$670 break from the Conservative Party.

There are a few things that I would like to suggest my colleagues across the way should focus a little bit of time on. As they focus on that, they should think about the word “hypocrisy”. Here is one of the things they should think about. Let us look at the carbon tax increase that occurred on April 1. How many seats are there for the province of Alberta? I think there are 34 seats. I might be wrong. I might have the number wrong. Out of the 34 seats, I think the Conservatives have 30-plus of those seats. Then there is the Conservative Premier of Alberta. In Alberta, on April 1, the Conservative premier brought in a gas tax hike that was larger than the carbon tax that was increased on April 1. Members will recall that not one, but numerous Conservatives were hanging from the ceiling here yelling and screaming about the tax increase on gas that was taking effect in April. They were jumping all over the place, condemning the government. On the other hand, how many of those Conservatives, in particular those reformers from Alberta, stood in their place here in Ottawa, or on their social media accounts, to criticize the Conservative policy guru from Alberta? I did not hear one of them.

● (1545)

I say to them across the way right now, is there any Conservative member of Parliament who was critical of the gas tax hike in Alberta and the impact that it was going to have on Albertans? Is there one Conservative member, of the hundred members of their caucus, who actually stood up for those Albertans the same way they were critical of the Government of Canada for the increase that was less than the Alberta increase? The short answer is no. Not one of them stood up to criticize it in any fashion. They would say that it is provincial. I have been here long enough to recognize that when it comes to jurisdiction, on issues of this nature, Conservatives have no problems standing up. All one needs to do is take a little bit of a history or a look at some of the things that were said in Hansard.

I can tell members that, at the end of the day, the policy that is being proposed really does not make sense. When one stops and thinks about what the Conservatives are talking about, they go around saying, and again, it feeds into this misinformation, that they are going to give a \$670 break to average Canadians this summer, between now and September 1 or the long weekend in September. That is a conditional amount of money that they are actually giving, as I have pointed out.

What does it actually mean? A couple of my colleagues did some math on that issue. If we think about it, the carbon tax is 17.6¢ a litre. The gas tax is 10¢ a litre. If we add the GST to it, that gives us just under 29¢ a litre. If we look at \$670 and do the math, that

means an individual would have to use 3,293 litres. When we average things out, in terms of what the average person drives, in terms of a gas vehicle or a gas engine, it works out to approximately 37,000 kilometres.

As has been pointed out, whether by the deputy House leader or the Minister of Environment earlier today, who I thought did a fantastic job in explaining it to the official opposition, one could literally, if there were a highway between the North Pole and the South Pole, visit the polar bears at the North Pole, and then drive all the way down and visit the penguins at the South Pole, and still have thousands of kilometres to be able to drive. If one did all of that driving, then one would benefit from that \$670.

I do not know how much of a benefit that is, because people are going to pay a whole lot more on the gas in order to achieve that \$670 amount, yet Conservatives seem to think that this is a sound policy. That does not say anything about the policy that the Conservatives do not have in regard to our environment. On the one hand, their understanding of basic arithmetic seems to be really off, I would suggest. As was suggested by the Minister of Environment and others, the Conservatives need to get that calculator fixed or go back to some AI or maybe do a bit of a Google search on it. At the end of the day, their math just does not add up. If one takes a look at those who would actually benefit from it, I would suggest that it is a very small percentage of people.

● (1550)

If we factor in those individuals who do not drive, which is a fairly significant percentage of our population, there is absolutely zero benefit for them, yet the Conservatives go around saying that they are going to give a \$670 break to people this summer. Just do not ask them to explain it because the moment they have to explain it, I suspect they would be lucky if 10% of Canadians would actually benefit from it in any way, and that is being somewhat generous with the numbers.

What about the impact in terms of the environment itself? I would suggest that it reinforces something that Canadians already know, and it is that the Conservative Party of Canada does not have a climate policy. There are still members of the Conservative/Reform caucus who are climate deniers. I still remember a resolution, not that long ago, that passed within the Conservative annual meeting that denied the existence of climate change.

There are genuine concerns, and we wait with bated breath until we can actually hear something of substance. The last time we actually heard something was two or three leaders ago, when Erin O’Toole was the leader of the Conservative Party. He made it very clear to Canadians that Canada needs to have a price on pollution, and he came up with a plan, but he was not alone.

Business of Supply

Stephen Harper actually had a plan for a price on pollution, too. He did not do a good job in implementing it, but he did have a plan. The thing that Stephen Harper and Erin O'Toole had in common was that they both believed in a price on pollution. In fact, for the Conservative candidates in the last election, all they need to do is open up their platform book, and they will see that they supported a price on pollution, but unlike Erin O'Toole or Stephen Harper, the far-right Conservative Party today, which I see as more of a Reform party, to be honest, are so far to the right that they do not believe in things such as climate change.

The environment is not something that they have truly demonstrated any interest in dealing with when it comes to public policy. They are more interested in the flashy bumper sticker, even though that bumper sticker is misleading Canadians. That is truly unfortunate because young and old alike understand the importance of our environment. Constituents, not only mine but also 80% plus of all Canadians, are getting a net benefit with the carbon rebate.

• (1555)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is wonderful to rise and hear the only member of the Liberal Party who seems to actually speak in the House. His daughter is the only provincial Liberal politician west of Toronto, and in the House, he seems to be the only Liberal left because he is the only one who will stand and speak.

The member talks a lot about misinformation, and I would love to get into all the items that he was misinforming Canadians on, but I only have a few seconds and not an hour to refute everything. He talks about the savings people get from the carbon tax. I wonder if he could comment about those people who cannot afford to buy a car, as he talks about, or upgrade the windows, which is about \$10,000. The Tesla that he commented about buying is about \$60,000.

Right now, two million Canadians are going to the food banks every month because of the policies of the member and his government. How many of those can actually afford to go out and buy a \$60,000 Tesla or to spend \$10,000 upgrading the windows to save a few dollars per month, as the member has suggested?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can say to my friend across the way that there are actually more Liberals in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta than there are Conservatives, or Reformers, I should say. After all, in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Party has a progressive element; it is somewhat small, but it is still there. Even in Alberta, the Reform Party is not the same degree of Reform Party we see here. I can assure the member that in Manitoba, its members are in fact progressive Conservatives. Therefore, I would suggest to members that the far-right reformers, the party that the member across the way is a part of, needs to do a lot more in the Prairies to get that provincial representation of the extreme right.

Having said that, 80% of constituents, mine and the member's constituents, will actually benefit from getting more money back on the rebate than they will pay in the tax.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, the fuel excise tax is \$5.5 billion a year. For three months, it is \$1.4 billion.

What I would like to know is this. How does my colleague think the Conservative Party would pay for its new federal fossil fuel subsidy? What would it cut?

• (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member brings up a very good point, and I appreciate that. When we look at the gas tax itself, I believe around 40% of that gets funnelled back into municipalities for infrastructure. It is a very important component. We have heard Conservative members talk about getting rid of the tax, and some have even hinted a bit at getting rid of the gas tax in its entirety. If they are looking at doing that, we can think of the hundreds of millions of dollars that would be lost to the municipalities that receive a portion of that gas tax, which is money that ultimately goes toward infrastructure. I am not sure exactly where Conservatives are on the gas tax, as some have implied that they want to permanently do what they are proposing to do today.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that the Liberals ended the greener homes program years early, leaving Canadians, small business owners and contractors worried about the future of the program. It was a highly successful program, but at the same time, we know it was inaccessible for many Canadians. I know there is a campaign right now to have heat pumps for all, to ensure we have safer, cheaper and cleaner energy.

To my colleague, is the government going to respond with a new greener homes program? Is it going to bring forward a program so that not only low-income Canadians, but also all Canadians, British Columbians, can access heat pumps, so that we can have safer, cheaper and cleaner energy in our communities, and so that every home can access it?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, whether it is heat pumps or home renovations to improve energy efficiency, that is something the government has invested in a great deal in past years, and it will no doubt continue to look at ways we can improve and encourage individuals, through incentives, to continue to make their homes more efficient.

The bigger question that needs to be answered by the New Democrats is with respect to their sense of commitment toward a price on pollution that is universally applied to all Canadians. With the rebate component, it provides a great incentive for all of us to be able to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to allow time for more questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, what I heard from the member across the way is that this recommendation is not worth the effort, that it is not enough for Canadians and that it is meagre, yet he was fine with giving a significant rebate to people in Atlantic Canada. Here we are with an opportunity to spread that across the country, and he is not willing.

We know that in Alberta the gas tax had been lowered, which it does regularly. It is lowered, based on the price of oil, and then it is raised depending on where things are, and the people understand that.

The member's side lowered the price of the carbon tax for Atlantic Canada, but it will be going back up three years from now. What will it be for the people in Atlantic Canada three years from now?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, no. What I was suggesting is that the opposition could do a far better job than trying to mislead Canadians. An example of that would be supporting things that are proposed and that ultimately pass without the support of the Conservative Reform Party across the way, things like dental care, which is helping hundreds of thousands of people, and many are her own constituents.

These are issues of affordability. We can talk about pharmacare and seniors who require medication for their diabetes. There are more targeted ways, which are very real and tangible, that we can actually support Canadians. The national food school program is another one. These are substantive ways in which we can actually help Canadians. What Conservatives are proposing is not going to help Canadians at all.

• (1605)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary referred earlier in his speech to the origins of the B.C. carbon tax. Having been involved, I was amazed to find that a fairly right wing premier in British Columbia, Gordon Campbell, came up with a letter perfect, academically rigorous, revenue-neutral carbon tax, driven, as he was, by the disaster of the loss of the forests of interior B.C. due to climate change. It is a longer story, but this was due to the pine beetle assault because we lost our cold snaps in winter. Just to wrap it up, Gordon Campbell would have been defeated in that election, but the NDP in B.C. ran a campaign against him called “axe the tax”, and because British Columbians supported the carbon tax, he was re-elected.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there is a sad reality to this whole idea of a price on pollution and just how effective and how positive it could actually be, if the election ads, the electioneering and the politics were put a bit to the side. After all, I think there are 19 Conservative members of Parliament who ran on two occasions with an election platform in favour of a price on pollution. There is a certain progressive element within the Conservative Party, but that has completely evaporated, which is why I suggest that this is more of a Reform Party than it is a Conservative Party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like the parliamentary secretary to comment on the fact that the amounts that are collected through these taxes are

returned to the provinces in the form of road maintenance transfers. That money would no longer be available if we were to implement today's motion.

Where does my colleague think we could get that money? What impact would that have on the rest of the budget?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are absolutely silent on that. In essence, it would be taken away, so many Canadians would actually have a net loss, in a significant way, because of this particular commitment that the Conservatives are proposing today.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House, in relation to the consideration of Bill C-70, An Act respecting countering foreign interference:

- (a) during the consideration of the bill by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security,
 - (i) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings,
 - (ii) the committee shall meet for extended hours on Monday, June 3, Tuesday, June 4, Wednesday, June 5 and Thursday June 6, 2024, to gather evidence from witnesses,
 - (iii) the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, the officials from the RCMP and CSIS, the National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, the officials from the Department of Public Safety, and other expert witnesses deemed relevant by the committee be invited to appear,
 - (iv) all amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 4:00 p.m., on Friday, June 7, 2024,
 - (v) amendments filed by independent members shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill,
 - (vi) the committee shall meet at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, June 10, 2024, to consider the bill at clause-by-clause consideration, and if the committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by 6:30 p.m., each party shall be allotted no more than five minutes for each of the remaining amendments and clauses, and the committee shall not adjourn the meeting until it has disposed of the bill,
 - (vii) a member of the committee may report the bill to the House by depositing it with the Clerk of the House, who shall notify the House leaders of the recognized parties and independent members, and if the House stands adjourned, the report shall be deemed to have been duly presented to the House during the previous sitting for the purpose of Standing Order 76.1(1); and
- (b) the bill shall be ordered for consideration at report stage on Wednesday, June 12, 2024.

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

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SUMMER TAX BREAK

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable. Obviously, I am looking forward to hearing his speech.

[English]

I gave a statement in the House a couple of hours ago about how the citizens of Calgary Midnapore are suffering as a result of nine years of the NDP-Liberal government. I mentioned such tragic things as young adults not being able to have the children they dreamed of having, as a result of economic circumstances. I talked about parents having to pull kids out of organized sports. As a hockey mother, I can say that it is not a cheap endeavour to do organized sports in this day and age. There are also seniors who are so embarrassed. They have contributed so much to this country and now have to rely on food banks, as do over two million Canadians.

In my time, I would like to share a few more heartbreaking stories from my riding, explain why this is happening after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government and, finally, suggest a small step or solution the Conservatives are providing for the House to consider. Hopefully, members will vote in favour of it come this Monday.

As I indicated, I am hearing tragic story after tragic story out of my riding, and it is no surprise to me considering that Albertans pay an average of \$2,943 per year for the carbon tax. I will start with a very sad email from Belinda. Belinda, from my riding, writes:

Please help Canadians. My husband works a job downtown and I work we have three teenagers at [a local high school]. We are college educated and can't afford anything besides necessities. I have never written to an mp but feel like our whole community is desperate. Mental health is being affected. We no longer have funds to do anything fun. We have to rip our kids out of sports next year.

That is a heartbreaking proposition for a parent, I am sure. "And it's killing me inside", Belinda writes. "Help us please help it change."

I received another email from Jacob. Jacob, from my riding, writes:

I'm reaching out to express the general sense of dread associated with my family's future. We are living in a time where we are experiencing the highest prices on every non-discretionary item on our budget. From the gas pump to the grocery store. From the fear of heating my home to keep my family warm, to buying my son new sneakers—

I know all about that.

—it seems too much to bear. I am asking that you represent me and my family in Ottawa, a place that seems to have forgotten us Albertans. Please fight to eliminate these unnecessary and ineffective taxes, and to bring common sense back to Canada. Please fight to make Canada affordable again.

I also received this email from Ace, who is in the beautiful community of Silverado in my riding:

Is the liberal government aware of the housing crisis and the high cost of living that are facing Canadians? With the carbon tax and the high interest rates, we can feel the impact. We are all struggling day in and day out to make ends meet. Where is our prime minister who we thought was cheering for the middle class?

Business of Supply

I have recently met more and more people who cannot afford housing, rent and groceries. Wasn't this used to be a basic thing to afford if we have a job? As an Uber driver, I hear a lot of stories from all walks of life, good and bad. But lately I have been hearing a lot of sad stories about people who cannot afford the cost of living anymore. I am going to share a few with you. A young lady told me that she was thinking of getting married and having kids, but now it is impossible for her dream to come true as homes and rentals are out of reach. I spoke with an oldish man in his 50's—

I hope that is not too old.

—who used to live in a nice townhouse in Calgary, but now lives in one room in a shared accommodation because his townhouse rent doubled and he could no longer afford it. Another story, I met a young lady who had moved from BC to Calgary, she told me the rent was so expensive that she had to work as a part time sex worker to pay the bills. Last but not least, I met a lot of young men and women who moved back to their parents' basement because they cannot afford rent.

● (1615)

Are higher interest rates helping us to bring down inflation? The fact of the matter is THEY ARE NOT, but all it does is bring down the middle class and make us poorer and poorer. I sometimes wonder whether our government in Ottawa is not aware of the citizens' issues or does not care. I quite frankly do not see any improvement to our lives. Life is getting more and more expensive and poverty is a national epidemic. Who is fighting for us?

In a nutshell, the high cost of living is destroying us. We need a proactive government that would do its best to help its fellow citizens. We are drowning in poverty. PLEASE HELP!

These are just some of the sad and desperate stories that I have received from my citizens in Calgary Midnapore. When I look at the actions of the government, I see why this is the case. The government is spending out of control and has an absolute obsession with outside consultants and passing on funding to Liberal friends, not to Canadians.

We need only look at the most recent supplementary estimates, which I had the opportunity to discuss with the President of the Treasury Board yesterday at the government operations committee. Planned spending in 2023-24 has reached a record \$21.6 billion. That is incredible. There is \$704 million in proposed spending on professional and special services, and this amount will likely increase with additional spending requests in subsequent supplementary estimates. In 2023-24, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat lapsed, at the end of the fiscal year, \$500 million, but it indicated that of the \$500 million, \$350 million was for professional and special services.

Even with the \$350 million in consultant savings, the cost for consultants increased by \$3 billion. It is not even one-sixth of the \$3 billion that was spent by the Liberal government, due to its obsession with consulting, in the year before. Current estimates have the costs at higher than \$1.2 billion, but lower than last fiscal year by \$1.8 billion. It is highly likely to increase, however.

Business of Supply

When the President of the Treasury Board was present yesterday at the government operations committee, I pointed out the \$39.8-billion deficit currently in existence, in addition to the record amount being spent on consultants, as I had said before, and the additional \$1.9 billion in interest in the supplementary estimates, which apparently the Treasury Board president failed to remember during the last round of spending. Who knows how much this amount will be in the future.

Another example of this out-of-control spending on consultants is the hiring of the consulting firm KPMG to, ironically, find ways for the government to save money. As for the two contracts for KPMG, one was valued at \$325,000 and the second one was valued at \$344,650, for a total of \$669,650.

The problem with the government is clearly that it is not listening to Canadians. The good news is that Conservatives have a plan, through a motion, that will allow families to have a bit of joy this summer: getting rid of the GST on gasoline and diesel, eliminating the carbon tax and the federal fuel tax just until Labour Day. This will save the average Canadian family \$670 and 35.6¢ a litre.

If the government could kindly give up its obsession with spending and consultants and support our motion, along with the other parties in the House, including its NDP and Bloc coalition members, this would be a gift for Canadians during the summer. I certainly hope all members of this House will consider doing that.

• (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is interesting. The member is criticizing the government, saying that we are not listening. I am listening to the member, and she is talking about all these needs. We are bringing forward answers to many of those needs, whether through the dental program or the pharmacare program that I referenced. There are so many things we are addressing for the needs, including the disability plan.

Then she brings it to an end by saying that we are not listening, and families will benefit by \$670. That is just not true. Can she intentionally mislead as blatantly as that? The average Canadian is not going to benefit by \$670. That is just wrong. The member cannot substantiate it.

Can the member substantiate her statement that average Canadians will benefit by \$670? If so, how?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the numbers that I just shared substantiate that. There are record levels of debt, record levels of deficit and record amounts being spent on consultants.

As I have said time and time again in this House, the government takes and takes with one hand and gives a tiny bit back with the other, tiny scraps of what it takes. The member is just trying to perpetuate a mistruth.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to challenge my colleague on something. Throughout her speech, she spoke about the Liberal government's out-of-control spending.

I would like to point out to her that the Conservatives are adding a new expenditure of \$1.4 billion over three months, which is rather ridiculous.

How can she assure us that, if this money is spent, it would go to those who need it most? Usually, it is the more fortunate who spend the most money on gas with their fancy cars.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I know that members of the Bloc Québécois never appreciate what Alberta is doing. Frankly, the natural resources sector has given so much to Canada. I think that is obvious with this question.

As an Albertan and a Conservative, I can say that my party and I will continue to work for all of Canada, including Quebec. It is important to understand that everyone across Canada needs all sectors of the economy, including the natural resources sector.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech and I agree that people are suffering in this country. However, the Conservatives seem to put it all on the carbon tax, when as governments, we consistently and consecutively legislate poverty.

I want to note a statement from the Ontario Human Rights Commission that talks about poverty. It says that to deal with poverty, we need to recognize the right to an adequate standard of living, help by providing good health care and a universal basic income, and ensure we meet needs related to food insecurity, minimum wage and low-paid work.

Why do the Conservatives focus on one thing instead of dealing with the problem in the first place?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, who I enjoy seeing. I also very much enjoyed it when her mother was in the House.

The member talks about legislating poverty. It is my belief that her and her party have been legislating poverty for the last 36 months, working hand in hand with the government. She and her party always have a chance to make the choice to leave their agreement so that Canadians have a choice in how they would like this nation to go forward. Hopefully, we can reduce the debt and this deficits, reduce this obsession with outside consultants and bring some ease to Canadians. The first little step the member and her party can take is to support the motion we are putting forward on Monday.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by saying that two people from my riding are here in Ottawa. These two young people are just embarking on their political careers. Audrey-Anne and Annabelle have been learning a lot during their time in Ottawa. I hope they will enjoy the debate. I am very pleased to have them here in Ottawa with us. I would also like to thank my colleague from Calgary Midnapore for her excellent speech.

Business of Supply

After nine years, this Prime Minister and his Bloc Québécois supporters are just not worth the cost of \$500 billion in Bloc-endorsed inflationary spending that is forcing parents to skip meals to save their families.

Today's motion is about suspending the gas tax for the summer. While the Bloc Québécois leader and a number of the MPs on his team are campaigning to radically increase gas taxes, Quebeckers in the regions who do not have access to public transit are paying a hefty price. Talk about being completely out of touch with Quebec. I will say more about that later in my speech.

I have a few statistics about the impact that nine years of this Prime Minister's government has had on Quebeckers. This year, food banks are helping 872,000 people every month. That is a 30% increase over 2022 and 73% over 2019. In 2019, 500,000 people were helped by food banks every month. Now there are 872,000. Behind those statistics shared by the press are human beings, vulnerable people, families, children, single people who are experiencing food insecurity and do not know whether they will have enough to eat each day. More and more working families are seeking help because people just do not have the means to cope with all the increases imposed by nine years of this Liberal government.

I want to quote from an article entitled "Housing has become a privilege":

Soon, there will be nowhere for us to go, those of us who do not make a lot of money and who live in vulnerable situations. Housing prices are so high!

Among them, there are people who will end up in the encampments that are popping up everywhere.

In another article entitled "Housing crisis and mental health: Quebec organizations call out for help", a spokesperson for the Regroupement des comités logements et associations de locataires du Québec states the following:

We hear from tenants who intend to commit suicide. This is more than just despair. They do not see a way out, and they want it to be over. That is what it has come to.

I have one last article from the Journal de Montréal entitled "Proof of the housing crisis, she will soon be forced to live in her van". Here is a quote:

This is what's become of me. I feel ashamed. I'm mad at myself, but also at the government, which treats it like a political issue. It's not a political issue, it's a crisis!

Nine years of Liberal governance has led us to this crisis, and we need to find solutions. We need to take action to help Quebeckers and Canadians get through this. The Bloc Québécois is certainly not helping Quebeckers by supporting \$500 billion in inflationary spending by this government.

What is \$500 billion in inflationary spending? It is the government's budgetary appropriations. These appropriations represent the money we voted on in Parliament. What are they funding? They are funding the bureaucracy, the consultants, the agencies, and the contributions to corporations and lobbies. In short, it is the money being used to fuel the big federal monster from which the separatists want to separate. It is rather surprising. We would think that a separatist party would vote against this budget that helps fuel this big federal monster. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

The leader of the Conservative Party raised a very important point in the House. He said that he found it fascinating that a so-called separatist party from Quebec literally never supported reducing the tax burden on Quebeckers. That party never supports tax cuts. One would think that a separatist party would never support forcing Quebeckers to send their money to Ottawa, but no. In their own words, Bloc members want to drastically increase taxes.

When we think about it, it is true. Today, the Bloc Québécois claims to vote in the interest of Quebeckers, but we see that it is not true. We see that it is just a slogan. What the Bloc Québécois is really saying is that it will always vote in the interest of its party and its little brother in Quebec City, the Parti Québécois. The Parti Québécois does not represent all Quebeckers.

• (1630)

If the Bloc Québécois really wanted to vote for all Quebeckers, it would not hesitate to vote for Bill C-234 as it was written. It was designed to abolish the carbon tax imposed on farmers. As everyone knows, if we tax the people who make the food, the food will cost more. Who is going to pay for more expensive food? Everyone, obviously.

If the Bloc Québécois were truly the party for Quebeckers, and not the federal branch of the Parti Québécois, it would think about people in the regions. I am talking about people in Matane, Joliette, Thetford Mines, Mirabel, Saint-Hyacinthe, the people who need their vehicles to get around, to go to work, for recreation. Yes, these people need their vehicles to get around.

A study was published by Le Journal de Montréal in 2023. The article was entitled, "Cost of living: How much does it cost to live outside the big cities?" I would like to quote from it:

Living outside the major centres of Montreal, Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Saguenay, Sept-Îles, Gatineau and Sherbrooke can get expensive pretty quickly. The further away you live, the higher the cost of living. A family of two adults and two children can survive on a livable income of \$71,161 a year in Montreal, but it increases to \$76,918 in Sept-Îles. In Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, in the Gaspé Peninsula, that number rises to \$78,621.

Why? The answer is simple, "The big difference between the cost of living in town and in the regions is the need for a car. If you have a family, you have two cars." A father of four in Cap-d'Espoir said, "They need gas and gas is more expensive than it is in Montreal. It all adds up, so yes, there are things that cost more."

Like the Liberals, the Bloc wants people in the regions to pay more for getting around. They would like the carbon tax to be drastically increased. I have a pile of statements here from Bloc Québécois members calling for the tax to be drastically increased, who say that the tax is not high enough and that we should immediately triple it to make people pay for pollution. For people living in the regions, pollution is the fuel they put in their car to get around, to go to work, to take part in leisure activities.

Business of Supply

Not wanting to budge from that sort of ideology has consequences. Unfortunately, the consequences are that Quebec families, workers in the regions are paying the price. I would like the Bloc Québécois to realize that. The Bloc Québécois members want to punish Quebecers to appease their conscience by making them pay more for fuel. It is an essential commodity for those who live in the regions, who do not have access to structured public transit services like those in the big city.

I am eager to see whether the Bloc Québécois will support our motion today to suspend federal taxes on fuel. Does the Bloc Québécois agree that Quebecers should keep their money in their pockets instead of sending it to Ottawa? If we were to ask that question to anyone in Quebec, they would say that that is surely not what the Bloc Québécois wants.

However, from what I have heard today from the representatives of the Bloc, it is apparently not that easy or straightforward. One would expect it to be a no-brainer for a party that wants to separate from the big federal machine. Unfortunately, I would be very surprised if the Bloc Québécois supported us, because, as I said earlier, they want to drastically increase gas taxes. To keep expanding the big federal Liberal machine, the Bloc Québécois will keep sending Quebecers' money to Ottawa. Once again, I will quote the member from Carleton:

The Bloc Québécois supports high taxes, massive federal debt and a bloated bureaucracy that meddles in everything but is good at nothing. We should also remember that the Bloc Québécois supports a justice system that frees repeat offenders and bans hunting rifles. In fact, an independent Quebec with the leader of the Bloc Québécois as premier would be almost identical to the federal state led by the current Prime Minister.

When we look at the facts and at the action taken by the members of the Bloc Québécois in the House, we cannot help but agree with the words of the Leader of the Opposition. To really change things so that Quebecers have more money in their pockets, members need to support this Conservative motion, which seeks to suspend the federal gas tax. I think that there is only one real option for Quebecers who want more money in their pockets and that is the Conservative Party's common-sense plan.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party is trying to give the impression that the average Canadian will benefit by \$670 because of this particular policy. That is just not true.

I would suggest that it would be lucky if 5% of Canada's population would get the maximum benefit of \$670. Does the member have any evidence whatsoever to clearly show I am wrong in my estimation of 5% of the population, if that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, there is one thing I am sure of. I hear the member for Winnipeg North trying to distract from the debate at hand, but there is one number I am sure of, which is that 100% of people who put gas in their vehicles want lower taxes. That is a fact. No one is happy paying tax when they are putting gas in their vehicle.

We are asking for common sense. Right now, people have less money in their pockets. We want to leave them with more by cutting gas taxes for the summer at least, so they can enjoy summer too.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Mégantic—L'Érable for ascribing such power and importance to the Bloc Québécois. Indeed, we really are a bulwark against the Conservative Party. It seems to me that the Conservative members are doing something they do a lot: making up problems that do not exist and coming up with solutions that certainly do not work.

Here is an example. Right now, the government is returning all of the revenue from the carbon tax, which does not apply in Quebec. I have had to repeat this several times. Maybe one day the opposition members will get it. In the provinces where it does apply, people are reimbursed for this tax, which does not apply in Quebec. Voting for this measure to abolish the tax for three months works out to \$3 billion, \$3 billion that Quebecers would have to pay.

I do not know why my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable does not talk about the debt he would be forcing Quebecers to take on this summer. Instead of having money in their pockets, they will have to pay for Canada, which does not want to do the same thing Quebec is doing, that is, participating in the carbon market.

As I said, the Bloc Québécois serves as a bulwark. I would have liked to hear my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable comment on the fact that, two weeks ago, we were talking about women's right to control their own bodies. The House was full, but I did not see anyone applauding the parties opposite or over there. Ours, however—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will give the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable the opportunity to answer the question.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, first of all, the carbon tax, federal carbon pricing, does not apply in Quebec, because Quebec has the carbon exchange. However, that does not matter. The Bloc Québécois thinks that Quebecers are still not paying enough yet.

Here is what the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert had to say on the matter:

Madam Speaker, the carbon tax is a very good measure. However, it needs to be increased far more drastically than it has been so far.

I think the UN was recommending that the tax be set at \$200 per tonne now. Based on what we are hearing, it will be about \$170 per tonne in 2030.

That is three times the price we are paying in taxes right now. The Bloc Québécois is not saying it out loud, but what it wants is for Quebecers to pay more at the pumps, period.

Can they vote in favour of our motion to give Quebecers a break this summer, yes or no?

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, in Ontario, the Conservative government under Doug Ford scrapped the cap-and-trade system we had. It cost billions of dollars to get out of the agreement that had been made and that was functioning very strongly. Now we have a carbon tax, rather than that system. Ironically, cap and trade was developed more to tax businesses and the real polluters, versus what we are now stuck with.

What does my colleague think about Doug Ford's putting us in the situation where it cost us billions of dollars to get out of cap and trade, and now putting us in the current situation?

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I think the Prime Minister's government has done a lot of damage to this country over the past nine years. It has doubled the cost of housing. It has caused inflation to reach its highest level in 40 years. No one, not a single young family, can still dream of owning a home or property, because it is too expensive.

Without a doubt, the NDP has made its bed. It chose this Prime Minister's Liberal government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 Courtenay—Alberni, The Environment; the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country, Mental Health and Addictions.

[English]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it will be my absolute pleasure to be sharing my time with the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine.

As always, it is a pleasure for me to speak on behalf of residents of my riding of Davenport to today's opposition motion by the Conservatives. I am going to read the motion, just because, in my own imagination, I always think that of course there are people who might want to look at this at a future date and they are going to want to know what the opposition motion is about. The motion states:

That, in order to help Canadians afford a simple summer vacation and save typical Canadian families \$670 this summer, the House call on the NDP-Liberal government to immediately axe the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, and the GST on gasoline and diesel until Labour Day.

First of all, there is no NDP-Liberal government, so we should probably just state that up front. There is a supply and confidence agreement between the Liberal government and the NDP.

I would also say that I do not agree with the premise of this motion. It is not the carbon pricing that is stopping Canadians from affording a summer vacation. The only provinces that are actually subject to carbon pricing are those provinces that do not have a current plan in place to reduce their carbon emissions. For example, my home province of Ontario, and it was just mentioned by one of my NDP colleagues here, did have a carbon-pricing mechanism before the current provincial government was elected in 2016. It was a cap-and-trade system with Quebec and California. When the

provincial Conservative government in Ontario got into office, it cancelled that system and, unfortunately, not only was there a cost to cancelling it, but the province actually lost, and I remember this very clearly, \$3 billion in annual revenue. On top of that, the government did not replace it with another system to reduce carbon emissions.

It is known that climate change is happening. Every country in the world needs to do its part to reduce emissions, to meet its Paris Agreement targets and to move to a low-carbon future.

The Conservatives like to make bold and, sadly, unfounded assertions that carbon pricing is worsening food-security challenges in this country, but there is no evidence that this is happening. In fact, time and again, the data suggest that the impact of carbon pricing on inflation is the equivalent of a rounding error. We hear that time and time again in the finance committee. This fact is also supported by the Bank of Canada and many others. Carbon pricing has no real, discernible impact on any increases of food costs in this country. We have seen experts appear at the agriculture committee suggesting the same, saying that they can find no straight line between carbon pricing and food costs.

Therefore, what do we know? During a high inflationary period worldwide, compared to G7 countries, many that do not have carbon pricing, Canada has the second-lowest food inflation rate.

What else is the data telling us? It is telling us about the impacts of climate change on food costs. Let us take, for example, the impact on grapes or cherries, like those in Okanagan Valley, British Columbia. Increased forest fires taint the crops, rendering the products of those farmers unsellable. Blueberry farms in Nova Scotia, like the one in the riding of the member for Cumberland—Colchester, who unfortunately spoke against carbon pricing yesterday, are losing large amounts of crops to huge fluctuations in precipitation that lead to either drought conditions or extreme wet weather. Let us also talk about the impacts of flooding on animal agriculture, like what we saw during the atmospheric river flooding in the Lower Mainland of B.C. We saw cows up to their udders in flood water; we saw many barns destroyed; and, unfortunately and very sadly, we saw many animals perish.

We also have seen the climate impacts on invasive species on our crops. We have seen that climate change helps the spread of new pests that threaten both crops and animals. We are also seeing the climate change impacts on the warming of the oceans, and that this warming poses a serious threat to the billion-dollar east coast lobster fishery.

Business of Supply

• (1645)

I could go on and on with a lot of examples, but these are the costs that we have to be very focused on. These are the real costs of climate change, and they are happening in real time, year after year.

Where is the leader of the party opposite to be found in actually addressing these issues with real solutions? He is nowhere. We all remember last year when, being the leader of the party opposite, he had to cancel the axe the tax rallies in Yukon and Okanagan Valley because of wildfires. Yet, he has absolutely nothing to say about climate change, nothing to say to farmers and the next generation of farmers about how the Canadian government will take their concerns seriously and support them to be more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

Actually, there is something else that members opposite are not being honest about. Taking away the price on pollution would also remove the Canada carbon rebate and hurt people with that key income support, which is helping them to put food on the table. The Canada carbon rebate benefits lower-income Canadians the most. These are Canadians who tend to suffer most from food insecurity.

Germaine Romberg in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan is on a fixed income and depends on the Canada carbon rebate payments to make ends meet to pay for rent and for other necessities. The \$300 she got every four months last year on top of her disability payments made a world of difference for her monthly bills. She is not alone; this story has played out with Canadians across the country.

A study published late last year in the Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics, called “Canadian food inflation: International dynamics and local agency”, looked at the difference between the amount Canadians pay and the amount they get back in the Canada carbon rebate. The author concluded that:

Removing the tax may actually make some Canadians, particularly lower-income and rural Canadians, worse off than they are under the carbon tax...The impacts of the carbon tax on food prices are suggested to be small. If they are smaller than the difference between CAI payments and carbon tax paid, many Canadian households will suffer a net loss due to the repeal of the tax.

This is the same thing that the Government of Canada has been saying all along: Eight out of 10 Canadians get more back than they pay.

There are tens of thousands of Canadians out there like Germaine in Saskatoon, who, if they lost their rebate payments, would have their ability to purchase food severely diminished. We know that Conservatives, sadly, would deprive people of these rebate payments if they ever got into power.

I am going to repeat something that one of my colleagues said this morning, because I really believe it is important to be repeated. It reads:

Carbon pricing continues to be the most efficient, simple and cost-effective way to meet our targets. It is a measure that encourages the whole population, every household and every business, to find ways to cut pollution, whether and however they would like. It sends a powerful message forward of confidence to businesses to invest in cleaner technologies to be more energy efficient in the future.

Carbon pricing does not raise the cost of living. In provinces where the federal fuel charge applies, as I mentioned earlier, it represents only a tiny fraction of inflation and increase in the price of groceries, which is less than half a percent. However, there is a

10% supplement for people living in rural and remote communities. We proposed increasing it to 20%, but the Conservatives, sadly, have been delaying Bill C-59 for months now. I am hoping that they will stop delaying this, but for provinces under the federal pricing system with a Canada carbon rebate, 80% of Canadian households receive a refund greater than what they pay. In fact, if carbon pricing were abolished today, not only would clean energy investment and job creation grind to a halt, but our low- and middle-income families would have less money in their pockets.

I am urging all members of this House to vote “no” to the opposition day motion, because, unfortunately, the Conservative opposition party has no plan to address climate change, and no plan to actually help Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet.

• (1650)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech, but here we are in the middle of a climate crisis, and what does the government do? It had a successful program, the greener homes program, that employed many tradespeople and enabled people to reduce their energy needs and their carbon footprint. People were able to take autonomy in their own homes to come up with a cleaner energy future and be part of that story. It is still out of reach for many Canadians, as many Canadians need heat pumps and cannot access them, but this government killed that program, which was hugely successful.

Is my colleague, whom I have worked with many times on climate-related issues, going to be working with her government to bring that program back and actually expand it so that all Canadians can access it and help tackle this climate crisis?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his passion.

I agree with him. It was a very popular program. The residents in my riding of Davenport loved that program as well. He will recall that when we introduced the program, it was not that easy to apply to. We reintroduced it and, all of a sudden, an overabundance of Canadians applied.

My understanding is that there continues to be a lot of support for that program and we are hoping to reintroduce that program in the near future.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to commiserate with the member for Davenport in having her office vandalized in such a gruesome manner that now the Toronto Police Services Hate Crime Unit is investigating it as a hate crime. As one member of Parliament to another, we do not enjoy such things being done to our offices and the risks that come to our office staff.

Business of Supply

A previous member of the Liberal Party mentioned William Nordhaus, a Nobel Prize-winning economist. In his research that has been used by IPCC, and I have read the IPCC report, he specifically points out that if we have carbon taxes, we should do nothing else because they are very damaging to the economy. Of course, the government's policy has been to try to do all of it, which has been damaging to the economy. Even William Nordhaus's research demonstrates that in his calculations.

I wonder if the member would agree with William Nordhaus that we should only have carbon taxes, which is the economist's preferred path. Our preference on this side is to go with homeowners and families in our ridings who are just looking for a break from one long weekend to the next so this summer they can have a staycation and not to pay any of the excise taxes, gas taxes and GST on any of their fuels.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I think I need the rest of my time to answer the three different things that the member talked about, but first I want to thank him for his kind words. The vandalism of my office a couple of days ago is something that happens to members of all political parties. We all have to make sure that we discourage that and that we encourage good protests, healthy debate and public discourse.

What I would say to the member opposite is that carbon pricing works. We have introduced a climate action plan and framework with over 100 measures that we have to implement in order to meet our Paris targets and our target of net zero by 2050. It is believed that the carbon pricing is only going to—

• (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I understand the hon. member would like to give a fulsome answer, but there is another question. I would ask her to give a very brief answer.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, it will help us achieve one-third of Canada's emission reductions by 2030. We have a number of other measures in place that will help us reach the rest of our targets.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are in a Parliament where certain political parties are actually competing to see who can do more to help the oil companies, which are making huge profits.

I would like to know how my colleague can live with the fact that her government, in the last two budgets, proposed six tax credits that could cost taxpayers a total of \$83 billion. That money will be given to the oil companies, which we have been talking about all day, with some feeling so sorry for them because they are being taxed so much.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, that is a question that many Davenport residents ask all the time. I will say, though, that I am very proud of our government. We have eliminated all efficient and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. I hope the member will be happy to know that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to take part in the debate on the motion moved by the member for Carleton on this opposition day.

[*English*]

Before I begin, I want to salute the courage of my colleague from Davenport, who spoke right before me and whose office was vandalized, as well as that of her staff who had to see the photos and work in such an environment. I want to give my support to my colleague as well.

We are meeting today to go over an opposition day motion. For Canadians who are watching, I always like to use this sort of thing as a teachable moment. When Canadians look at what the motion says, it sounds kind of interesting. It states, "That, in order to help Canadians afford a simple summer vacation and save typical Canadian families \$670 this summer, the House call on the NDP-Liberal government to immediately axe the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, and the GST on gasoline and diesel until Labour Day."

First of all, we would like to know where the members opposite came up with that number. In order for Canadians to save that kind of money, they would actually need to use 3,293 litres of gas. Summer vacation normally starts once school lets up, so let us say it is July and August, which is literally two months' time between now and Labour Day. In two months, in order to save that kind of money, based on the Conservatives' math, Canadians would have to drive more than 37,000 kilometres. I do not know about you, but I will not be driving 37,000 kilometres in two months, and I do not think any Canadian is going to be driving 37,000 kilometres in two months. Therefore the premise of the motion is factually incorrect.

The motion also mentions the NDP-Liberal government. I have to say that there is no NDP-Liberal government, but we do have great colleagues across the way, and we are working together, which is what Canadians want us to do to help them and make things better for them. Therefore when I look at the motion and scratch its surface, we can see that it is virtually impossible. In my home province of Quebec, it would be even more than that, because there is not a price on pollution; there is a cap-and-trade program.

I think of the Canadian families who are struggling with the cost of living.

[*Translation*]

In the budget, we presented to Parliament measures to help Canadians when it comes to the cost of living. We are now offering modestly priced child care across Canada that is modelled after the program implemented in Quebec under Quebec's leadership.

Business of Supply

We have introduced programs for the purchase of heat pumps to reduce Canadians' demand for fuel.

• (1700)

[*English*]

We provide rebates for Canadians who would like to change their form of heating and rebates for Canadians who would like to perhaps purchase a plug-in hybrid or an electric vehicle. We encourage Canadians to visit Canada, this wonderful place, but in order to do so, we cannot have a summer like last summer.

[*Translation*]

Last year, Canadians faced the worst wildfire season in our recorded history. Over 15 million hectares burned, which is seven times more than the annual average. An area twice the size of Portugal went up in smoke, along with hundreds of family homes.

We cannot afford to impose the high cost of climate inaction on Canadian youth. That is why we put a price on carbon pollution. As I mentioned, the provinces and territories are free to implement their own carbon pricing system. That is what Quebec, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories did.

The federal backstop is in place in the provinces and territories that did not do that. The system is designed to be fair and affordable. Eight in 10 families get more money than they pay thanks to the Canada carbon rebate.

[*English*]

The Canadian carbon rebate ensures that we fight climate change. In my home province, the citizens of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine are absolutely committed to fighting climate change, and they want us to do so in the most cost-effective way, delivering hundreds of dollars every three months to Canadians residing in provinces where the federal fuel charge applies. Importantly, lower- and middle-income families benefit the most.

Last summer we witnessed horrific scenes coming out of British Columbia, Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Over 200,000 Canadians were evacuated and eight firefighters were killed fighting wildfires. On top of that, we all saw the images. We were here in this very place, with the smoke that we could literally taste when we were walking outside. The smoke from the wildfires last year blanketed the entire east coast of the United States. People with asthma and other respiratory illnesses suffered greatly. The cost of inaction on fighting climate change is too large to bear. We must continue in every way possible to fight climate change.

For the families who are planning their summer vacation, of course we want them to have the ability to take a vacation. That is why the Canada child benefit is indexed. That is why we put forward measures that will assist Canadians and their families to be able to take a much-needed vacation. We encourage Canadians to take the necessary downtime after working hard, and we are making sure that young Canadians too can continue to save up for their first home. We are putting measures forward in the budget to make sure that Canadians can reach their full potential.

I am at a loss as to where the proposed number came from. I do not understand how the Conservatives can say that in two months,

Canadians can drive 37,000 kilometres or that they would even want to. I just cannot support the motion. I welcome the feedback from the Conservatives on how they got to the number of \$670, because I cannot figure out how they did, and I do not think they have been able to explain to us yet today in the debate how they got to that number.

Let us be clear. I think we are all united here in terms of wanting every Canadian to have an opportunity to have some time off this summer. I think every Canadian wants that, and that is why we are making sure that the Canadian carbon rebate puts more money back in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians where it applies in their jurisdiction.

With that, I do want to say to Canadians that I hope they have a great summer holiday this year.

• (1705)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague across the way wants to know where we get numbers. I want to quote some numbers I have taken right from the public accounts. I believe my colleague across the way actually served on public accounts with me for a short bit.

The government has given \$277 million in direct subsidies right to Tesla over the last year and a half. That is over a quarter of a billion dollars. Elon Musk is worth \$268 billion Canadian. He owns 20% of Tesla, so the government has paid Elon Musk, the world's richest person, \$55 million directly, and this is right from the public accounts.

Why is the member opposite happy to subsidize Elon Musk but will not give Canadian taxpayers 35¢ a litre off their gas for their summer driving?

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. government House leader on a point of order.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, while my colleague is preparing her excellent answer to the question she was asked, I would like to request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting be 12 a.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, February 28, the request is deemed adopted.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

Business of Supply

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, when we adopted by unanimous consent that we could meet until midnight, I did not put on the record, but I would like to now, that I think there should be nursing stations available for those of us who work until midnight night after night, and that there should be very available places for at least quick naps to be able to continue our work. We do get elected to work, and we work hard, but we should not put our lives at risk.

* * *

OPPOSITION MOTION—SUMMER TAX BREAK

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I actually have not sat on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I did ask to be put on that committee when I first was elected because I thought it would be quite interesting, but I do not actually sit on that committee.

With respect to the subsidizing of Tesla, I personally do not actually pay for the subscription to X. I am curious how many members opposite actually do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, as the member said, we had a taste over the past year of the frightening new reality brought about by climate change, with 15 billion hectares having burned down, as she mentioned. Does she not think that her government should change course when it comes to the oil industry, so that we can turn things around as quickly as possible? Obviously, it is the main cause of climate change.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge the hard work being done by SOPFEU to fight forest fires in Quebec.

I want to tell my colleague that investing in clean energy is important too, like Hydro-Québec, which is doing an outstanding job. Quebec is a world leader in clean energy. I think that investing in wind turbines and solar energy is a good idea.

I know that my colleague will say that Quebec is a leader in Canada and the world when it comes to clean energy.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I concur that I have an element of confusion about what the Conservatives' intent really is here and how they measure people's needs. That being said, I know that climate change is having a huge impact on British Columbia. In my riding, what I have been hearing repeatedly from the tourism industry is that a lot of people are withdrawing their trips because they are afraid of forest fires. As we all know, part of British Columbia has already been on fire. People are scared they would be risking their life. That has really changed. I am actually supportive of carbon pricing, but I think it is one small step in moving toward climate safety, and we are far from that.

I am just wondering whether the member has heard anything from the tourism industry in her riding. What next steps should we

be taking, and we should be taking a great deal more, to combat the climate crisis?

• (1710)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from North Island—Powell River, who has been an advocate for her community for as long as I have been here. Her colleague also has talked a lot about the damage from climate change to the vineyards. There was a snap freeze in January in which a lot of the crops froze, and growers are not quite sure yet whether they are going to be permanently damaged.

However, fighting climate change is so important for the tourism industry. This is something I did not speak about, but if people are staying away, that is absolutely impacting the tourism industry so many communities rely on for generating revenue and creating good jobs. It is really important, and I am glad to see colleagues around the chamber are willing to work together to make sure we are supporting those industries and also fighting climate change.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years under the Prime Minister, Canadians are being forced to cancel their summer vacations, as the Liberals' tax-and-spend agenda has made even a simple road trip unaffordable. Parents can barely afford basic necessities, much less a summer vacation. The Prime Minister may be able to jet off on a \$230,000 luxury vacation, but most Canadians are having to scale back and cancel their summer plans after the Liberal carbon tax made gas and groceries unaffordable.

Like all MPs in the House, I am getting emails and calls from moms and dads who are struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table. I am hearing from seniors who worked for decades to save for their retirement, only to see inflation eradicating their income and their financial security. As someone who represents a large, rural constituency, I know how the carbon tax disproportionately impacts the people who call Westman home.

At a time when life is costing far more for my constituents, the Prime Minister's recent budget does nothing to bring the relief families desperately need. As the costs of groceries, gas and home heating continue to increase, the NDP-Liberal government fails to listen to Canadians.

I am glad to be splitting my time with my colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

As my constituents back home know, the Liberals have voted down numerous calls from our Conservative team to scrap the carbon tax. Instead, the Liberals increased it even more, despite the financial hurt Canadians are feeling. The reality is that more and more families are struggling to afford basic necessities. When people find themselves in financial troubles, as they are today, even simple pleasures end up falling by the wayside.

Business of Supply

For many, a summer vacation is not a big, dramatic, expensive getaway. It could be a long weekend at the cottage, a week-long road trip or simply a few days of camping. It is a treasured opportunity to get away from business as usual, unplug and recharge with loved ones. Kids need time with their parents and grandparents; they need the chance to experience the outdoors and appreciate the beauty of our great country here in Canada.

Unfortunately, thanks to the NDP-Liberal coalition, the Prime Minister was able to hike his carbon tax by 23% on April 1, further driving up the cost of everything. The fact is that 70% of Canadians oppose this tax hike; moreover, 70% of the provincial premiers have asked the Prime Minister to stop this painful tax increase, and for good reason.

Canada's Food Price Report predicted an additional \$700 annual increase in food expenditures for the average family this year over 2023. The most significant increases range from 5% to 7% in the categories of bakery, meat and vegetables. Last year, food banks had to handle a record two million visits in a single month, with a million more visits expected in 2024. Homeless encampments are now common in every city across Canada, and their number continues to increase.

The decline in the Canadian economy since 2019, created by the Liberal Prime Minister, means Canadians are now poorer by \$4,200 per person. While the American GDP per capita has grown by 7% since 2019, Canada's has fallen by 2.8%. This is the single largest underperformance of the Canadian economy in comparison with our United States neighbours since 1965.

We have already seen the real-world impact of this in our own backyard. In Brandon, the Samaritan House food bank gave out nearly 36,000 hampers last year, a dramatic increase of 12,000. As I have said in the chamber a few times, this was 50% above its normal annual average. This is in line with trends across the country, showing that families are struggling to make ends meet and put food on the table. We recently found that more than 50,000 Manitobans are now regularly using a food bank. That is the highest number ever recorded.

• (1715)

While we can get bogged down in statistics, we must never forget that we are talking about people: our relatives, our neighbours and our friends. Food banks are being used by full-time workers more and more. In some communities, one in six visitors says they are employed, which is an 82% increase over 2016. That number continues to grow. More than 60% of visitors are first-time food bank users. It is heartbreaking. There are hundreds and thousands of Canadians who have been forced to stay in line in food banks only because the NDP-Liberal coalition is determined to make life equally miserable for all Canadians.

Let us be clear: The rising cost of food and other necessities cannot be divorced from the NDP-Liberal government's tax-and-spend policies. The carbon tax alone is driving up the cost of everything. It is contributing to the cost of growing our food and other expenses along the entire food supply system. It gets passed down until everyday Canadians get stuck with the bill.

Despite numerous claims by the Prime Minister and his radical environment minister, the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that families are seeing a net loss under this ideological policy. People pay more in the carbon tax than they receive back from the rebate. Conservatives have been pointing this out for years. Nothing is more insulting to the millions of Canadians trying to heat their homes in the winter than when the Prime Minister decided to temporarily pause his carbon tax on only 3% of households. It is no wonder that provincial governments are up in arms.

The most recent example of how out of touch and stubborn the Prime Minister can be is his position on Bill C-234. This is a Conservative bill that aims to remove the carbon tax for farmers, thereby lowering food costs that are passed on to consumers. Instead of using an opportunity to lower food prices by passing the bill, or at least letting it pass with no political interference, he did everything possible in the House of Commons and the Senate to delay change and undermine it. Moreover, the Liberals and their NDP coalition partners decided to hike the carbon tax by 23% in April. That was just one step in their plan to quadruple the carbon tax over the next six years, making everything more expensive at the worst possible time. At the same time, their inflationary spending and ever-increasing taxes are already taking their toll, and paycheques are not going as far as they once did.

While the NDP leader is trying to save what is left of his political legacy, we must not forget that every NDP member voted 23 times to keep the Prime Minister's carbon tax in place. I will not stop calling on them to do the right thing and support our Conservative motion this time.

This year, the Prime Minister's carbon tax will cost Manitobans an extra \$1,750. This summer alone, it will take more than \$600 from family budgets. These costs add up, and even the most basic summer vacation plan suddenly becomes out of reach for people. The constituents of Brandon—Souris are disproportionately affected by the carbon tax. The riding covers more than 17,000 square kilometres. It is the ninth-smallest riding in Canada. Brandon—Souris is roughly the same size as three Prince Edward Islands put together. That may be hard to picture for the finance minister, who lives in downtown Toronto. The Liberal government needs to start realizing that its policies affect rural and urban Canadians quite differently.

We know the Liberal carbon tax is playing a role in raising the price of everything, so we are fighting to axe the tax and bring relief to Canadians. Let us save \$603 this summer for Canadians. They need it. People know better how and where to spend their own money, and the Prime Minister must recognize this fact. Let us put a pause on the carbon tax, the federal gas tax, and the GST on gasoline and diesel for the summer. We must do it now.

If we want to help young people, families and seniors deal with the rising cost of living, I implore all my colleagues to vote in favour of our Conservative motion. A future Conservative government will axe the tax on everything for everyone in a carbon tax election, but until that can happen, the Prime Minister must adopt this common-sense measure to give Canadians a break this summer.

• (1720)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I need to inform the House that Donald Trump has been convicted on 34—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That has little to do with the administration of the Canadian government.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one concern that we have is the tendency of the Reform Party across the way to mislead Canadians. The issue here is that they are trying to give an impression that Canadians will save \$670 over the summer. I suspect that this could be challenged. I do not believe there is any substantive, factual information that the Conservatives can present to clearly show that Canada's population would benefit by the full \$670. I believe that fewer than 5% would achieve the maximum \$670, yet the Conservatives go around and say they will.

Can the member provide any evidence whatsoever that would show that I am wrong on that?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, he has been questioning us all day on this particular issue. I guess one would have to say that the only thing that he has got is a dispute of the facts.

If one goes by the Liberals' enunciation of why people are getting more back in the rebate than they are actually paying, it is because the Liberals only use a few simple things, such as the cost of gasoline, the carbon tax on gasoline for one's car and for heating one's home, when it applies to many other materials that are moved back and forth across the country.

It is very easy to use the Parliamentary Budget Officer's own analysis to come up with these numbers that we have provided today.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, could my colleague tell me on what scientific, financial or taxation basis his party made that choice?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is an issue with the interpretation. There might be a problem with the earpiece of the hon. member from Brandon—Souris. Is the interpretation working? Yes? Okay.

The hon. member from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles may start over.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, we know that the Conservatives' proposal involves not an expense, but a \$1.5-billion shortfall over three months.

Business of Supply

I would like to know what financial or taxation basis the Conservatives relied on to estimate that there would be savings of \$400, \$500 or \$600 per family. How did they calculate that? That is my first question.

I might have had a second question, but I have decided not to ask it.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, our leader very clearly articulated this morning that the savings could be made by better management of the government. One thing is the fact that they have hired 25% more consultants over the last number of years and paid over \$100 million in accounting fees that are questionable with regard to the number of people that they have hired to do consulting for them. It is not hard.

I think what the member from the Bloc is missing is that this is coming right out of consumers' pockets today; they have young families. We have a short summer season in this country, and it would be, very much, a break for all families in this country to be able to afford a small holiday this summer.

• (1725)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing that I am really grateful for is that, earlier on in this debate, we finally had a Conservative MP from British Columbia acknowledge that the federal carbon tax does not have jurisdiction in British Columbia. Actually, only the British Columbia government can decide whether it is going to remove or continue the carbon tax, despite the fact that we have the leader of the Conservative Party, from Carleton, coming into British Columbia and saying that he will axe the tax; he would not have jurisdictional authority.

The member said that, in British Columbia, they should vote for one of the parties that would get rid of the tax. That would be one of the parties that brought in the tax, actually. One cannot even make this stuff up.

Maybe the Conservatives are considering getting rid of the GST, since they brought the GST in here federally. That is actually something they have authority for. It seems that they bring in policies, and then they run and hide from them when it seems convenient for them politically.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, this is pretty rich coming from the New Democrats, whose leader says that he now vows to get rid of the carbon tax.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to get on the record in Ottawa my support for our Conservative opposition day motion, a common-sense motion to help provide immediate relief to those who are suffering from the cost of living crisis in every part of this country.

What we are proposing is immediate fuel tax relief on the price of both gas and diesel from Victoria Day all the way to Labour Day. That would take the tax off on multiple fronts when it comes to gas and diesel, suspending it for the summer. It is not just the carbon tax, which is going to quadruple, but also the federal fuel tax. If the Liberals do not frustrate Canadians enough, remember that they taxed the tax when they put GST and HST on the carbon tax.

Private Members' Business

We will save 35¢ a litre for Canadians this summer if our motion passes. That means Canadians and families could maybe afford a summer road trip, which is not possible now because they cannot make ends meet. It maybe helps somebody going to medical appointments from my part of eastern Ontario to Ottawa or Toronto on a regular basis, or somebody in northern Ontario, in Timmins, who has to drive three and a half hours down to Sudbury for routine medical appointments. They deserve to have 35¢ a litre kept in their pockets this summer.

I want to spend a bit of time talking about the break that Conservatives would provide on not only the price of gasoline, but also the price of diesel. As many know, I was proud to be born and raised around Jet Express, a trucking company in eastern Ontario that my parents ran for many years. I want Canadians to know about the trucking industry and how billing works.

If we were to take the federal taxes off the price of diesel for the few months we are talking about this summer, it would have an immediate and measurable impact on the cost of transportation in this country. The overwhelming majority of trucking companies, when they charge a rate, have a base rate and fee, but there is a flexible and rotating fuel surcharge put on that. The higher that gas and diesel prices go, the more a trucking company has to charge in fuel surcharge, adding to the cost of delivering something from, for example, the soup and salad bowl that is Simcoe County all the way up to northern Ontario and all the way out to the east coast or west coast. If federal taxes were taken off, the price to run a reefer truck would drop significantly with the savings from the federal tax on diesel. The fuel surcharge could go down, providing immediate relief on the cost of goods and shipping around this country.

It is common sense. The Conservatives will keep advocating for it, despite opposition from the other parties.

• (1730)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

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. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote on this important issue.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 3, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from April 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (need to know), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-377, introduced by the Conservative member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, raises extremely important but sensitive issues.

The member is correct in saying that the current situation is not working and needs to be improved. When we talk about parliamentarians' access to classified information, there are two conflicting principles. Both of these principles are important, and so we must find a way to reconcile them before our deliberations come to an end.

On the one hand, there is responsible government, which is the very basis of democracy. Ministers are responsible for everything that happens in their departments. Cabinet members are collectively responsible for everything that happens in government. They are not accountable to the Holy Spirit, but rather Parliament.

We have a parliamentary system, and Parliament is the boss. The government must be accountable to Parliament, to the representatives of the people. To do that, Parliament must have access to all the information it needs, including documents that are to be produced.

When classified documents are involved, the situation is more sensitive. Those documents are classified secret for a reason, and disclosing them can be dangerous. Doing so can expose the identity of confidential sources, which burns them. It can make impossible co-operation with the intelligence agencies in friendly countries, which is necessary for ensuring security both at home and abroad. It can set off an international crisis or even uncover military secrets that would make us all vulnerable; it could cause an ongoing investigation to derail.

In the somewhat outdated words used in Bourinot, the old procedural guide that was consulted by the Chair during the Afghan prisoner crisis, it is important to preserve the roughly 140 years of collaboration between the House, the grand inquest of the nation, and the government, the defender of the realm. It is old language, but we understand the principle. When it comes to classified documents, there is no real mechanism that allows for this collaboration to work. This gap was made clear during the Afghan prisoner crisis and the Winnipeg lab crisis.

The Afghan prisoner crisis occurred under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper and the Winnipeg lab crisis under the current Liberal government. This is not a partisan issue. It is an institutional gap.

Private Members' Business

I want to say a few words about the story of the Afghan prisoners. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, the United States felt it had been the victim of aggression. It invoked NATO's collective defence clause and asked its allies for help. This marked the start of the Afghanistan campaign, in which Canada took part.

In 2007, whistle-blowers made some alarming statements to journalists. Whenever the Canadian army took prisoners, it handed them over to the Afghan government, at which point they were tortured. This contravenes international law. Of course, it was extremely serious.

In 2009, there was another leak. A memo prepared by Canadian diplomats in Afghanistan confirmed the 2007 allegations. The special committee on the war in Afghanistan asked to see the memo, but the government denied its existence. The committee asked to see all the documents relating to the affair, but the government refused. It was the start of a tug-of-war. The government eventually released 4,000 pages of documents, but so much had been redacted that it was impossible to know what information they actually contained. Worse still, new leaks showed that the redacted parts did not contain information that needed to remain secret. They contained information that was simply inconvenient to the government.

The Speaker confirmed that the House had a right to know. The House declared the Harper government in contempt of Parliament and the government fell in 2011.

However, this did not resolve the matter. The Harper government, which managed to win a majority because the Bloc Québécois had been weakened, created a committee of former judges and parliamentarians, all with security clearance. In the end, 40,000 pages of lightly redacted documents were made public in 2014 and confirmed the allegations.

Canada had indeed handed over some prisoners to the Afghan government. They were subjected to torture. Canada knew it. Soldiers and diplomats had concerns about it. They are not to blame. However, the government turned a deaf ear. Seven years had gone by. The practice had long since stopped. The Canadian army's combat mission ended in 2011. It was too late to do anything.

The Winnipeg lab affair is quite similar. In 2019, we learned that two researchers were fired and deported to China, but the government refused to say anything more. This was the start of another tug-of-war. The House asked for documents, and the government refused. The head of the Public Health Agency of Canada was found in contempt of Parliament and was admonished by the Speaker. The Liberal government, however, doubled down. Worse still, it took legal action against the Speaker of the House and then dissolved Parliament.

Last week, after a committee composed of security-cleared former judges and parliamentarians reviewed the documents, the report was finally made public. Our worst fears were confirmed: These two researchers were spying for the Chinese government. Five years had passed since the information first came to light. Clearly, the system is broken.

• (1735)

There is the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which the government legislated into existence in 2017. However, the story of the Winnipeg laboratory, which occurred two years after the committee was created, laid bare its limitations. Not only are its members bound to secrecy, but it does not report to Parliament. It does not really allow Parliament to do its job.

This is where Bill C-377 comes in.

When it comes to giving access to classified documents, the government has two requirements. First, individuals must have security clearance. Second, the documents must be required in the course of the individual's work. In the case of civil servants with well-defined responsibilities, it is fairly difficult to determine whether they need access to a particular document. In the case of parliamentarians, it is more complicated. The government is accountable to Parliament for all its activities and the government should not have the right to decide what Parliament can legitimately investigate, which is essentially the situation we have now.

Bill C-377 proposes a simple solution. Proposed subsection 13.1(1) reads as follows:

A member of the Senate or the House of Commons who applies for a secret security clearance from the Government of Canada is, for the purposes of the consideration of their application, deemed to need access to the information in respect of which the application is made.

The bill respects the privileges of parliamentarians, so this is a step in the right direction. The government will no longer be able to decide, on a case-by-case basis and in a completely arbitrary manner, what a parliamentarian should have access to. However, Bill C-377 is missing something. Parliamentarians who have security clearance will have easier access to classified information. That is good, but they will obviously have to keep it to themselves. I do not know whether the House of Commons, as an institution, will be strengthened by this or how the situation will be any different from what we are experiencing with the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, whose limitations we have seen.

The United States has the Gang of Eight. The government regularly provides this group with confidential briefings and access to documents. Who is on that panel? For each house of Congress, it is the leaders of both parties, plus the individuals responsible for intelligence in both parties. They must keep the information to themselves, of course, but having access to it guides their work, both in Congress or in the Senate, and at committee. This approach, in addition to giving representatives and senators access to information, feeds the institution and guides its work.

However, such an institutional mechanism is missing from Bill C-377. That is why I just said the bill is missing something. It is nonetheless interesting, and I sincerely thank the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for introducing it. The debate on this bill is important, very important indeed. The Bloc Québécois is approaching this in a non-partisan, open-minded way, because we are all interested. We remain open-minded, as we reflect and listen, which is the hallmark of a healthy parliamentary system.

Private Members' Business

• (1740)

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-377. First of all, I want to acknowledge the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. We have worked on a few things together. I have a deep amount of respect for him and the work that he does in this place, so I am very pleased to be able to speak to this piece of legislation.

I think it is a very interesting one, particularly in the context of the work that I have done on PROC, a committee that was overseeing a study on foreign interference. As we were going through that process, what we heard again and again was that the members of the committee were not vetted and did not have the clearance to access information that would really make the process for us a lot more logical, a lot less partisan and more focused on the important issues we were dealing with, so this bill, Bill C-377, really would allow for parliamentarians to be vetted and to go through that process. However, it is really important to underline the fact that this would not give them that clearance unless they were to go through that process. It would mean that parliamentarians would be able to apply, to go through all the interviews and to have things checked out to make sure they could be trusted to have secret information that the government may not necessarily want them to see, or they may simply not have the appropriate clearance, which would block that pathway for parliamentarians. Therefore, whether a parliamentarian would actually get that clearance is based on their history and on their capacity to get that. This bill, Bill C-377, addresses that and allows for parliamentarians to get that done.

I think where this is really important, and Canadians need to think about this, is that we see a lot of drama sometimes in this place, which is largely based on hearsay. I know, as a parliamentarian, one challenge I have had with respect to the work put before me, especially around the foreign interference file, was that I was trying to understand what was happening without all the information. I understand that some of that information could not necessarily be shared. I think it is really important that Canadians understand that our relationship with other countries really matters. When we have information shared with us because of our partnerships with other countries, we must have a very clear process, and that needs to be protected because if it is not, it will lessen the trust other countries have in us and their ability to share information with us. Therefore, we need to assess all those things.

Even if we are able, at committee, to have all the members of the committee vetted, if somebody from a particular party cannot get that vetting, then if we were to have somebody sit in their place who is vetted, that would mean the committee could actually do some of that work, and there is a transparency at least to members of Parliament. When we talk about foreign interference, we know that is part of the challenge we have been facing. People who have been specifically targeted do not have the clearance and do not have a clear process in this place that allows them to know they are being targeted, which is horrible. I know, as an MP having gone through that process, I have been very concerned about who is being targeted, how we would know if we were being targeted and what that would look like.

The other part of this, and why I will be supporting this bill, Bill C-377, is that we know Parliament and government are already slow places. Things move far too slowly, and it really builds a sense of frustration sometimes for Canadians. Therefore, if we have a process whereby MPs and senators, who are either appointed or elected to their positions, could go out and do the appropriate tasks, could do the thorough assessment and could have that secret clearance, then they would be able to know information and would be able to clearly explain the process, but not the details. I think we have to be very aware of that. Parliamentarians would know things that they would not be able to tell, but they would be able to say that they saw it, that they know what is happening, and they would have information that might allay or grow people's fears.

In this day and age, where we see such a vast, changing reality, and I think of last weekend when I was at the NATO Parliamentary Association where we talked about the development of AI, what that means for military action and what it means to have that information sent out to all people in the world and to have our constituents included in that, we need to assess those things and understand them.

• (1745)

The world is becoming trickier. It is trickier for parliamentarians in our particular roles, and it is trickier for Canadians. When we look at this, we have to look at what is disinformation and what, in terms of trust, is being broken or poisoned by disinformation for everyday Canadians. It is a lot to try to understand all the different things that are happening, and it is hard sometimes to know what information is thorough, which is researched, and what is actually from bad actors selling disinformation specifically because they want to attack our democracy. This is not the only tool, and we could talk a long time about the other tools that we need, but this tool would allow parliamentarians to come together.

Right now, we do have NSICOP, which is one committee where all the people in it are cleared, and they have access to information. That is a good process. I have no problem with it, but we need to have that expanded to this degree. I think this bill, Bill C-377, really does a good job of talking about how we could do that. It would not fix all the problems, but it would certainly address some of them.

Private Members' Business

One thing I learned really clearly in the work I was doing around foreign interference is that particular communities are vulnerable to misinformation. I was particularly passionate because what I understood as I went through that process is that rural and remote communities are one of those areas that are more vulnerable to disinformation. The reason they are more vulnerable is that often their local media has been shut down as they do not have enough money to keep going, which means when information comes out that they may need to know, local radio stations or local newspapers may or may not be there to actually report it, and it does mean that there are particular challenges. We heard very clearly that some ethnic media was also having particular challenges.

When we look at this as a whole of building trust, we want to build trust with Canadians and build trust with our institutions of government. When we look at having parliamentarians be more aware, more accountable and have tools to do that work, these things all have to come together. I appreciate that it is one part, and we need to definitely see more.

As we move through this new world that we are facing, we have to look at how to educate everyday Canadians more about security measures, about what they look like and about why we have to follow them so that people understand where we should push and where we should not push. I think that is really important because those relationships, internationally, and that information can make us extremely vulnerable.

I also think we need to look at education. I know that some countries are doing a phenomenal job and are starting to invest more resources into educating kids from a very young age about how disinformation is spread and about the capacity of a green screen to make things that are not real look real. Some places have colleges and universities with courses in any kind of training, from becoming a scientist, to a carpenter, to a welder, to a business person, and they actually have components where they educate people about what is happening in the world, about how to decipher misinformation and about how to develop that critical thinking process, which is so important.

I look forward to supporting this bill, Bill C-377. I look forward to it going to committee to make sure it does all the things we want it to do. I also hope to see more work in this place around educating everyday Canadians as we go into a technology world that is changing so rapidly.

• (1750)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am joining the debate on my colleague's bill, Bill C-377, this "need to know" piece of legislation that I support. In some of my work in the past, it would have been useful to have at least secret level clearance in order to be able to receive a briefing from the government or even to get information on what the current state was of parliamentary work.

In my particular case, as members will know, I am one of 18 parliamentarians who were targeted by APT31, which is a specific unit of the People's Republic of China. There are many of these APTs, but this is a specific intelligence-gathering organization responsible not only for digital surveillance but also for going after politicians and activists overseas as one of its target groups.

In fact, the U.S. Department of State has named about a dozen of these agents, or hackers. They are professional hackers essentially, but they are intelligence officers in the PRC. It would be useful for me to be able to apply to the Government of Canada in order to obtain a security level clearance so that I could actually get a security briefing. It has come to the point where this type of legislation is now needed. A lot of information is digital. It is not just in written format, but it is out there, and it would help us to do some of our parliamentary work.

What I do like about Bill C-377 is how short it is. It would basically only add one section to the Parliament of Canada Act about access to information and would add a clarifying section on our privileges as members of Parliament, which we are simply stewards of. We do not own them. They are not for us. They are for the benefit of members of Parliament in the future.

Bill C-377 would also protect senators in that other place, making sure the powers and immunities they enjoy are still protected, by us being allowed to apply for a secret security clearance from the Government of Canada. Again, for the purpose of that application, we would be considered as needing to know because we need to know.

Too often I have seen, at different standing committees, where officials either will skate around the question or will avoid the question entirely by saying that due to operational security reasons they cannot disclose the information. Even though we may sometimes offer, after the fact, to move a committee in camera, which means it is not in public, there is a transcript that is kept with the Journals branch, but it is only available 30 years after the fact. Even though the public does not have it, we cannot often use it. However, it is very rare, and I have actually never experienced it myself. I think I received one in camera briefing with FINTRAC at one point. One can go see it, because it was one of the publicly available meetings. We were given a public briefing and then a private briefing as well.

This bill, Bill C-377, would have perhaps given us the opportunity to follow up with the Government in Canada to find out more about what exactly is going on with particular files. It all starts with little things, when we start pulling at the ball of yarn, trying to get at the answers so we can better understand an issue, both from witness testimony and from government officials who come to tell us about the work they have been doing on behalf of taxpayers. For us to be able to hold them accountable, we need to know what they know. We need to know what information they have. I have noticed that when it comes to security agencies and to those responsible for national security issues, too often there is a block, and they will say that they cannot disclose it to us because we do not need to know.

Private Members' Business

My grandmother used to often say that one cannot empty the ocean with a spoon. She would say it in Polish. It turns out it is a Yiddish proverb as well. I sometimes feel like we are drowning in an ocean of information, trying to understand what is useful information and what is information that is not useful, not necessary, not relevant to the work we do. I think that is a big part of a member of Parliament's job, as well as that of senators.

The second part of it is then to realize what sensitive security information is required to do our jobs. I will go back to this APT31 group. I was the target of a digital surveillance campaign, specifically one attack, and I was not told by the Government of Canada that I had been targeted. The House of Commons cybersecurity did not tell me specifically that I was one of the targets. I had to find that out from IPAC, and then I had to find out from the FBI what exactly this digital surveillance was. I received a briefing from the FBI. I did not get a briefing from CSIS, from the RCMP or from House of Commons security to tell me exactly what it was.

I actually went to look for those emails, which were still in my inbox, unread, thankfully, because I did not know who they were from. I still had those two emails. Had I opened them, and had my browser settings been set to automatically open images, I would have been impacted by this digital surveillance campaign specifically. I would like to be able to go to the government and say that I need a security level clearance, that I need to know and that I would like to obtain more information. I would like to be able to ask the government what it can give me up to that level, let us say.

● (1755)

In that particular situation, I think it would have been useful for me to be able to have it. The proposed legislation would fix that; it would give me an opportunity to go to the government and ask for that clearance.

I remember being an exempt staffer. It feels like many years ago. I was dating myself with someone else, and it feels like it has been now about 16 years, so it was quite a long time ago, during the Afghan war. I know that the mover of the private member's bill is a combat veteran from Afghanistan, and around that time he was in Afghanistan. While I was at National Defence headquarters as an exempt staffer, I cleared the security level clearance for secret, but because I was born abroad, as I am a naturalized citizen of Canada, they actually had to send an agent to the Republic of Poland to do the further background checks so I would qualify for top secret-level clearance.

I thought, absolutely, that is the way it should be done. Whatever they need to do, they need to do. I accept it. I remember filling out all the forms, but in the many months that it took, I actually never cleared it because my minister was shuffled out of his portfolio before I was cleared for that information. I would always be excused out of the meetings where there was top secret-level information being discussed by other exempt staffers. I thought that it was perfectly acceptable and that was the way it should be, because I did not need to know, and I accepted that.

In a situation like this for parliamentarians, we are not very often told to leave a room because we do not need to know. I do not sit on the NSICOP committee, the way the mover of this particular private member's bill does, so I am not affected by that type of infor-

mation that I might have to receive, but there are other situations, like the one that personally impacts me and the work I do as a parliamentarian involving this intelligence office, APT31, from the People's Republic of China, where I do have a need to know. I do have a need to know because it has impacted my work and it has impacted how I relate to human rights activists in Canada and diaspora groups. I also meet with legislators and former legislators who are sometimes members of the opposition, sometimes members of the government or out of government, or exiled to Canada.

I meet with journalists who are exiled to Canada as well. One of my favourite people to speak about is Arzu Yildiz, who is a very famous Turkish journalist and is very well known in Turkey. At least, she was well known, almost a decade ago now, when she reported on activities of the Turkish government and for all her troubles, she was basically forced into exile to Canada.

In my dealings with people like this, it would be good to be able to ask the Government of Canada, "I need to know. These are the types of people I am meeting with. Can the government share some information with me about their backgrounds?" I think we all have this experience if we are working with cultural communities and diaspora groups, working on legislation. We would like to have a bit more information available. What do our national security agencies know, and can they share it with us?

I am glad that the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound has proposed now that members of Parliament be deemed needing to know so we could get that type of clearance, and it would also be extended to members of the Senate. There are two Houses of Parliament, and the Senate plays an important role as well, making sure that, in the work that we do, we get it right. It is the House of sober second thought.

My grandmother used to always say to start with little bits and that we cannot empty the ocean with just a spoon. This is now that beginning. It would be increasing our capacity to obtain information that is valuable to us. We have Order Paper questions, but as public information, we can file access to information requests, which I do quite often. That is privately held information up until it appears on the Treasury Board Secretariat's website as a released ATIP. Sometimes these take several years. Some of my ATIPs are coming close to being eligible for a member of Parliament pension at this point, because I still have not obtained them, but Treasury Board Secretariat is working diligently to make sure they are further delayed. They know who they are.

Private Members' Business

I support the bill. I support initiatives generally like this, for more transparency and more access, so that parliamentarians who are not members of the cabinet can get access to information they need to know. There are a lot of constituents who simply expect it now. It is an expectation in our work that we do get access to more information from our government. Members of the cabinet know a lot more, and I think parliamentary secretaries do enjoy some more access than just plain backbenchers like me. We have a role to play in this democracy, and we should be able to play it fully.

• (1800)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will pick up on one point the member referred to, because it is a really important aspect. When we think of all the information out there, it is incredible just how massive it is. Information nowadays, through technology and archives, is truly amazing. What we need to recognize right at the beginning is the need-to-know principle: “The need-to-know principle restricts access to sensitive information and assets to those whose duties require such access; that is, to those who need to know the information.” I think “whose duties require such access” is probably the most important thing for us to recognize. How wonderful it would be to sit in any sort of meeting and get the sense that we have an entitlement to know everything that might pique our curiosity. However, I do not think that this is in the best interest of national security, in terms of things such as foreign affairs, public safety and national security.

It is interesting to listen to the debate, and particularly what is coming from the Conservatives. I say that because when I was a member of the Liberal Party when it was the third party, Bill C-51 was brought forward. At the time, Liberals were arguing that we needed to establish a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. That was something that was justified, because there was a sense that parliamentarians on the committee would be able to look at anything and everything and they would have the security clearance to do so. We argued that. I argued that, 10 years ago, when I was sitting in opposition, recognizing that there is sensitive information, even back then, that not all members of Parliament should be receiving because it should be based on the need to know.

Back then, I articulated why it was so important that we establish this national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. Hansard will clearly show that, back then, I said the committee should be apolitical, non-partisan, and should have representatives from all political parties. We took a lot of heat back then from the government of the day and lost. We could not convince the government to establish such a committee, in the form of an amendment to Bill C-51.

We should keep in mind the relationship that Canada has with its allied countries. When we think of security, we have to think of the Five Eyes countries, of which we are one. At the time, we were the only country in the Five Eyes that did not have a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. That was one of the primary arguments I used back then. I believed that, whether there was the RCMP, CSIS or any other public agency, this committee of parliamentarians needed to be established to ensure that there is a higher sense of accountability. We made the commitment back in

2015 to establish that committee, and we did just that. We established the committee and joined the Five Eyes countries, our allies, in having this parliamentary committee, but members will recall it was with a great deal of protest from the Conservatives, because they did not want this committee to be established. Why is that?

• (1805)

A lot of politics is played when it comes to issues, whether it be foreign interference or any sort of foreign affairs. We were talking about hostages yesterday. There are a great deal of professional, civil servant-type individuals who are out there protecting us and making sure that Canadians are safe and secure. There is some information that we individually do not necessarily need to know, if that is in the best interest of public safety.

As parliamentarians, we get involved in all sorts of meetings. One could argue we could be more effective if there were no redactions done to documents brought forward to the standing committees. Even within in camera meetings, whether it is intentional or unintentional, we are going to have information being leaked.

I have listened to members opposite speak to this bill, and there was nothing said that addresses that specific concern. What I hear them say is that they are members of Parliament, so they should be able to have unlimited access if they can get a particular security clearance. If someone wants to be able to get information, they just go and ask for the security clearance.

I will go back to the need-to-know principle: “The need-to-know principle restricts access to sensitive information and assets to those whose duties require such access; that is, to those who need to know the information.” For the people who are concerned that something is awry or something is happening that they should know about, there are other mechanisms currently in place. We have the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. We have representatives from all political parties who sit there, and there are no restrictions there. We also have mechanisms that have been agreed upon for when certain issues come to the attention of the House of Commons.

We can talk about the Afghan detainees issue and the great uproar that took place there. People wanted classified information. They wanted to see the words and the information. That was actually done through negotiations with the then prime minister and opposition parties. There was a consensus as to how that information could be revealed to all political parties.

We have seen other issues come up in the interim. It is interesting that when the opposition talks about, for example, the Winnipeg labs issue, this government offered the very same formula that Stephen Harper offered when he was prime minister. We offered the very same formula in trying to deal with the issue, and the opposition said no to that initially.

Private Members' Business

Why did the opposition say no to that? Why did they say no to joining what the Five Eyes and other countries around the world were doing? I suspect that it has more to do with politics than good practice. That is why, when we take a look at the legislation that is before us today, I have not heard an argument as to why we should be looking over and above the need-to-know principle. However, we are not done. There is still going to be some more debate. I will continue to have a bit of an open mind on it. I will say, to this point, I have not heard anything.

• (1810)

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise this evening and speak to Bill C-377, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, need to know. I thank the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for championing this important bill to rectify an oversight that hinders the work that we do here in the House of Commons and over in the other place.

Like the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, I too recently received security clearance, as have other members who have spoken to this bill. It was granted to us by the federal government for our respective roles. The sponsor of this bill received it for his work on the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, known as NSICOP, and I received it for being on the special ad hoc committee tasked with investigating the Winnipeg lab documents and the espionage that took place there, which originated out of Beijing in mainland China.

The essence of this bill is simple yet important. It states that a member of the House of Commons or the other place, and I am referring here to the Senate as the other place, who applies for security clearance is deemed to need access to the information for which the application is made. That is it. It does not mean automatic access to classified information. It would merely establish a need-to-know basis for the application process. For example, when I was chosen by the official opposition to sit on the ad hoc committee looking at the Winnipeg lab documents, we were in the dark about how this was going to work, given that I would need to see classified information. The process was opaque, and we did not know where to go or where to turn. This bill would clarify that, and it is crucial for improving transparency and accountability, and for informing parliamentarians, as well as Canadians, about ever-changing and ever-evolving threats to our democratic institutions.

This is how the prevailing governing policy operates, and this is long standing. I have to say, listening to the Liberal Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who just spoke, turning it into a political football and accusing members who support this bill of bad faith and Liberals of championing a system, that the approach of the Liberals is to treat parliamentarians like mushrooms: Feed them a load of bull, and keep them in the dark. That is the Liberals' approach when it comes to national security issues. On this side of the House, we think parliamentarians have a responsibility to oversee the executive, and I hope others do as well. At times, that does mean accessing classified information. The Government of Canada's current policy is problematic because it undermines the ability of parliamentarians to perform our essential function of government oversight effectively.

Recent testimony at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs highlights the need for the bill. Vincent Rigby, former national security and intelligence adviser, emphasized that increasing transparency by producing annual public threat assessments, responding to NSICOP reports, publishing intelligence priorities and sharing more intelligence with members of Parliament is important. Wesley Wark, a national security expert, stressed that Canadians lack awareness about national security, which could be improved through public hearings.

Now, before the Liberals get all alarmed that secrets will spill out, I sit on another committee. I chair the public accounts committee. Through the hard and diligent work of all members of that committee, this committee was the first committee within western countries to legally receive the vaccine contracts from the pandemic. We kept those documents secret. We reviewed them in camera, and the committee is set to table its report. It will do so in a way that respects those confidentiality agreements, and nothing has been leaked. Now, this didn't require classified information, but it did require going through a number of hoops that the government first resisted, although, by working together, we showed that these committees can do their work and keep classified information confidential. In this case, it was not so much national security but commercial interests that the government, as well as vaccine producers, were looking to protect. We wanted to, as they say, trust but verify, so we reviewed these documents.

• (1815)

The aim of this bill is to bridge the gap between the need for national security and the imperative of parliamentary oversight. Members of Parliament, as well as senators and representatives of the Canadian public, need access to critical information from time to time to hold the government accountable. That is what this is about. Even though this is a government that is on its way out, it is going to fight tooth and nail to the very end to prevent this from happening.

We should move ahead with this bill. We should pass this bill. I hope we have multi-party consensus to do that because the people in the chamber, elected officials, do not serve at the pleasure of the Prime Minister. We serve at the pleasure of our voters.

Under the existing framework, the government typically restricts access to classified information of individuals who pass the personal security screening process and who need access to the information to perform their official duties. This need-to-know principle is fundamental to protecting classified information. Applicants for security clearances undergo rigorous vetting, where their entire lives are scrutinized to ensure that they are trustworthy.

Private Members' Business

However, just so people do not think this is some small cabal, from 2016 to 2023, nearly a quarter of a million security clearance applications were processed by the Government of Canada. At the exact same time, the government's policy operates on the assumption that members of Parliament and senators do not need to know sensitive information. That is its starting point, and that should change.

As such, passing this bill is crucial for improving transparency and rebuilding trust in our democratic process and institutions, particularly at a time when foreign interference is on the rise. The government would prefer to ignore that problem, and hope and pray that it goes away, but it will not go away.

This bill would ensure that parliamentarians have the necessary clearance to access sensitive information when requested by Parliament. This is not a blank cheque. For example, while I was in my role on the Canada-China committee, an order to produce unredacted documents related to the firing of two scientists at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg was denied by the government. An identical order through Parliament was also denied by the government, and then it went so far as to sue the House and the Speaker. It is outrageous and the first time that had happened in our country's history.

At the time, the government's position was that this information was so sensitive that only it could be trusted with it. It was later determined that this was an excuse put forward to protect the government from damning evidence of bureaucratic incompetence and ministerial malaise. Their incompetence has jeopardized our relation with other Five Eyes allies because we look like a bunch of bloody fools who cannot manage a level four, top secret lab, and we somehow let in not only officials from mainland China but also officials from the People's Liberation Army who specialize in biowarfare, but I digress.

We got that information, and Canadians can now see the incompetence of the government. It is important to clarify that this bill would not guarantee that every member of Parliament or senator would obtain security clearance. It does not grant members automatic top security clearance. As well, obtaining security clearance does not grant unfettered access to information. It merely allows the individual to be considered for access. It is an on-ramp. It is the beginning of a process, but just the beginning. Applicants must still pass the security screening process, which is stringent and thorough. I can say that. I went through it.

The bill would merely facilitate the application process, ensuring that parliamentarians who need to access that classified information for their duties can apply for clearance. The primary risk associated with this bill is political. If a member's application is denied, the reason for denial will remain private and not disclosed, maintaining individual privacy and security for members of Parliament.

• (1820)

In conclusion, this bill aligns with the unanimous recommendation of PROC to facilitate security clearance for parliamentarians who are not members of the Privy Council, ensuring they are adequately briefed on important national security matters. Ultimately, this bill will help parliamentarians. I hope it will pass.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound has five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank everybody who participated in this important debate because it actually achieved one of my aims, which I talked about in my initial speech when I introduced this bill, and that is education. I will get into the reasons why that is so important.

I am not shocked by this, but after listening to members, there seems to still be a level of misunderstanding of what exactly this bill is. I am going to talk about what it is, what it is not, and why it is so important. I will read the crux of what this bill is into the record one more time because then it will be easy to break down. It is subclause 13.1(1) of this need to know legislation, which reads, "A member of the Senate or the House of Commons who applies for a secret security clearance from the Government of Canada is, for the purposes of the consideration of their application, deemed to need access to the information in respect of which the application is made." That is the important clause.

My point is that the only thing this bill would do would be to allow parliamentarians to apply for a secret security clearance. The government would not be able to deny, regardless of who is in government, a parliamentarian from applying. That is all that it would do. It would allow them to apply. I would dare say that every speaker who spoke to this during the debate on my PMB highlighted two key examples: the Winnipeg labs, most recently, and the Afghan detainee file.

A colleague just spoke to what this bill does not do. This does not guarantee a parliamentarian will pass, should they apply. They still have to go through the same security vetting and clearance process that we have been doing for decades. I have had a secret level clearance for likely 25 to 30 years now. I have been at the top secret level for 15-plus years. The clearance does not guarantee one has a need to know or that one gets access to the information because that is how the system protects it. One still has to demonstrate that to the government.

Government Orders

Why is this so important? We have heard a little bit about this. The world is more complicated. We have listed a couple of historical examples. The most important one, which has been highlighted numerous times, is foreign interference. When we look at foreign interference, there are lots of cases. I do applaud the government about Bill C-70. It is going to come and address some of that because it allows changes to the CSIS Act, which then allows CSIS to actually share information beyond just the federal government, not just to potential parliamentarians. Again, if they are not cleared, they still cannot get that information, but it will potentially allow CSIS to share information to other levels of government, to industry and stakeholders, but they have to have the clearance.

We have heard testimony and speeches here, so we know that parliamentarians are being targeted. We have seen the original NSI-COP annual report of 2019. What was one of the key takeaways? Parliamentarians need to be briefed on the threats that they face from foreign interference. We have seen Madam Hogue's public inquiry into foreign interference. Just recently we saw the NSIRA report that came out. We are only a few days away from seeing NSI-COP's latest report. However, it is not just from those agencies. I would like to read again from the recommendations that came out of PROC, with unanimous consent, just a few weeks ago. Recommendation 3 reads:

That the government work with recognized parties' whips to facilitate security clearances, at Secret level or higher, of caucus members who are not Privy Counsellors (particularly those who sit on committees with mandates concerning foreign affairs, national defence and national security), who shall be taken as satisfying requirements for a "need to know," to ensure that they may be adequately briefed about important national security matters, including foreign intelligence threat activity directed toward Parliament, or their party or its caucus members.

The point is that this has already unanimously passed at PROC to basically implement what my bill is trying to achieve.

In conclusion, I have not heard a single criticism of the bill that is based on what the bill would do and what is contained within it. I know members from all parties who I have talked to are going to support this bill. I am hoping that, when it does come up for a vote, it will pass unanimously.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 6:25 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

Accordingly, the question is on the motion.

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. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I would ask for it to pass unanimously, but I doubt that would work, so I am going to ask for a recorded vote.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until

Wednesday, June 5, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

PHARMACARE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are 13 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-64.

[*Translation*]

Motion No. 7 will not be selected by the Chair as it requires a royal recommendation. Motion No. 13 will not be selected by the Chair as it could have been presented in committee.

[*English*]

All remaining motions have been examined, and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in the note to Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at the report stage.

Motions Nos. 1 to 6 and 8 to 12 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 6 and 8 to 12 to the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting the short title

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

Government Orders

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 9.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-64 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, could you clarify that the result of these Conservative motions would be to delete the entire bill at a cost of voting of about a quarter of a million dollars?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry but that is not a point of order. The hon. member can ask that question during questions and comments.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on another point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, could you clarify whether the Conservatives could simply vote against the bill and have the same effect?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, that is a point of debate. I would just ask the hon. member to maybe keep those questions and comments for the appropriate time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, it is interesting here in the House, the whole idea, whether the NDP-Liberal costly coalition likes it or not, of actually having a robust debate, especially when there are significant differences of opinion. Of course, that is why we are here tonight. We on this side of the House believe that legislation should be debated, and debated robustly, in spite of the fact of the trickery and antics used by the costly coalition to move closure on the bill.

On behalf of Canadians, I say that it has become fascinating to me that the notion that the House is spending other people's money has been lost, and this is a \$2-billion bill where we would spend the money of taxpayers. I think we should do it with great caution. We should be prudent when we are doing it, and we should be doing things that we hear from taxpayers are important to them.

When we look across the country and hear about the things that are mentioned in the bill, we know that that is not happening. Therefore, when the hon. NDP member who is standing behind me says that what we are talking about is this or that, or some other foolish intervention, then what we end up with is just wasting more time. He has been here long enough to know the rules, or he should know the rules.

We know that when the bill was introduced there were only 10 hours of witness testimony and five hours of debate on clause-by-clause on it. Why is this important? When we begin to look at the pharmacare bill, we see that some of the amendments that were in-

troduced originally were related to having Canadians understand that the bill really relates to only two classes of medications: contraception and medications and products for diabetes. That does not mean that those two classes are not important; they are. They involve important health states that often need the intervention of a prescription, but it means that the bill is no more than that at the current time.

It is interesting that the government, on canada.ca, puts out a list of medications that may or may not be covered by the bill, which creates hope for Canadians. Canadians will say, "Well, these are the medications that are going to be covered." Many different groups come forward and ask, "Well, why not this and why not that?" Probably one of the most influential medications in the history of diabetes treatment besides insulin is Ozempic, but it is not on the list. People will say, "Well, why is it not on the list?" Then, of course, the government talks about the bill and says, "Well, that is not really the list; that is just a list. It is any old list." Why did it publish it on its website, on canada.ca? Are those things important? Absolutely, they are.

When we talk about definitions, folks listening in at home will say that some of them are self-evident. They are not self-evident when we are dealing with \$2 billion. For example, what is the definition of "universal", "single-payer" and "first dollar"? Those definitions are incredibly important, so that the 70% to 80% or so of Canadians who have private insurance can be at least somewhat reassured that they would not lose private coverage.

That is the largest, most expansive and most distressing concern that we on this side of the House have. I would suggest that reassurances from the Minister of Health are just not enough for Canadians. To say, "Oh, trust me" is kind of akin to that old saying, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help", which we all know is a difficult pill to swallow.

There was another interesting thing that, in our limited time, we did learn in committee. There were two experts. One was actually there in person and one was on Zoom, and they were both touted as Canada's experts on pharmacare. I was glad they were not in the same room, as we never know what might have happened, but that being said, the most fascinating thing was that, even though both of them are experts on pharmacare, neither one of them was actually consulted on the bill. They did not give any input whatsoever on how the bill should come to be, what should be in it or what should not be in it, and for me that is somewhat distressing.

● (1830)

Another somewhat distressing thing that is referenced in the bill is the committee of experts, the group that would be put forward to decide exactly which medications and which devices would be covered. Again, there are several amendments related to that. Things such as regional representation and professional representation were once again simply dismissed by the NDP-Liberal costly coalition. That creates significant problems for us on this side of the House, and it is exactly why we believe we need to be here this evening. When we know it is not a plan, not a blueprint, but is a plan perhaps to create a plan, that again creates distress on behalf of Canadians.

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We know that people value the private coverage they are fortunate enough to have at this time, and we know that employers are happy to offer those benefits to their employees as a condition of their employment. Sadly, about a million people do not have coverage for medications. We on this side of the House believe there could be better ways to give them that than offering the pharmacare idea.

When we begin to look at the state of health care in this country at the current time, we know there are problems with the system we have. When one cannot access primary care, it is incredibly difficult to have a lab test done, to see a specialist or to have a diagnostic imaging test done. I say it is difficult because what happens is that people end up going to emergency rooms and urgent care centres to have some routine things done or even to have their prescriptions refilled. When we begin to look at that, in the words of former Canadian Medical Association president Dr. Katharine Smart a couple of years ago, the system is actually on the brink of collapse.

If anything, in the last couple of years we know that things have become even worse. There are now approximately seven million Canadians who do not have access to primary care, which means, as I mentioned, that they have to go to urgent care centres or emergency rooms, or go without care, which is the worst state of affairs.

Some of the other estimates would say we are 30,000 physicians short in this country. When we graduate about 3,200 every year, it seems almost an impossibility to make up the shortage. I always try to help Canadians understand it. It is kind of like having a car that does not have any wheels on it, but wanting a new stereo in it, which is not terribly helpful. It is perhaps not a great analogy but it is something to try to help Canadians understand what is going on.

The other part is that we know that wait times in the system, if one is so fortunate enough to be able to access it, are the longest they have been in 30 years, three decades. If one is fortunate enough to have a family physician, the wait time for having specialist care is over 27 weeks, six months. We know that people on waiting lists are dying. Somewhere between 17,000 and 30,000 people are dying every year waiting for treatment in this country. The system itself is in absolutely poor shape and falling apart.

The difficulty we also see, again, is government members' being champions of photo ops. They talk about their dental program, which has significantly disappointed many Canadians. We now know that provincial dental associations are taking out ads warning people about the extra costs and the lack of ability to find a dentist.

Liberals promised a \$4.5-billion Canada mental health transfer, which has never come to fruition at all. They promised affordable housing, and we know they are building less housing than before. They promised \$10-a-day day care, and of course one cannot access it.

What we have is a government that is great at announcements and very bad at actually making anything happen. We know, on this side of the House, that Bill C-64 needs significant amendments and significant debate. On behalf of Canadians, we need to be incredibly cautious with how we are spending other people's money.

• (1835)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Madam Speaker, under the statute, there would be a requirement for the government to come up with an essential drug list within a year of its getting royal assent. It would seem to me this would be a difficult process. I am sure all kinds of doctors are going to want different things to be part of the essential drug list. What does the member think about our ability to do that and to do it within one year?

• (1840)

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, sometimes people liken getting a group of doctors angry to getting a bunch of bees angry, in the sense that if we make one mad, they all want to sting us. That interesting image would hold true in this case.

How do we decide things when a group of experts get in a room? First of all, we need to pick a group of experts, which we had some ideas on at committee. They were rejected by the costly coalition. The other part of it is asking, what is the best insulin? What is the best medication, the pills, available to treat diabetes? Why is Ozempic not here? How do we make those pharmacoeconomic decisions when we know that some medications are incredibly cheap but not as effective as the more expensive medications? Who is going to be the final arbiter of that decision-making?

I thank my hon. colleague for the question, because I think it is a very important one. Canadians need to understand that the lists published on Canada.ca are simply lists and are not worth the paper they are printed on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have a problem here in Ottawa. Governments, particularly Liberal governments, think they know more than the provinces in fields where they are completely incompetent.

However, the NDP is breaking records. It is even worse. Not so long ago, the leader of the NPD wrote to Quebec's health minister asking for a meeting so he could teach him about the benefits of a pharmacare system. He did that even though Quebec has a system where everyone has been insured since 1996.

I would like my colleague to tell us what he thinks of this kind of attitude in Ottawa. How does the NDP's centralizing and equally incompetent attitude compound the already deep wrongs of Liberal governments?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, it is very important to respect provincial jurisdictions.

Everyone in the House knows that the province of Quebec has a drug coverage program. It is a very extensive program, but it costs too much.

We need to sit down together, talk about the problems and find solutions, especially in a case like this, where drug coverage is really a provincial responsibility.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, Conservatives say they want to save money, but they are spending \$400,000 on this debate tonight, which is about meaningless motions that basically delete the entire bill. There is not a single contribution the Conservative Party and Conservative MPs have made to pharmacare.

We know the Conservatives were wrong on dental care. Some 120,000 seniors, in the first three weeks, benefited from dental care across the country. Two million seniors have signed up, with tens of thousands more each and every week. Pharmacare would help six million Canadians with diabetes and nine million Canadians who buy contraceptives.

Is that not why Conservatives are wasting this debate and \$400,000 of taxpayers' money tonight? Is it not because they fear the supports the NDP is providing for the Conservatives' constituents across the country?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, let us be clear. I do not fear anything the NDP members have to say or think. I think that is important. They fear spending money on anything except democracy. All they want to do is ram legislation through, in their costly coalition partnership, with respect to things they sadly do not understand. The only other thing the NDP members want to spend money on is delaying the date of the election by one week so that many of them can access their pensions, which is money spent on behalf of Canadians.

When we look at those kinds of things, those words do not ring true with any of us in the House.

• (1845)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to a very important piece of legislation, Bill C-64, which deals with pharmacare and develops a framework for it. This bill, along with other investments made by our government, would help millions of Canadians who are struggling to pay for their prescription drugs. We had a very healthy process at HESA, the Standing Committee on Health. I want to thank all witnesses who appeared before the committee and those who sent written testimony because it really helped us understand the positive impact of this legislation.

[Translation]

This bill is a priority for our government. It establishes the fundamental principles for implementing a national pharmacare program in Canada. It also sets out our plan to work with the provinces and territories who so desire to propose universal single-payer coverage for a certain number of contraceptives and diabetes medications.

[English]

Since this bill was introduced, we have heard many facts about access to and affordability of prescription drugs within Canada. Statistics Canada's data from 2021 indicates that one in five Canadians has reported not having enough insurance to cover the cost of prescription medication in the previous 12 months. We know that having no prescription insurance coverage is associated with higher non-adherence to prescriptions because of cost. We also know that

this results in some Canadians having to choose between paying for these medications and paying for other basic necessities, like food and housing.

This is why our government has consistently made commitments toward national pharmacare. Bill C-64 recognizes the critical importance of working with provinces and territories, which are responsible for the administration of health care. It also outlines our intent to work with these partners to provide universal single-payer coverage for a number of contraception and diabetes medications.

This legislation is an important step forward to improve health equity, affordability and outcomes and has the potential of long-term savings for the health care system. In budget 2024, we announced \$1.5 billion over five years to support the launch of national pharmacare and coverage for contraception and diabetes medications. I would like to highlight the potential impact that these two drug classes, for which we are seeking to provide coverage under this legislation, would have on Canadians.

We have heard stories of people, or know someone, in our constituencies struggling to access diabetes medication or supplies due to a lack of insurance coverage through their work, or of an individual who has limited insurance coverage so they cannot choose the form of contraception that is best suited for them. For example, for a part-time uninsured worker who has type 1 diabetes and is also of reproductive age to manage her diabetes, it would cost up to \$18,000 per year, leaving her unable to afford the \$500 upfront cost of her preferred method of contraception, a hormonal IUD. With the introduction of this legislation, this individual would save money on costs associated with managing her diabetes and would be able to access a hormonal IUD at no cost, with no out-of-pocket expenses, once the legislation is implemented in her province.

Studies have demonstrated that publicly funded, no-cost universal contraception can result in public cost savings. Evidence from the University of British Columbia has estimated that no-cost contraception has the potential to save the B.C. health care system approximately \$27 million per year. Since April 1, 2023, British Columbia is the only province in Canada to provide universal free contraceptives to all residents under the B.C. pharmacare program. In the first eight months of this program, more than 188,000 people received free contraceptives.

[Translation]

The same cost-cutting principle applies to diabetes medication.

Government Orders

Diabetes is one of the most widespread chronic diseases in Canada. Although there is no cure for diabetes, there are treatments to manage the disease.

• (1850)

[*English*]

One in four Canadians with diabetes has reported not following a treatment plan due to cost. Improving access to diabetes medications would help improve the health of some of the 3.7 million Canadians living with diabetes and would reduce the risk of serious life-changing health complications such as blindness and amputations. Beyond helping people with managing their diabetes and living healthier lives, if left untreated or poorly managed, diabetes can lead to high and unnecessary costs on the health care system due to its complications, including heart attacks, strokes and kidney failure. The full cost of diabetes to the health care system could exceed almost \$40 billion by 2028, as estimated by Diabetes Canada.

The bill demonstrates the Government of Canada's commitment to consulting widely on the way forward and working with provinces, territories, indigenous peoples and other partners and stakeholders, including other political parties, to improve the accessibility, affordability and appropriate use of pharmaceutical products by reducing financial barriers and contributing to physical and mental health and well-being.

Beyond our recent work on Bill C-64, I would like to highlight some of the ongoing initiatives that this government has put in place to support our efforts toward national pharmacare.

On a national level, our government launched the first-ever national strategy for drugs for rare diseases in March 2023, with an investment of up to \$1.5 billion over three years. As part of the overall \$1.5-billion investment, our government will make available up to \$1.4 billion over three years to willing provinces and territories through bilateral agreements.

[*Translation*]

The strategy marks the beginning of a national approach to meeting the need for drugs used to treat rare diseases.

[*English*]

This funding would help provinces and territories improve access to new and emerging drugs for Canadians with rare diseases and would support enhanced access to existing drugs, early diagnosis and screening for rare diseases.

I would also like to highlight another initiative under way, which involves the excellent work by Prince Edward Island through a \$35-million federal investment. Under this initiative, P.E.I. is working to improve affordable access to prescription drugs, while at the same time informing the advancement of national universal pharmacare. The work accomplished by P.E.I. has been remarkable. Since December of last year, P.E.I. has expanded access to over 100 medications to treat a variety of conditions, including heart disease, pulmonary arterial hypertension, multiple sclerosis, psoriasis and cancer. In addition, effective June 1, 2023, P.E.I. reduced copays to five dollars for almost 60% of medications regularly used by island residents. I am pleased to share that through this initiative, P.E.I.

residents have saved over \$2.8 million in out-of-pocket costs as of March of this year.

Finally, on December 18, 2023, the Government of Canada announced the creation of Canada's drug agency, the CDA, with an investment of over \$89.5 million over five years, starting in 2024-25. The CDA will provide the dedicated leadership and coordination needed to make Canada's drug system more sustainable and better prepared for the future, helping Canadians achieve better health outcomes. I am pleased to share that as of May 1, Canada's drug agency has officially launched.

In closing, members can see the extraordinary amount of hard work that has been dedicated to national pharmacare.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-64 is a major step forward in our commitment to guaranteeing affordable, quality drugs for all Canadians. Our universal coverage plan for contraceptives and diabetes drugs will change the lives of individuals, families, society and our health care system.

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is hard to know where to begin with the speech the parliamentary secretary just gave. I have heard some of this before at rare diseases conferences. I just want people at home to know that not a single rare disease drug would be paid for through this legislation. That is for starters. It is only mentioned once in this entire piece of legislation. Second of all, the Canadian drug agency is not created. CADTH is being repurposed and renamed into the CDA.

My question, though, is specifically on rare diseases because the parliamentary secretary mentioned them. Of the \$1.5 billion announced all the way back in 2019, \$1.4 billion is still left unspent. Could the member tell me which rare disease drugs were covered between 2019 and today, which patients received the drugs and for what conditions?

• (1855)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member opposite for his advocacy on rare diseases and drug coverage. I have heard him speak before quite convincingly, and I thank him for the hard work he is doing.

The member is absolutely right. We have allocated \$1.5 billion over three years, but that delivery will come through provinces and territories. We are doing the hard work to engage in bilateral agreements with provinces and territories so that we can flow that money through provinces and cover the cost of medication through bilateral agreements for rare diseases. That work is ongoing.

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The work that we are doing through Bill C-64 on pharmacare is an add-on to that work. It complements the work that we are doing on rare diseases, and I look forward to continuing to work with the member opposite on this very important issue.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives were fighting tooth and nail to stop the dental care program. More than two million seniors across this country have signed up for dental care already. In the first three weeks of the dental care program, 120,000 have had access to dental care, often for the first time in their lives. Conservatives fought like hell to stop that program from coming into being and helping their constituents.

Now the Conservatives are wasting \$400,000 in taxpayers' money in a debate that is about deleting all the clauses of the bill, a meaningless, ridiculous, disrespectful debate that will cost Canadians \$400,000 by the time it ends this evening to try to block pharmacare, which will help, on average, 18,000 Conservative constituents with diabetes medication and 25,000 Conservative constituents in every riding in the country in terms of contraceptives.

Why are the Conservatives so afraid of the benefits that the NDP has forced the government to provide that will actually make a difference and help their constituents' lives?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, the truth is that the Conservatives do not support a pharmacare program. They do not support a Canadian dental care plan. They are throwing up all kinds of obstacles and denying the existence even of a Canadian dental care plan because they do not support that kind of really important help.

In fact, ideologically, they are motivated by private health care. If they have their way, that is what they will be championing, but on this side of the House, in this government, we strongly believe in a universal, single-payer system of health care and making sure that the most vulnerable in our communities get the care they need. That is why the Canadian dental care plan is such a success just in three weeks. The numbers cited by the member opposite are absolutely correct, and we will see more seniors and young people getting that health care because oral health is health.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague can provide his thoughts with regard to how the Government of Canada works with other jurisdictions, in particular, the provinces, to look at ways that we can support Canadians in terms of medications.

I see this as a good, solid first step for pharmacare. I would ask him to add some comments with respect to that.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, the member and I share an experience. We have both served in the provincial legislatures in our respective provinces, Manitoba for him and Ontario for me. We know that one of the biggest responsibilities provinces have is the delivery of health care. That is why it is imperative that the federal government work with provinces and territories in delivering these programs. That is what this pharmacare framework legislation is all about. I am very much looking forward to entering into those bilateral agreements with provinces and territories once this bill is passed into law.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the members who may have the courage to sit late with us this evening.

Today we are debating Bill C-64 to supposedly institute a national pharmacare program. I say supposedly because that is not what the bill does. Let us speak the truth. It is a bill mainly designed to playing politics, to the benefit of who knows who because by all accounts, the NDP is dropping in the polls.

What we are seeing today is a partial implementation of this system. The Liberal government, together with the NDP, is focusing on diabetes medication and contraceptives. What we are seeing today is a bit what the Conservatives have also been trying to do for a while now in this Parliament, to introduce American-style politics here in Canada's Parliament. We know that in the United States, in some states, the right-wing parties, the right-wing Republicans are attacking a woman's right to bodily autonomy. The Liberals are very afraid of the Conservatives, often with reason, because we know that there are a lot of people in the Conservative caucus who think that women do not have the right to control their own bodies. Essentially, the pharmacare plan is being used to Americanize Canadian politics.

Now, what this bill does is say that a national pharmacare program is needed. I want to point out that we are talking here about a federal national program, because we know that Quebec is a nation. The government is imposing a format. It is called first dollar coverage, which means that an individual must be insured and must have access to medication without having to spend a single penny. I understand that it would be ideal if many insurance plans, depending on the nature of the risk, were to say that, when a person is sick, they are not responsible for their situation. They did not do anything in particular to get sick, they are just unlucky and they should be insured and not have to spend a single penny. Society will be responsible for providing full insurance coverage.

However, Quebec already has an insurance program, a mixed insurance system. It is true that people have to pay a little. For example, for the public plan, when a person does not have a workplace plan or a private plan, they pay from \$0 to \$700 and change per year per person, depending on income. The contribution is geared to income. Most people have a plan through their employer that is negotiated as part of their collective agreement, so it is true that, in some cases, people pay a deductible for medication. They pay a certain amount, which is often very low, but everyone in Quebec is insured and the system already exists.

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The money that is going to be used to meddle in Quebec's affairs in an area where the federal government is notoriously incompetent, namely health care, should be paid out to Quebec so that we can improve the system that already exists and help it evolve. There is a list of 8,000 drugs that are covered in Quebec. That seems to have piqued people's interest. The federal government knows it is going to be very expensive, so it is buying time. The Liberals know very well that this completely universal plan, where everything is covered, will never come to fruition before the Conservatives come to power. This plan deals with two health conditions. Do people realize how huge a gap there is between reality and rhetoric and how we could have taken this money and sent it to Quebec so that these funds could be managed based on Quebec's priorities?

Some of the debates we had were disgusting in many ways. We, in the Bloc, were told that by opposing Bill C-64, we were opposing the well-being of the people in our own ridings, and that the only possible way to show concern for people's health, supposedly, was to support a bill that will not properly establish a universal pharmacare system for Quebecers. That is going to be addressed through questions, if the Liberals ask any. They will tell us that we are against this or that, that we are against people's health, but that is absolutely untrue. We are in favour of insurance, but Quebec is ahead of the game, and we cannot totally upend the Quebec system just because at some point, 25 years down the road, the federal government and the NDP decided to wake up one Tuesday morning. We cannot do that.

● (1900)

One of the reasons the NDP included this kind of program in its coalition agreement with the Liberals, and one of the reasons the only NDP member from Quebec, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, is fighting tooth and nail for Bill C-64, is supposedly because the major unions support it. It is a delicate situation.

It is true that the cost of drugs has increased, as has the cost of health care services in general, as well as all health technologies. As a result, the cost of private group insurance has gone up. In many workplaces, employer and employee contributions have increased over the past few years. This can put pressure on people's ability to pay. This can put pressure on collective bargaining to get higher wages to deal with the cost of living. We recognize that. We know that is important.

The reason the unions might be united in supporting this federal legislation is not because Ottawa is capable, it is not because Ottawa is good, it is not because Ottawa is competent, it is because the money is in Ottawa; it is because there is a fundamental fiscal imbalance; it is because there are more revenues in Ottawa than the weight of responsibility on the federal government; it is because the provinces need money. The federal government is so determined not to transfer money unconditionally to the provinces that many people have at some point lost confidence in one day having a federal government that will act responsibly and transfer money unconditionally. At some point, the unions decided that they will support the minimum. They will support what they think is feasible in a context where the federal government's lack of respect for provincial jurisdictions and its contempt for Quebec have been institutionalized for decades. That is what is happening.

The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is grandstanding and saying that he has the support of the unions. The message that he should be sending to the unions is this. He should tell the unions that, with Ottawa running this program, they will get less value for their money. There will be fewer drugs and less coverage. The system will not be as effective. The government will be creating a redundant system. In the end, the workers are the ones who will pay. This measure is extremely anti-union.

The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie should have acted more responsibly. He should have explained to the unions that we need to stand together and look to Quebec to get the transfers with no strings attached because Quebec is prepared to improve its system. That is what should be done.

I served on the Standing Committee on Health for several months. The ability to spend, the ability to put a knife to the provinces' throats, to make them accept conditions in exchange for money is in the NDP's DNA. I spent enough time in committee to know that.

The Bloc Québécois proposed a completely reasonable amendment. It asked for the right for Quebec to opt out with full compensation because Quebec already has all the necessary infrastructure. Quebec already has a system. Quebec is prepared to improve its system. It needs that money to continue this social development, which, as with day cares, means that, today, Quebec has a social policy—

● (1905)

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I apologize to our hon. colleague.

I rise on a point of order. In a debate such as this, there seems to be, according to our constitutional requirements, a lack of quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but quorum cannot be called during this debate.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, indeed, the absence of Liberal colleagues in the House should not be mentioned.

We have tabled an amendment—

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Just to be very clear, there are members inside and outside the chamber, from all political parties, who listen—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. Someone was speaking while you were speaking initially and I did not quite get what the hon. member said.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it was just in reference to quorum. It should be noted that members cannot call quorum, as you have pointed out, but there are members, both—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Yes. Thank you very much. I think all members know very well what the rules are because of the fact we have been doing this over and again for quite some time. There is no quorum call during these debates.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, that adds a bit of spice to our evening, obviously.

As I was saying, we asked for the right to opt out with full financial compensation. That should have been granted, in the interests of patients, those who are ill and workers. However, it was denied by the Speaker on the pretext that it requires royal recommendation, when the only thing Quebec wants is to have its share of the funds that are already allocated within this bill.

This shows just how institutionalized and deep-seated Ottawa's desire is to crush Quebec, to crush Quebec's desire to act in its own areas of jurisdiction and to exercise authority within its own areas of jurisdiction based on its preferences, particularly when it comes to pharmacare. It is in the genes of Ottawa's politicians, in their DNA. What is happening here today is so unfortunate.

It is unfortunate because the interests of patients and Quebecers are coming second. We should be greatly saddened to see that people's health is being politicized for electoral purposes. That should never be commended.

● (1910)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am truly surprised that the Bloc Québécois refuses to listen to what Quebecers are saying.

A large coalition, the largest in Quebec, made up of two million Quebecers, major unions and community groups, said that Quebecers applauded the federal government's Bill C-64.

They said the following:

Never before have we come so close to implementing a real public, universal pharmacare program. The hybrid public-private system in place in Quebec creates a two-tiered system that is unsustainable and needs to be fixed.

While criticizing the system, they also said this:

We are asking the federal government not to give in to the provinces and territories, which are asking for an unconditional right to opt out with full financial compensation.

That is the message that Quebecers are sending to the Bloc Québécois. It is a bit like dental care, where the largest percentage of people advocating for dental care are Quebecers.

Why does the Bloc Québécois refuse to listen to Quebecers?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, there are dissenting voices in every society. There are debates in every society. However, Quebec's voice is heard in the Quebec National Assembly, which is made up of 125 members who are elected by the people.

My NDP colleague's leader had the nerve to send a letter to Quebec's health minister. He literally told the health minister that he wanted a meeting with him, that he wanted to educate him and teach him how pharmacare works.

Do members know how Quebec's democracy responded? First, he was told to take a hike, because it was deeply disrespectful and ridiculous. Then, Quebec's democracy unanimously passed a motion in the National Assembly denouncing this kind of paternalistic attitude, which is, and always will be, unacceptable.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Mirabel for a very well-thought-out speech.

I come from Ontario, and the Conservative Government of Ontario has something called the Ontario drug benefit program. The member is aware of, and quite rightly pointed out, the jurisdiction of the provinces.

The pharmacare program that the government is bringing forward is not really a pharmacare program. It is like an announcement. It does not cover most of the drugs that the provincial plans cover. No Canadian, no Ontarian, wants a worse plan that would cover less. Perhaps the federal government would only cover certain medications.

Could the member explain to the Liberals and the NDP a little more about the jurisdictional issues that they are dealing with, and what people on the ground in his community are really asking for?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question.

One thing is for certain: If the federal government has money for the provinces to cover more drugs, then perhaps even more drugs could be covered if the money is sent to the provinces and they are given the right to opt out with full compensation so that they can expand programs with existing infrastructure.

However, Ottawa has this bad habit of creating structures, bureaucracy and new layers of all sorts of things that cost a lot of money. Then we end up with dental care plans like the Liberal plan that ultimately involves the private sector, which runs counter to the very principle of the Canada Health Act if it were subject to it. That is what we end up with. These are failures after failures.

What is the point of all this? It is about campaigning for the Liberals and the NDP.

● (1915)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am also from Quebec and I fully respect Quebec's jurisdictions.

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I have a question for my colleague. Does he not know that, right now in Quebec, IUD fittings, for example, are not covered by insurance? Women have to pay every month for their method of contraception, which costs between \$20 and \$30. Many women choose not to take contraceptives.

Why not simply join a program that will give all women free access to their choice of contraception?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, my best regards to the minister. I thank her for her very good question.

I will use the same wording to answer. Does she not know that Quebec is asking for health transfers? Does she not know that Quebec needs unconditional transfers? Does she not know about the health care funding deficit? Does she not know that if Ottawa stopped saying no to health transfers, we might not be where we are today?

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start off by just taking a moment to congratulate the citizens of the United States of America and the rule of law that has prevailed this evening. Donald J. Trump has been convicted of 34 felony counts. Justice will be done in the United States, and a serial criminal, who has committed many crimes but never had to pay the price, will finally be behind bars in a matter of a few months.

[*Translation*]

I send my regards to the citizens of the United States. Tonight, the verdict is in, and Donald Trump has been found guilty on 34 counts. Finally, we see justice being served in the United States.

[*English*]

There are Conservatives who admire this convicted criminal. I think it is important and very relevant to the debate tonight that Conservatives have imposed five hours of debate, at a cost to Canadians of \$400,000. This is being spent on a debate that Conservatives have put forward—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that if they have questions or comments, or if they are not interested in listening to the debate, they should ensure that they hold off until it is the appropriate time or step out of the chamber and come back when they are interested in listening to the debate.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I would also suggest to Conservative members that they should not be drinking and coming into the House. It is not a good combination, and it does not look good on them. The reality is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has been in this chamber for a very long time and knows that we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly. To assert that Conservative members are drinking and coming into the chamber intoxicated

is incredibly unparliamentary. I would ask that he withdraw those comments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure exactly what is being done. If the hon. members could stick to the subject matter that is before the House, the House will run much more smoothly. I do not think that putting accusations forward is proper.

I would just ask the member to withdraw so that we can continue.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, it was not an allegation, but advice, and that is quite a different matter.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Julian: However, Madam Speaker, I will withdraw it if that advice was misconstrued by any member, including the member who seems to be shouting very belligerently.

This debate tonight is going to cost us \$400,000, which is a lot of money. Even Conservative MPs, I think, would agree to that. However, what they have proposed in this debate tonight on pharmacare is a Conservative series of motions to delete the entire bill. That is why we are spending \$400,000 of taxpayers' money. That is it. That is what they have to offer tonight, which is certainly in keeping with what they have been doing since February 29. They have been trying to block, by all means possible, the passage of pharmacare.

Why would they do that? Why would they waste \$400,000 of taxpayers' money? Conservatives love spending money. We saw this under the Harper regime, with \$30 billion given each year to overseas tax havens, tens of billions of dollars given to corporate CEOs in the oil and gas sector and \$116 billion, including from the CMHC, given to banks to prop up their profits. I mean, there were unbelievable amounts of cash showered on lobbyists, on corporate CEOs and on banks. Conservatives love to spend money on anything but what actually helps people.

Conservatives have raised the question today, curiously, and are spending \$400,000 of taxpayers' money on a useless debate where all they are offering, in terms of motions, is deleting every single clause in the bill. There is absolutely nothing respectful of Parliament to try to put forward such a motion. They are ready to spend \$400,000 to basically waste a whole evening on a useless debate about deleting the bill rather than just voting against it, which is what normal people would do. However, they are unwilling to spend a penny to help people such as Amber.

Government Orders

Amber pays \$1,000 a month for her diabetes medication. She lives in Burnaby, B.C. She has to scrimp and save; she finds it difficult to keep a roof over her head and to put food on the table. However, the member for Carleton and his entire caucus are suggesting that it is okay to burn \$400,000 tonight on a useless, meaningless debate in which they are simply trying to delete every single clause of the bill. For them, it is okay to give \$116 billion, including from a housing fund, for bank profits. It is okay to give tens of billions of dollars to corporate CEOs in the oil and gas sector. It is okay to put in place the infamous Harper tax haven treaties, for a loss of \$30 billion each and every year over the course of the dismal Harper regime; that is nearly \$300 billion that they just burned. However, when it comes to helping Amber or their own constituents with paying for diabetes medication, which can sometimes cost as much as \$1,500 a month, Conservatives draw the line. They say, “No, hey, we give money to banks. We give money to oil and gas CEOs. We give money to big people. We give money to the rich. That is where we love to spend our money.” The member for Carleton, the lobbyist-in-chief of the Conservative Party, believes that this is where Canadian taxpayers' money should go, not on pharmacare and certainly not on dental care.

Now, on the dental care front, Canadians have said overwhelmingly to Conservatives that they are wrong. There were 120,000 seniors getting dental services in the first three weeks. What Conservative MP, over the course of their career, can ever point to having helped people? On the NDP side of the House, we can point to 120,000 seniors, including many in Conservative ridings, who have been helped immediately by the work of the member from Burnaby South and the entire NDP caucus. The NDP forced dental care through the House of Commons even though it was voted against four years ago by both Conservatives and Liberals. We certainly proved our worth to Canadians, and we have come back on pharmacare. However, Conservatives say the same thing: “We do not want to see our constituents helped.” There are 18,000 people in each Conservative riding in the country who would benefit from having diabetes medication paid for. Amber is just an example of what millions of Canadians are living with.

● (1920)

Canadians are looking for contraception. Women are looking for their reproductive rights and freedoms. There are 25,000 on average in each and every Conservative riding in the country, and the Conservatives say, “No, we do not want to give them that money. We want to burn \$400,000 on an all-evening debate about motions that would simply delete every single clause of the bill.” That is the one contribution that Conservatives have been making to the debate since February 29.

On this side of the House, we actually believe in helping people, unlike the member for Carleton. He has never really held a job in his life. He worked for Dairy Queen for a few weeks, and that is it. Everything else has been given to him by the Conservative Party. In my background, I had to work as a manual labourer. I had to work in the service industries. I had to work my way through school as a teacher. I worked in a brewery. I worked in an oil refinery. I have working experience. The member for Carleton has not a whit, and maybe that is why, because every single member of the NDP caucus can point to that real-life, real-world work experience, we un-

derstand that when people are struggling to make ends meet, they actually need us to help them.

Conservatives will say they want to take a few cents off a litre of gas on the price on carbon. They are going to eliminate the price on pollution, as if somehow that would help Canadians, and we know full well that already the cost of the climate crisis goes far beyond the price that it has put on pollution.

The Conservatives, despite the fact that now the member for Carleton has been leader for a couple of years, have not been able to offer a single solitary thing to Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet and put food on the table. One could ask, if the Conservatives are bad, what about the Liberals? The reality is that the biggest fault of the Liberal government has been that it continued all the Harper practices. We still have the infamous Harper tax haven treaties still costing us \$30 billion a year, according to the PBO. The government also coughed up money to the banks over COVID and was willing to spend money from the CMHC. Instead of that going to affordable housing, it went to prop up the banks, and the government has continued the oil and gas subsidies.

The biggest thing that I can reproach the Liberals on is the fact that they have acted like the Conservatives, with some exceptions, and that is because the NDP has stepped up to force them to get dental care into place. That has been an undeniable success. It is the best new support for Canadians that we have seen in decades. Now with pharmacare, people like Amber can know in the next few months, once we pass this bill, that they will actually get supports, and Amber will not have to struggle to find \$1,000 each month to pay for her diabetes medication.

That is why I am supporting the bill, and that is why I find it ridiculous that the Conservatives are forcing, at a cost of \$400,000, this ridiculous debate to delete all clauses in the bill tonight.

● (1925)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things that amazes me is the degree to which the Conservatives are so insensitive to their own constituents. One of the biggest beneficiaries of passing this legislation would be people with diabetes. Every member of Parliament has literally hundreds, if not thousands, of constituents with diabetes, and this bill is long overdue. I would like to see it passed, and the Conservatives do not seem to want to recognize the important impact this is going to have on Canadians with diabetes.

Could the member provide his thoughts on that aspect, please?

Government Orders

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the question is a very relevant one. On average, 18,000 people in each and every Conservative riding in the country, whether it is Cariboo—Prince George or Cumberland—Colchester, could benefit from the pharmacare provisions that the NDP have pushed the government to put into place, yet those members of Parliament, instead of helping their constituents, are siding with big pharma.

Who are they benefiting by, for the last few months, fighting to stop this bill from helping their constituents who pay \$1,000, sometimes \$1,500, a month for medication? I think they need some reflection, because Conservatives are not doing anything to help their constituents at all.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is absolutely fascinating, because when we look at the statistics, about a million people really do suffer from a lack of coverage. That is just the fact, in spite of the conflated numbers that the member from NDP wishes to state.

Maybe the member could do his math again on behalf of all Canadians and let Canadians know how many diabetics really need this program. There are some, admittedly, who really need it, whereas many others have fantastic coverage. His foolish plan would actually take away their coverage, leaving them with less ability to choose the insulin that works well for them or the other medications that are important to their own health, and the freedom of choice that they now have.

Perhaps the member could swallow his pride and get his numbers straight on behalf of Canadians.

- (1930)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I like the member.

We have had a breakthrough. One Conservative has finally admitted that people actually need pharmacare. One Conservative said, “Oh gosh, yes”. His numbers are wrong, but he is right in saying that people actually need pharmacare.

Why have the Conservatives been fighting tooth and nail to block this bill since February 29? Why have they been trying to stop their constituents, 18,000 of them, who he has just admitted actually need the program, from getting the program they need?

There is a breakthrough tonight. Maybe this is a use for some of that \$400,000 that the Conservatives are burning. If some Conservatives had the penny drop and finally realize that they are doing the wrong thing, they may start to do the right thing. That would be a benefit to all Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member was starting to hit the nail on the head here, when he made reference to the fact that there might be some benefit in terms of late-night sitting tonight, if somehow we can get the Conservatives to flip-flop on this particular issue.

It is encouraging, and the first step is to recognize not only people with diabetes, but also the millions of Canadians who would directly benefit because of contraceptive coverage. I believe it is somewhere around nine million women who would, potentially, directly benefit from this aspect of the program.

Can the member comment?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, that is very important, too.

There are 25,000 people in each and every Conservative riding in the country who would benefit from the provisions around contraception. Conservatives should be embracing that. On the issues of family planning, women's bodily autonomy, reproductive rights and freedoms, if Conservatives actually believe in freedoms, they should be supporting this bill.

I am hoping, perhaps, there may be some usefulness for the \$400,000 that the Conservatives are spending tonight to try to delete all sections of the bill. If one, or maybe two or three Conservative MPs wake up and actually vote in favour of the bill, maybe it will be worth it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and speak to this legislation today.

There are some aspects of public policy that I have had a great deal of interest in over the years, not only here in Ottawa, but also during the days I spent in the Manitoba legislature. Canadians have a justified expectation that provincial and federal governments will work together on the important issue of health care. It is part of our Canadian identity. In many ways, it is one of the biggest treasures we have as Canadians.

At the end of the day, when I look at this legislation, Bill C-64, I see it as a significant step forward in recognizing just how important it is, when we talk about health care, that medications need to be incorporated in a very real and tangible way into the discussions. I think of the number of people over the years who have ended up going to emergency services, had a premature death or were in situations where there were additional costs for health care. Imagine the number of different pharmacare programs that are scattered throughout the provinces. Even within a province, there are multiple different forms of pharmacare programs being provided. However, even with all of those hundred-plus national or provincial insurance programs that are out there, there are still many Canadians, hundreds of thousands, who have absolutely no insurance for prescribed medicines.

This policy that is sound and makes sense. Therefore, I am bewildered as to why, yet again, we see the official Reform Party across the way saying no to Canadians on what I believe is a significant step forward toward a national pharmacare program. It would start off with two medications, in two areas. I believe Canadians would overwhelmingly be in support of this. Whether it is people in Quebec, Manitoba, B.C. or Atlantic Canada, we will find resounding support for this initiative, and I would like to think that Conservatives, at some point in time, will open their eyes and have a better appreciation for the true benefits of this program.

Government Orders

This is not new for me. I have been talking about it in this House for many years. For the last half-dozen or so years, I have raised the issue. I have presented petitions on the issue. Whenever I had the opportunity to highlight the importance of pharmacare, I would often make reference to the importance of the federal government working with provincial governments across the country to encourage more participation in a truly national program. Interprovincial migration happens all the time. I have family members who live in different provinces. In fact, I have a brother who lives in B.C. and a sister who lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. The types of coverage vary. We all have opinions. Because this includes medication for people with diabetes and contraceptives for women, we would all benefit directly because we all have family members or know people who would benefit from that. I would personally love to see an add-on to it with respect to shingles.

● (1935)

I understand that in some provinces there is better coverage than in other provinces. That is one reason I would argue, as my daughter has in Manitoba, that we need to get provinces to come to the table in such a way that we could recognize the best pharmacare program that we could have, while expanding it to what it ideally could and should be into the future, with a higher sense of co-operation. I believe that is the answer. I think it was back in 2016 or 2017, I recall being on Keewatin Street in the north end of Winnipeg, asking people to sign a petition on the importance of national health care and on a national pharmacare program.

The NDP House leader made reference to a Quebec union and its thoughts about ensuring not only that this program sees the light of the day, but also that all politicians get behind it. There is a saying from the national nurses union that health care workers understand and they appreciate. If one goes into a hospital, one will find, at least in Manitoba, that one's medications are covered. When one leaves the hospital, depending on their situation and what kind of a plan they might have, they will get their medication. Many may not have a plan, so they will not get the medications, and often, the person returns to a hospital situation. I have talked to individuals, particularly seniors, who talk about medications versus food. That is a real discussion that takes place, sadly. From a personal point of view, the pharmacare program has been more important to me than the dental care program, and we have seen the success of the dental care program.

As a government, with the Prime Minister, we have seen how much Liberals value our health care system, our Canadian identity, virtually from the get-go with the buying of prescription medications to be circulated in order to support provinces, until not that long ago when we made a contribution of \$198 billion over the next 10 years to support our health care system so that we can enhance programs such as staffing requirements, long-term care and mental health. Those are expectations our constituents have. That is the type of thing that we are delivering because we have seen agreement after agreement with provinces and Ottawa dealing with health care, and we recognize just how important the issue is. We continue to be able to work with the different jurisdictions.

I believe that when we think about issues like mental health, dental services, pharmaceuticals and long-term care, they are all things that I believe, through the Canada Health Act, we have a responsi-

bility to show leadership for. I like to think that whether it is a territory or a province, there is a some semblance of what we could expect and that it would be of a similar nature. That is why we have transfer payments, equalization payments and so much more. That is why we have a government that not only understands it, but it brings in budgetary measures to support it and legislative measures like we are debating today on Bill C-64. The Conservative Party needs to wake up and understand what Canadians want. That is better quality health care, and Bill C-64 delivers just that. Conservatives should be voting in favour of it, not filibustering.

● (1940)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not get to say this very often, almost never, in the House, but that speech by the member was so much better than the previous drivel that we heard from the member for New Westminster—Burnaby. It was not good, but better than what the NDP House leader from B.C. had said, which was incoherent babble.

I do have a question for the member, which I asked the previous health minister and the current health minister at committee: How many provincial health ministers at FPT meetings asked for a pharmacare program? I have talked to the health minister in Saskatchewan, and this was never on the agenda at any FPT meeting. How many provincial health ministers asked the NDP-Liberal government to bring in this program?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will do better than that because I have been talking about this and campaigning on this type of issue for many years, and a vast majority of the constituents, the people whom I represent, want to see this. They want to see strong national leadership, and we are getting that through the Prime Minister, through the current government and the collection of Liberal MPs, and we are grateful for the support we get from the NDP. Because of that, we are going to see it happen, and as a direct result, millions of Canadians could realize the benefits. Our health care system is being improved upon, and believe it or not, that is something that the member who posed the question would also like to see.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will actually ask the member a question about the legislation. In Bill C-64, clause 6, "Payments", it says very specifically that it is supposed "to provide universal, single-payer, first-dollar coverage".

First-dollar coverage means that if a private insurance company today covers diabetic medication, it will not be able to do so if this legislation comes into force. In fact, it would be a crime. It would be illegal to do that, which means that there is a great potential for Canadians who are currently insured for their diabetes medication with a private insurer to lose it. They are actually the majority in this country.

Government Orders

How many Canadians would lose the coverage that they currently have because of this first-dollar coverage found in clause 6 of Bill C-64?

• (1945)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, let me answer the member by asking this: How many of his constituents are not going to have the types of benefits this legislation would provide if the Conservatives prevail and this legislation were to die? We are talking about hundreds, if not thousands, of his constituents who would not be able to have the medications they require at the cost we are suggesting, which is zero. The member needs to reflect on that. He is denying his constituents the opportunity to receive those types of benefits. We are not talking about a few thousand constituents; we are talking about millions, nationwide.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my Liberal friend a question. I come from Ontario, and the Conservative government has something called the Ontario drug benefit plan. It already covers diabetes and reproductive medications. To compare it to what my colleague was asking, there are a lot of people with private insurance, and they have this coverage. However, this plan may only cover certain medications that are not really specific to an individual who can tolerate different types of medications.

Can the member please confirm for Canadians that nobody would lose the medication that they are used to utilizing and that they stay healthy on because of this new program?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the constituents whom he represents that what he just said is not accurate. He tried to give the impression that the people of Ontario do not have to pay anything for diabetes medications.

There are things such as deductions and a whole spectrum of ways in which there are direct and indirect charges for people who need insulin. I think the member does a disservice in trying to discredit the legislation, when I am sure he knows better, as the Conservative leader ought to know, that millions of Canadians would in fact benefit by the passage of this legislation. The Conservatives really need to ask themselves, collectively, in front of a mirror, “Why are we trying to deny Canadians these benefits?”

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to Bill C-64, an act respecting pharmacare, which seeks to support the implementation of a national, universal pharmacare program.

I am always ready to champion a federalism that meets the needs of all Canadians, but there are a number of things that bother me about Bill C-64. Apart from the fact that it interferes in provincial jurisdictions, it was born of the Liberals' need to keep a minority government alive. That is why we are debating this bill tonight. Another thing that bothers me about Bill C-64 is that the Liberals are using the NDP like a lapdog, keeping it warm and cozy, only too happy to give in to the NDP's costly demands, while keeping it on a tight leash in a minority government that is on life support until the fall of 2025.

Since this bill does not respect provincial jurisdictions, it is obviously not legitimate. I have a hard time sorting out the reasons for this interference in provincial jurisdictions, which has become chronic over time, since the arrival of this Liberal government. I am even beginning to wonder whether the Bloc Québécois is not starting to rub off on the Liberal-NDP government in the House on other subjects.

One thing is certain. Canadians are finding it increasingly difficult to identify with those who have become spokespersons for every issue instead of minding their own business. The Bloc Québécois is another example. On many issues, they are undermining the real well-being of Canadians, and especially Quebecers, by playing provincial politics in the federal arena. They are confusing everyone.

In its current form, Bill C-64 would replace the private insurance system with a single insurance system. It would be a federal monopoly administered by a centralizing and incompetent Liberal government that has trouble managing its own departments and portfolios. For example, I am thinking about this government's inability to issue passports on time, which we experienced two years ago. I am not even sure what to say about the government's financial management, when it keeps spending borrowed money on the backs of future generations and dragging us towards a chronic and structural deficit. It is distressing to see a Liberal government that is incompetent across the board being supported by the NDP and, unfortunately, all too often by the Bloc Québécois as well.

Canadians are increasingly vulnerable, not because they lack access to medication in the provinces, but because they can no longer make ends meet. They have to make difficult choices between food and housing. Bill C-64 is just another idea where the expense is not worth the cost. Even more of taxpayers' money is being wasted in the expansion of the federal government, which is becoming increasingly intrusive and costly. Bill C-64 was born of noble intentions, but implementing it would create yet another inefficient and costly bureaucracy on top of the one that has been far too intrusive since 2015.

Currently, according to the brief submitted by Innovative Medicines Canada to the Standing Committee on Health, 97.2% of Canada's population benefits from access to prescription drug coverage through a public or private pharmacare plan. However, one in 10 Canadians are not enrolled in a government program that would cover the costs, even though they are entitled to it.

If we want to improve coverage, then we need to better inform Canadians. We do not need to destroy what is already in place to rebuild on a new foundation that has not been proven. The precursor pharmacare system in the province of Quebec, which was implemented 28 years ago, has been proven. The system is already practically universal. Common sense tells us that to improve coverage and access we just need to have targeted policies for the populations that do not have access. It is unnecessary to demolish what is already working, contrary to what the Liberals are currently proposing.

Government Orders

• (1950)

Monopolies of any kind have rarely served the interests of citizens. Replacing all the private drug plans entails major risks, including a reduction in the quality of service. As a result of competition, approximately twice as many new drugs are made available to patients on the private market in half the time.

Canadians appreciate this efficient system. Because it is a high-quality system, hospitals are less crowded, which in turn means lower costs. As I was saying earlier, this is yet another attempt by the Liberal government to interfere in provincial jurisdictions without consultation.

The health minister suggested that it would be absolutely out of the question for Quebec to give Ottawa free rein to create a pharmacare program in the province, unless it gives Quebec the right to opt out with full financial compensation, which the Prime Minister has no intention of doing. The same goes for Alberta.

The real reason behind this bill is that the Liberals have no choice but to bring forward this proposal because it is a condition of the NDP's support for the Liberal government and its survival, which has been at risk since its re-election. They outright ignore all the misgivings about the need for the bill and especially the costs associated with implementing it, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer told us. The survival of the costly coalition is at stake. They are trying once again to establish an even more centralist government, forgetting the country's federative nature and attempting to make it a unitary state.

The government should be more pragmatic and less ideological about this bill, otherwise all its efforts will be counterproductive. Instead of thinking about kickbacks to stay in power, the Liberal government should recognize the following facts. This is not a pharmacare plan. It is an empty promise that will not cover the vast majority of drugs used by Canadians.

After nine years of Liberal governance, the current Prime Minister has made a lot of promises. He promised affordable housing, and then he doubled the cost of housing. He promised that the carbon tax would cost nothing, and now we learn that 60% of families are paying more because of the carbon tax. He promised that taxes would be lowered but they went up. He promised safe streets, but ushered in crime, chaos, drugs and disorder.

This Liberal-NDP government cannot be trusted to deliver anything worthwhile to Canadians. In fact, the people have been betrayed, along with the working class too, to keep the Prime Minister in power while he doubles the cost of housing and quadruples the carbon tax.

Most Canadians already have prescription drug coverage. Many worry about losing the coverage they already have, coverage that works for them. There are also serious concerns about the cost of this proposal. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that it could cost tens of billions of dollars. Canadians cannot afford it at a time when they cannot even afford to pay their bills because of this Prime Minister. No Canadian wants a system that performs less well, offers less coverage, costs more and creates a massive new bureaucracy in Ottawa.

In closing, I want to reassure concerned voters who are not buying it. The common-sense Conservatives are going to abolish the carbon tax and bring down the prices of the basic goods that Canadians need. Canadians do not need legislation like this in these difficult times. What they need is an election as soon as possible to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

• (1955)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are talking about pharmacare and the member is talking about cutting the carbon tax.

Let me read a quote from Linda Silas: "Every day, nurses witness the profound impact of poor access to medications on their patients' health." She has addressed this to all members of Parliament. Further down she says, "Get it done for the sake of our patients, for the future of our health care system and for the well-being of our country. VOTE "YES" ON BILL C-64." Linda happens to be the president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

Could the member provide his thoughts on why the Conservative Party is going against our professional health care providers, who really want to see this legislation pass because they understand it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would love to hear what Canadians think about this during an election, which may even come this summer. That would be for the greater good of all Canadians.

If this government has the courage to find out what the people want, it should call an election. Otherwise, let it continue to follow the NDP's lead.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am well aware that the member has had a long career and that he lived through the Harper regime, the most expensive regime in Canadian history. Some \$116 billion was given to the big banks to increase their profits. According to the Parliamentary Budget Office, \$30 billion a year went to tax havens thanks to Mr. Harper and his team. Of course, there was also all the money given to CEOs in the oil patch.

The costly Conservatives spent a lot of money on the rich and affluent. However, now we are talking about pharmacare, which will help people in his riding. It will help 18,000 people with diabetes who are struggling every month to pay sometimes up to \$1,000 for their medication.

The question I want to ask my friend is very simple. Why are the Conservatives so keen on spending money on billionaires, CEOs and banks, but do not want to give a penny to people struggling to pay for their medication, such as diabetes medication?

Government Orders

• (2000)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague, who was here when I was part of an excellent Conservative government, that the national debt was around \$500 billion. It is now over \$1.25 trillion. That alone is costing Canadians an enormous amount. Right now, the Liberals are spending more on debt interest than on health transfers. We are paying a huge amount of interest. The 7% that we pay on goods and services goes toward paying the debt instead of toward health care.

That is because the NDP is forcing the Liberals to overspend.

[*English*]

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in getting my colleague's response to the reality. As a community health nurse many years ago and someone who led, for a number of years, a multidisciplinary team at a community health centre that was very much about vulnerability, I saw time and time again the chronic illness implications of diabetics who did not have access to appropriate treatment. I saw repeatedly and was able to demonstrate through our data systems the cost to our health care system when someone with a chronic illness continued to move to the more severe aspects of their disease process because they did not have access to care.

I hear time and time again at committee and in the House that my colleagues are very interested in cost savings. Could the member please explain to me why he is reluctant to move this legislation forward in light of the very well demonstrated implications of cost savings in our health system?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, my colleague asked a very interesting question. I talked about that in my speech. It would have been better to target people who do not have access or who need a lot of prescription medication that they cannot afford. If the government had done that, then it would have to cover only about 1% to 2% of the Canadian population, and we might have supported the measure. However, it bothers us that that the government wants to scrap everything that currently exists in the public and private sector to implement an extremely onerous system with a lot of red tape.

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is it always an honour to rise in this House.

I want to start on a personal level. I was always so proud to grow up with my mother as a family physician, who continues to practice medicine in Winnipeg. In the past number of years, she has moved into working with people battling addictions. Much of my understanding of the health care system and how we care for people in our society has come through the compassion, expertise and professionalism that I have seen on my mother's part, so it is with her in mind that I rise today to speak about pharmacare.

Like so many of our colleagues in the House, I have heard from constituents who are eager for the government to move in a direction that will allow for a universal pharmacare plan. There are a variety of reasons for this, which I will get to later in my remarks. However, what I have heard primarily from seniors, whether it is on

the government's plan for dental care, the proposed piece of legislation we are talking about today or investments in aging in place with dignity, is that they are extremely enthusiastic about the direction the government is headed in relation to a variety of different health care policies.

As members know, recently there was an election in my home province of Manitoba. We have been working collaboratively with the new government, and I was very proud to join other colleagues, as well as the premier and the Manitoba health minister, not too long ago to announce a \$630-million health care deal with the Province of Manitoba. It is going to see us invest directly in a variety of areas that are going to make a difference in the lives of my constituents, and Winnipeggers and Manitobans broadly speaking. They include things like a reduction in wait times, investments in mental health and addiction and ensuring that we have greater efficiency in our health care system.

I have talked often in this chamber about my experience as a teacher, as a principal and as a coach, having worked for many years with young people, and I am proud of the investments we are making in youth mental health. I would also note that many of the students I have worked with in the northwest part of the city of Winnipeg are unfortunately, and in many instances disproportionately, impacted by type 2 diabetes. It is indigenous communities in particular that are facing those challenges. I come to this debate with some first-hand experience, having seen how difficult it can be to operate without coverage.

• (2005)

[*Translation*]

Our government promised to bring in a national, universal pharmacare plan so that all Canadians can have access to the prescription drugs that they need.

Our government worked on developing a solid foundation for building a national, universal pharmacare program. This work includes investments in the national strategy for drugs for rare diseases to help Canadians with rare diseases access the drugs they need. It also includes the announcement of the creation of a Canadian drug agency in December 2023.

[*English*]

With the help of the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, we have also completed preliminary work toward a national formulary. This work included the establishment of a multidisciplinary advisory panel with a recommended framework and process for the development of a national formulary.

In Canada, the roles and responsibilities for health care services are shared between provincial and territorial governments and the federal government, as we know.

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The provincial and territorial governments are responsible for the management, organization and delivery of health care services for their residents, which includes determining which drugs are reimbursed, and under what conditions, for their eligible populations.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with our provincial and territorial partners to improve the accessibility to and affordability of prescription drugs for Canadians. The bill would do just that, starting with contraception and diabetes products.

By continuing our work together and making wise investments, we can ensure that the health care system is there for us when we need it, both now and in years to come.

I said at the outset of my remarks that I spent a number of years as an educator, and it was during that time that I got to know kids and their families on very personal levels. I did not just get to understand them as students, but I got to understand them as people, including all the challenges that come along with daily life. Some of those challenges included access to health care.

I cannot tell members how many times, for example, I would have a first nations single mother with a child in crisis in my office, and she was not sure how to advocate well for her child, because they had had so many challenges over the years in interacting with the health care system. I remember one particular instance where a child was having some significant mental health issues, and I said that I thought we really needed to call the son's doctor and get an appointment for him. The mother picked up the phone and called the doctor, and the receptionist at the office answered the phone and said that, unfortunately, they did not have a spot for the next four months. This was a young person who was contemplating taking their own life at the time.

I was fortunate enough to be able to help that family in that particular instance. This was by virtue of something I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, and that is having seen my mother's ability to operate in and navigate the system. However, this is not uncommon, particularly for marginalized communities. In Manitoba more specifically, there are indigenous communities, whether first nations, Métis or Inuit, as well as newcomers, who have difficulty accessing our health care system for a variety of different reasons.

In addition, in many of these families, there were single mothers or single fathers working multiple jobs. They had to go long ways across the city in order to make ends meet and to provide for their families, and they did not have access to plans. They did not have access to medications that would allow them to live healthier and more prosperous lives.

I have those families and those kids in mind when I think about what the bill would mean for them and their future. I am proud to have the opportunity to rise today to talk about what we can accomplish through this historic piece of legislation.

I know that my time is running short, so with that, I will gladly take my seat for a moment and welcome questions from my colleagues across the way.

● (2010)

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague across the way for a very impassioned

speech, based on real lived experiences, that was not intentionally partisan. It was actually about reality. The class of by-elections of 2023, I think, includes some of the best around this place.

I will respond in kind with a bit of a personal reality. My beautiful wife, Cailey, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at age one, which I think was the earliest in the country at that point. Prior to meeting her, I did not know a lot about diabetes, so I personally had to learn a lot of the challenges of living with diabetes and what it entails, and I certainly can recognize the costs.

I am going to do a quick shout-out, while I have the opportunity, to wish Cailey a happy birthday tomorrow. I look forward to spending the day with her.

Cailey is on an insurance plan, as are many other Canadians, and a real concern is that the options available for specific products and insulin are adequately covered for the majority of people right now. Why the need to aim for universality when we could be more targeted and use taxpayer dollars more efficiently to still try to seek the same results? Obviously the expectation is to expand this to other products. We need to be smart with taxpayers' money while still trying to seek the results the member wants to achieve.

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, as a fellow Manitoban, it would be impolite of me to not also wish Cailey a happy birthday. To my hon. colleague's wife, I hope it is a fun day together tomorrow.

There are tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Canadians across the country who do not have access to the medication they need. I appreciate that, in some instances, there are provincial health plans or private plans that cover certain medications, but the reality is that this is simply not enough.

I would respond to my colleague by referencing something my colleague from St. John's East, who happens to be in close proximity to me at the moment, mentioned earlier: We are being smart with taxpayer dollars, and this is an investment in taxpayers. It is an investment in their health and in their future. The more we can get ahead of proactively addressing health care challenges people are facing, the healthier people are going to be down the line. That, in and of itself, is smart tax policy.

● (2015)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, early in my career as a politician, I was in a meeting with two young people who had type 1 diabetes. They came from two different provinces, so it was very interesting to hear the story of those young people and their parents. What stuck with me was that one young person lived in one province and had an important, often life-saving device, and the other young person from a different province did not have it. The reason they did not have it is that it was costing them a significant amount of money every month. The dad had been hurt on the job; he was now living on very minimal income, and they had to take the device away from their child. Could the member talk about how this would really create that important factor of universality so that all young people who have type 1 diabetes get exactly the same appropriate care across Canada?

Government Orders

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point. When we use the word “universal”, it is to ensure we do not have this kind of hodgepodge patchwork health care system across provinces, but that any Canadian, wherever they live in the country, is able to access these medicines when they need it.

I mentioned in my remarks that I worked with a lot of first nations kids in northern Manitoba in particular. Because there is so much migration within the province through to the city of Winnipeg, as a result of historical harms and all the reasons we know indigenous people are disadvantaged in this country, they are disproportionately susceptible to many of the challenges that come along with diabetes and other poor health outcomes. For first nations kids, in particular, and indigenous kids as a whole, as well as people such as the constituents she was talking about, the legislation would allow for us to fill some of the gaps that exist and make sure they get the type of health services that they need in this country. I am proud to work alongside her and other members across the way who support this legislation.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand here and talk about what is being billed as universal pharmacare but what we know is not universal pharmacare.

Before I go down the path of our debate tonight, it is about 5:18 p.m. back home in British Columbia, which would mean that my granddaughter Ren is being picked up from our house. She watches every time I am on, and she always talks to the screen. I am going to say hi to my granddaughter Ren and tell her that papa loves her and will be home soon.

We are talking about Bill C-64 tonight. We are talking about a bill that is literally, for Canadians who are watching, four pages long. That is it. It is being billed as universal pharmacare. We have those who are in the audience to listen to this speech tonight at 8:19 p.m.; it is a packed house in the gallery. Canadians at home are watching this important debate.

It is an important debate. There are over 27 million Canadians who are insured and have private plans. There are approximately 1.1 million Canadians who are under-insured or do not have plans. This has been said before by my esteemed colleague from Cumberland—Colchester, a former physician. He and I sit on the health committee. We work together in the best interests of Canadians and the constituents we represent.

When the government forced closure on Bill C-64 and started to ram it through the House, we rolled up our sleeves in good faith and submitted in excess of 43 amendments. These are amendments that the Conservatives and the other opposition parties were asked to submit without the opportunity to hear from the witnesses. Witnesses gave 10 hours of testimony. Surprisingly enough, the two most prominent experts in Canada with respect to pharmacare were not invited. We did not get a chance to hear from them.

There were 43 amendments that we tried to introduce in good faith. The government always says, with its NDP coalition partners, to trust it. We should just get the bill to committee, and we will do great work there. We will work collaboratively with all parties to make reasonable, needed amendments to these watered-down pieces of legislation. It does not work that way.

For five and a half hours, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby filibustered each and every one of the amendments. He says that it was Conservatives who had been blocking the bill the whole way.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Todd Doherty: The member heckles me and laughs at me right now from down at the far end.

Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, and he is a fellow British Columbian. We have worked collaboratively before.

At every step of the way, we introduced common-sense amendments. If I may, I will read into the record snippets of a few: “universal, in respect of pharmacare, means providing uniform coverage to all residents of all provinces and territories, including Indigenous peoples.” That was one that was voted down by the Liberal-NDP coalition.

● (2020)

Another amendment was this: “payments to the province or territory in order to provide, to Canadians without access to any other prescription drug coverage plan, public pharmacare coverage for or to increase any existing public pharmacare coverage for and to provide universal, single-payer, first-dollar coverage for”. Does that sound like Conservatives are trying to block this piece of legislation? It does not. How about this? This one is very straightforward: “make progress on providing universal coverage of pharmaceutical”.

I offer that to the House because, at every step of the way and throughout the next couple of hours of this debate, we will hear interventions from our Liberal colleagues and our NDP colleagues that will say that Conservatives tried to block this piece of legislation every step of the way.

Those of us who have been tasked, on this side of the House, to work collaboratively with the other side in the health committee worked diligently to try to come up with an actual piece of legislation that was accurate and that provided the necessary tools and meat for such an important topic. We were shut down at every step of the way, primarily by our colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, who was doing yeoman service for his Liberal coalition on the other side, as most of them sat silent.

I want to remind the House as well that all provinces have their own type of pharmacare and that 97.2% of Canadians have some form of coverage. This is a \$2-billion cost, a program cost. Surely, for the one million or 1.1 million Canadians who are without coverage, we could have found a different way of doing this, a better way of doing this, that would not have put in jeopardy the plans that 27 million other Canadians have. We have spoken with insurers. We have spoken with businesses that offer private insurance to their employees, and they have questions: Who is going to pay? What happens to their employees? What happens to those who are insured by them? Insurers have concerns. Canadians have concerns.

Government Orders

Moreover, I will offer this. In last night's committee of the whole debate, a lot was said about this plan being universal pharmacare. We know that we have constituents who are phoning and saying that they are going to the pharmacy today and asking if they can get their medications paid for. The reality is this: No, they cannot.

This was confirmed by the Minister of Health last night when I asked him if Bill C-64 provides any government funding for those struggling or inflicted with cardiac issues. The answer was no. Does Bill C-64 provide any funding for those with ALS? The answer was no. Does Bill C-64 provide any government funding for those who are struggling with asthma? It does not. Does Bill C-64 provide any funding for any medications other than contraception or diabetes? His answer was no, that it does not.

This is not universal pharmacare. It provides the necessary and very important medications for those struggling or living with diabetes and it provides contraception. It does not offer what it is being billed as. That is exactly what we are telling the government.

Tell Canadians exactly what it is. Let us be honest with Canadians. This is not universal pharmacare. That is where we have problems with this bill.

• (2025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. That is not the reason why the members of the Conservative Party have difficulty with this bill. The reality is that when it comes to diabetes and contraceptives, millions of Canadians will actually have benefits that many of them would never have had without the passage of this legislation. The member might be sympathetic as an individual member, but let there be no doubt that the Conservative Party of Canada, under the current far-right leadership of the leader today, does not support national pharmacare in any fashion whatsoever.

The member should not be trying to confuse the debate on this issue, to try to imply that it is some bogus reason as to why they are not supporting it. He might support it individually, but the party, the official opposition, does not.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, at every step of the way, we asked for clarification from the minister and his charges for definitions and terms that were contained within this four-page document. The member would like to stand up, wildly move his hands, speak very loudly and conflate the issues. This is not universal pharmacare. The Liberals are billing it as some “be-all and end-all”, which it is not. The member knows better and he needs to be honest with Canadians.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy speeches from my friend, and I like working with him, but they must be kidding. We see tonight what Conservatives have done in terms of the bill. They had an opportunity to put forward report stage amendments that actually, in their minds at least, would improve the bill; instead, they decided to waste \$400,000 of taxpayer money by deleting every single clause of the bill. It is just a complete waste of time at committee. The Conservatives know that many of their amendments were not even in order, and they withdrew a number of them as well. Therefore, I

find a bit rich the idea that Conservatives were working in good faith at committee.

I know the member understands his riding. In Quesnel, Williams Lake and Prince George, those folks have been signing up for dental care. Many of them need access to pharmacare. In some cases, the member has constituents who are paying \$1,000 a month for diabetes medication, and he is standing in the way of their getting the supports they need. Therefore, will he stand up for his constituents and will he actually say to his Conservative colleagues, “Let us support the bill. Let us get this done so that people with diabetes and people who need contraception can actually have that paid for”?

• (2030)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, that is a little rich from a member who has supported the most costly government in the history of our country at every step of the way. He approved the \$61-billion budget that the government announced just recently. At every step of the way, the member has done the bidding of his Liberal coalition. He has covered up scandal after scandal. The member also knows that I stand up for my riding of Cariboo—Prince George and I stand up for British Columbians each and every day because, God only knows, the British Columbians from the NDP do not.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I will come back on that. Of course, the NDP members got dental care for British Columbians. They are getting pharmacare for British Columbians, affordable housing and anti-scab legislation, all of the things that the Conservative caucus had been unable to do.

The reality is that Conservative MPs just have not worked very hard. We are not asking that member, who I know is devoted to public service, and the rest of his colleagues to actually lift a finger to deliver pharmacare for their constituents. All we are asking them is to stop standing in the way, stop forcing these meaningless debates like tonight's, with deleting all clauses of the bill, and let the NDP work on behalf of their constituents, so that all British Columbians and all Canadians—

The Deputy Speaker: I will interrupt the member, just so we have time for the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, there were 43 amendments. Only an NDP member would say that they worked hard for two years and came up with a four-page document. We had 43 amendments, and for five and a half hours we had to listen to a filibuster, as we are tonight.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to participate in this important debate. The legislation before us contains the four principles of accessibility, affordability, appropriateness and universality.

Government Orders

Today, I will speak to the principle of appropriateness, which relates to the appropriate prescribing and use of medicines. I will outline the importance of achieving a pan-Canadian strategy on the appropriate use of drugs, which is a key feature of this legislation. Notably, the World Health Organization defines “appropriate use” as follows: “patients receive medications appropriate to their clinical needs, in doses that meet their own individual requirements, for an adequate period of time, and at the lowest cost to them and their community.”

Prescription drugs play a critical role in the day-to-day for Canadians. Every year, over 750 million prescriptions are filled by 18 million people in Canada. It is estimated that in any given month, 55% of adults and 23% of children and youth will take at least one prescription medication. Getting the right medication at the right time can be life-changing. Whether it is receiving a prescription for an inhaler to help an asthmatic patient breathe better or anti-hypertensive medication to bring down blood pressure and decrease the risk of heart attack or stroke, medications have the power to restore health and improve a person's quality of life. However, getting the wrong medication at the wrong time can cause significant unintended harms. In fact, adverse drug events are a leading cause of unplanned hospital visits, contributing to over two million emergency department visits and 700,000 hospital admissions in Canada every year.

Examples of appropriate use and action include an informed conversation between a patient and their health care provider on the best treatment to improve their health, opting to stop a medication that was once helpful and is now causing more harm than good, or a public awareness campaign on how to use antibiotics wisely. Unfortunately, a growing body of evidence suggests that inappropriate prescribing and use happen more often than they should. Consider that 21% of adults in Canada between the ages of 40 and 79 are currently taking more than five prescription medications at a time. This is called polypharmacy and it can increase a person's risk of falls by 75%, among other impacts.

Consider the story heard from a clinician about a patient who was taking over 25 different medications, the combined effects of which were taking a serious toll on their health and quality of life. This clinician stressed to us the significant time and effort required to support the patient and caregiver to slowly discontinue the inappropriate medications. A striking takeaway from this conversation was that this case was far from an anomaly in their practice.

Inappropriate prescribing can threaten patient safety and lead to negative health, social and financial impacts. Other significant examples, such as increased antibiotic resistance due to overuse that threatens patient safety, the risks of addiction and overdose from opioid misuse, and many problems and injuries related to the long-term use of sleeping pills, show this issue is widespread.

It is estimated that approximately 1.9 million Canadian seniors regularly use at least one inappropriate medication, which can lead to dizziness, memory problems, hospitalization and even death. The cost of these inappropriate prescriptions is over \$419 million per year, and it rises to over \$1.4 billion if the costs of hospital visits and the impacts of other harms are included.

Appropriate use was established as a shared priority among federal, provincial and territorial governments. Jurisdictions, health organizations and even local providers have implemented a variety of initiatives and programs to address the issue at hand. There is good work happening across the country, but those doing this important work have called for a unified approach so we can increase its impact and reach.

While there are several pockets of excellence addressing appropriate use, persistent gaps and challenges exist. Inconsistent reach, overlapping efforts and even duplication have limited the scale-up and spread of promising approaches across the health care system, which limits our ability to make these benefits available to people across the country. Without a devoted strategy to better connect our siloed work and improve collaboration, we risk stretching our already limited health system resources, and we will miss an opportunity to serve patients with the highest quality of care.

● (2035)

Other countries around the world have shown us that addressing appropriate use works and makes a difference in the health and safety of their citizens. Countries such as Australia, the U.K. and the Netherlands have developed a coordinated solution that addresses appropriate use at multiple levels and works to ensure that everyone, including patients, prescribers and the public, is motivated to make the necessary changes. In doing so, they have managed to improve prescribing and use behaviours while reducing the harms and health system costs of inappropriate care. Developing and implementing a pan-Canadian strategy that builds on this learning would help expand the impact and reach of successful appropriate use programs to better serve prescribers, patients, and diverse communities across the country.

To date, efforts to improve appropriate use, detect and respond to patient safety issues as they arise have been hampered by the uneven ability of prescribing data. This has significantly limited the supports available to patients and prescribers to make the best decisions regarding their care. Support to enhance the collection of and access to prescribing data will need to underpin any strategy. Addressing appropriate use of prescription drugs also presents a unique opportunity to tackle some of the most topical challenges facing our health system, such as appropriate therapies for mental health; access to safe, long-term care; and optimizing primary care.

Government Orders

The prescribing of antipsychotics in long-term care is a prime example where, at any given time, it is estimated that nearly one in four long-term care residents was receiving an antipsychotic drug while having no clinical reason for its use. These medications put patients at increased risk of falls, fractures and even strokes. Ultimately, healthier patients and fewer adverse drug events puts less stress on our health professionals and health care system.

Patients, health care providers and partners all agree that now is the time to act, and a pan-Canadian appropriate use strategy would bring the vision into reality. This means directing efforts towards implementing widespread programs and initiatives, collaborating closely to make meaningful change, ensuring that health policy promotes positive actions and bolstering evaluation of programs so we can scale and spread those programs that we know would make a difference.

We are already getting started. Last spring, the Canadian drug agency transition office established an appropriate use advisory committee, comprising organizations, prescribers, patients, insurers and health system partners, to provide guidance and advice for the development of a pan-Canadian appropriate use strategy. The committee will soon issue its final report. It is also working closely with key partners, including Choosing Wisely Canada and the Canadian Medication Appropriateness and Deprescribing Network to better coordinate existing efforts to further enhance its impact.

New health challenges continue to emerge, and the need for a coordinated appropriate use strategy to enhance quality of care, improve patient health and promote the judicious and equitable use of health care resources has become even more critical. Members can see that this strategy, guided by the CDA, would be an important element of moving forward with national pharmacare. Addressing appropriate use on a national scale would confront these challenges, knitting together our existing patchwork of programs to provide much-needed support for patients and prescribers while improving safety and outcomes, ultimately reducing the cost of burdens caused by inappropriate care.

We look forward to working closely with patients, prescribers, health partners and jurisdictions in making the program a reality.

• (2040)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to all Canadians such as physicians, nurse practitioners and pharmacists who are listening and who are out there prescribing medications this evening, I find it fascinating that the member would be suggesting that their appropriateness is actually inappropriate and that we need the government now to tell physicians what to prescribe.

Think about someone with hypertension, sitting in their family doctor's office if they are fortunate enough not to be one of the seven million people without a family doctor. What is the family doctor going to do? Are they going to call the "1-800-who-cares" phone number provided by the people who cannot even get them a passport, and wait on hold while they say which medication should be prescribed? I find that to be an absolutely terrifying prospect for Canada's incredibly well-trained frontline prescribers in this country who have the independent ability to make those decisions, the

best decisions on behalf of the patients, many of whom they have known for an incredibly long time.

Maybe the member could answer this: Would they now be setting up a 1-800 number for doctors to ask which medication should be prescribed? Perhaps, as I mentioned, they could call it "1-800-who-cares".

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by first saying hello to my 10-year-old boy, who is watching. I know it is past his bedtime, but his mommy has given him an opportunity to hear daddy speak.

Second, I would like to say that is not what I said in my speech. Maybe the member should consult a hearing doctor. Why am I not surprised by the question from my Conservative colleague? Pharmacare, for example, is about access to contraceptives for women, which is clearly not within the priorities of the opposition party. My colleague opposite and his party have shown every woman in Canada that when it comes to contraception, they are on their own.

Canadians are listening, and by now they know that when it comes to health care, they cannot trust the Conservatives, just like when the member said, making fun of the 1-800 number, "Who cares?"

• (2045)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, it has been disappointing to listen to the debate and how partisan it has been. I wonder whether the member can remind us of what the bill would do. As this is just the beginning of getting universal pharmacare started, what would the legislation do to ensure that more work is done to improve on it as time goes on?

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, we know very well where the members of the official opposition stands on the bill. Obviously they are against it. They do not care, and it is very easy for them to be critical about it.

I thank my colleague for the tremendous work they did in shaping the bill with the government. We both understand how important it is. For example, contraceptive drugs were chosen as part of the next step in universal pharmacare specifically because contraception improves the equality of all women when they are able to receive proper care for their needs. It reduces the risk of unintended pregnancies and improves reproductive rights. Also, the bill would help all diabetic patients access proper care and be well treated.

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Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think throughout the debate on Bill C-64, whether at second reading stage or at committee, we have seen nothing but fearmongering on the part of the Conservatives, for a simple reason: They do not support the bill. They do not want Canadians to have pharmacare. In fact, they support a private health care system. That is why they have chosen every which way to put up blockades against the bill by inventing stuff. We heard the member opposite, the health critic for the official opposition, throughout the committee process make things up while witnesses kept telling him that was not the case. He is still repeating the same mistruths.

I want to ask the member, who gave an excellent speech, this: How does he feel the legislation, if passed by Parliament, would help his constituents get the medications they so deserve and need?

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Mr. Speaker, through our bilateral health agreements with the provinces and territories for the Canadian dental care plan and now pharmacare, we are delivering on the promise that every Canadian deserves better health care.

Thanks to this plan, nine million women and gender-diverse Canadians across the country will be able to access the contraception and reproductive autonomy they deserve.

In addition, it will help 3.7 million Canadians living with diabetes get the medication and resources they need. Canadians should never have to choose between their health and their—

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Give a foot; take a mile. I should know better. I wish your son good night. I am sure he was happy to see his dad working tonight.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand on behalf of the people of Edmonton Manning tonight.

When a bill is brought before Committee, I expect that during the study done there that committee members would be able to make amendments that would improve the legislation. Sadly, that has not happened with Bill C-64, the pharmacare act, which is probably because the legislation is so flawed that nothing can fix it. The only proper fix is to bury it.

I wish that tonight we were debating the merits of a proposed national pharmacare program. Many Canadians would like to see such a thing, although they might not be so enthusiastic once they saw the price tag. The only resemblance the bill before us has to pharmacare is in the name. If we had asked Canadians what they expected to receive from the NDP-Liberal coalition besides ever-increasing taxes, high inflation, sky-high crime rates and housing shortages, they would probably have said, “Well, at least they have promised pharmacare.”

If we had asked what that meant, they would have said, “free prescription drugs for everyone: drugs to treat heart disease or cancer, life-saving drugs and maybe penicillin to treat any number of less serious illnesses”. Instead, what the government is offering is a pledge to consider funding contraceptives and diabetes drugs. It is

not a pharmacare plan; it is an empty promise. It is not what anyone was expecting, but it is no surprise. It is not as if the Liberals really want a national pharmacare program. If they did, they would not have needed the NDP to push them into creating the bill before us.

The Liberals' plan is empty and it is pretty simple. They want to delay as much as possible to convince the NDP that a plan is coming and that therefore the incompetent government must be propped up. I have to give the Liberals credit for their political skill in this matter. They have the NDP so completely fooled that the government faces no chance of defeat no matter the scandals and no matter how much Liberal policies are hurting Canadians. The NDP is blindly accepting a Liberal promise, apparently unwilling to admit that they have been fooled.

I think it is safe to predict that when Canadians go to the polls, whether it is in October 2025 or earlier, the NDP will not be able to point to a functioning pharmacare program, not even the limited one that the bill calls for. However, the promise will have accomplished its purpose: keeping an undeserving government in power. It is the Canadian electorate that will hold both the NDP and the Liberals accountable for their actions. It is the Canadian people who will elect a Conservative government that actually cares about serving them and does not just care about political power.

The bill is being shoved through in haste by a government that is so desperate for approval. The Minister of Health is assuring Canadians that the pharmacare plan should not jeopardize the drug coverage that millions of Canadians have through private insurers. I am sure he is well-intentioned when he makes that statement; he may even believe his words, but good intentions are not reality.

The CEO of the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association says that the bill could indeed cause disruption for those who have existing drug plans. Either he is right or the minister is right; it cannot be both. Given the Liberal track record, I suspect the minister is indulging in some wishful thinking, which is not surprising from a government that thinks budgets magically balance themselves, something that has not happened under the current Prime Minister.

By using time allocation, the government is rushing the bill through the House without opportunity for proper scrutiny, which is no surprise. Despite having had two years to figure out how they were going to implement their deal with the NDP, the Liberals put together the legislation at the last minute.

● (2050)

It is window dressing, designed not to define pharmacare, but to keep the government in office for a few more months to deny Canadians what they want most, which is an end to Liberal overspending and incompetence.

The proposed bill is a promise, and Canadians know what happens when Liberals make promises. They have made promises in the past nine years. The reality is that, when the Liberals make a promise, things always seem to get worse. They promised affordable housing, and housing costs have doubled under their watch. They promised that the carbon tax would not cost us anything, and we find now that 60% of families are paying more than they collect. The Liberals promised that taxes would go down, and taxes have gone up. They promised safe streets, and then delivered crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. It is no wonder Canadians are afraid things will get worse when the Liberals promise pharmacare.

If the government were serious about helping Canadians, it would have gone about things differently. It would have consulted with the insurance industry, found out what the private insurance sector was offering and what the non-profit sector was providing, examined existing provincial coverage, and discovered if there were gaps that needed to be addressed. Instead, the Liberals decided to rush blindly ahead.

Canadians know the government is not worth the cost. That has been proven time and time again over the past nine years. Is this pharmacare program worth the cost? An honest answer is that nobody knows because the minister cannot tell us how much it will cost. Any numbers he tosses around are more wishful thinking than reality.

Canadians are struggling and looking to the federal government for help. Inflation eats away at their paycheques. Every trip to the grocery store, it seems the prices are going up. Liberals' catch-and-release bail policies are turning violent offenders loose to commit yet more crimes. Despite an ever-increasing carbon tax, the government has no plan to balance its books.

The Liberals apparently have no desire to fix the problems created by their wasteful spending. They believe that water runs downhill but never reaches the bottom. They know they will not be in government when the bill for this mismanagement comes due. Food Banks Canada's 2024 poverty report card shows that almost 50% of Canadians feel financially worse off compared to last year, while 25% of Canadians are experiencing food insecurity.

The cost of living has become so high that food banks have seen a 50% increase in visits since 2021. As a direct consequence of the government's inflationary spending and taxes, millions of Canadians are struggling to keep their heads above water, yet the Liberals ask us to take on faith that they know how to set up and run a pharmacare program without turning it into a disaster.

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This is the government that spent more than \$50 million on an app that was supposed to cost \$80,000, and it cannot tell us how or when that cost overrun happened, or who is responsible. Why should Canadians trust it to run anything?

The good news is that this is not a serious piece of legislation. As I said, the Liberals have no idea what they are doing and no real intention to institute a pharmacare program. Bill C-64 is a public relations exercise with which they hope to fool the NDP and Canadians into thinking they are doing something to help people. Given the Liberals track record, I doubt many Canadians will be fooled.

● (2055)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect the member opposite a lot. I listened to his speech quite diligently, and I am a bit perplexed because, on one hand, he spoke about and advocated for private health care insurance. He talked about how Canadians should just get private insurance for medicine if they do not have any, but then he went on to talk about affordability and the high use of food banks.

I hope the member can explain to all of us how he wants to ensure affordable fees against a pharmacare system that is going to save hundreds of dollars for Canadians who do not have private health care insurance so that they can afford to buy good, nutritious food for themselves. I would love to hear that explanation.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hon. member, who I do respect a lot, I did not suggest what he just said.

What I was saying is, if there is a gap in the system, the gaps can be filled in many different ways, and we need to solve the problem rather than giving a big promise that we know is not going to be delivered upon. That is the fundamental issue. There is no way I can speak in the House and not mention the difficulties Canadians are going through these days. There are the increased use of food banks, higher mortgage payments, high taxes and all the inflation issues Canadians have to deal with. It is a stop at the perfect time and position to be able to address that and remind ourselves about the disaster the Liberal government and the Liberal-NDP coalition have put Canadians through.

● (2100)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives, in a bizarre way, seem obsessed with the size of the bill. It is just a few pages, they say.

There is another bill that Canadians hold dear, and it is called the Canada Health Act. It is just a few pages, but it puts in place our universal health care that, in poll after poll, 80% of Canadians see as our most cherished institution.

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The dental care plan the NDP pushed out, which Conservatives refused to support and in fact tried to block at every turn, has now helped hundreds of seniors in the member's riding.

Now we have pharmacare, which would help about 18,000 people in this riding with diabetes and 25,000 who are looking for contraception. The reality is that the next election will be a health care election. Conservatives are very badly placed because all they have done is obstruct and block rather than offering anything at all.

Why is my colleague blocking legislation that would help 18,000 of his constituents who have diabetes, and who are sometimes paying up to \$1,000 a month, and 25,000 people who are looking for support for contraception?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, with the thinking mode the NDP member is in this evening, there is no way we can have a reasonable conversation. As well, his suggestion about the 18,000 people in my riding is as if I do not know my riding or the people who live in Edmonton Manning. The member chose to be fooled by the Liberals, but we are not fooled, and Canadians will not be.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe how easy it is to fool the NDP. We heard the NDP member stand up to talk about universal pharmacare. We have this bill in front of us, and it is covering two important things, which are contraception and medication for diabetes, but it is being promoted as universal pharmacare.

What does my colleague from Edmonton think Canadians are going to think about this? Again, this is another promise that is not being fulfilled, but the way it is being presented is really deceptive. What does he think Canadians are going to think about that?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the NDP is gathering, as a price for this, a one-week extension of the election so its leader can collect his full pension. That is what they are getting in return, and it does not matter what Canadians get, as long as the NDP leader—

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order from the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely misleading the House. He forgets, of course, the member for Burnaby South was not elected in the last—

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. We should not be saying that members are intentionally misleading the House.

We are going to move on to the next speaker, the hon. member for St. John's East.

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to speak to what our government is doing, and plans to do, to help millions of Canadians who are struggling to pay for their prescription drugs.

Statistics Canada has indicated that one in five Canadians reported not having insurance to cover the cost of prescription medications in the previous 12 months. We have heard, time and time again, that Canadians who do not have drug insurance coverage struggle to afford medications and are left to make extremely difficult decisions to choose between paying for these medications or other basic necessities of life, such as food and housing.

No Canadian should have to make this type of a decision. This is why we introduced Bill C-64, the pharmacare bill, and continue to work with all parliamentarians and colleagues to ensure its speedy adoption.

This bill is needed for so many reasons. It proposes the foundational principles for the first phase of national pharmacare in Canada. These principles of access, affordability and appropriate use and universality have guided, and will continue to guide, our government's efforts in moving towards national, universal pharmacare.

We have seen these principles reflected in the work that is already under way, including launching the national strategy for drugs for rare diseases and improving affordable access to prescription drugs, which is the initiative with Prince Edward Island. I would like to take a moment to highlight the impact that both of these initiatives would have on national pharmacare.

In March last year, the Government of Canada launched the first-ever national strategy for drugs for rare diseases with an investment of up to \$1.5 billion over three years. As part of the overall \$1.5 billion investment, the federal government will make available up to \$1.4 billion over three years to provinces and territories through bilateral agreements.

This funding would help provinces and territories improve access to new and emerging drugs for Canadians with rare diseases, as well as support enhanced access to existing drugs, early diagnosis and screening for rare diseases. This would help ensure patients with rare diseases, including children, would have access to treatments as early as possible for a better quality of life.

With respect to Prince Edward Island, the Government of Canada established an agreement with P.E.I., in August 2021, to improve the affordable access to prescription drugs and inform the advancement of national universal pharmacare. The \$35-million investment has allowed for P.E.I. to add new drugs to its provincial formulary and lower out-of-pocket costs for drugs covered under existing public plans for island residents.

As of March of this year, P.E.I. has expanded access to over 100 new medications to treat a variety of conditions, including heart disease, pulmonary artery hypertension, multiple sclerosis, psoriasis and cancer. In addition, effective June 1, 2023, P.E.I. reduced copays to \$5 for almost 60% of medications regularly used by island residents. I am pleased to share that, through this initiative, within the first nine months alone, P.E.I. residents have saved over \$2.8 million in out-of-pocket costs on more than 300,000 prescriptions.

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These two initiatives highlight how the principles of access, affordability, appropriate use and universality are reflected in our government's work, but they also underscore the importance of working with provinces and territories. Provinces and territories are, and will continue to be, a key partner in ensuring that Canadians get the health care they need. Our government will continue to work with provinces and territories to help ensure that this goal is met.

Finally, I would like to highlight another key component of Bill C-64, and that is the Government of Canada's intent to work with provinces and territories to provide universal, single-payer coverage for a number of contraceptives, as well as diabetes medications and supports. Similar to other initiatives that we have put in place, our work to provide contraception and diabetes medications would be guided by the principles I mentioned earlier and will involve working closely with our provincial and territorial partners. The importance of this provision within the bill cannot be understated.

● (2105)

We have likely heard over the past few weeks, since the introduction of Bill C-64, Canadians sharing their stories of how this bill would help them, how they are currently suffering from diabetes and do not have the insurance coverage, so they have to pay for their insulin, syringes and test strips out of pocket. Similarly, we are hearing stories of young women who do not have the drug coverage needed to pay for contraception or are limited in the choice available to them because more effective contraception is financially out of reach.

We have been receiving, and I certainly have received, numerous letters from Canadians across the country expressing their full support for Bill C-64 and asking the same question of when these drugs would be available to them. There is definitely a need for both of these sets of essential drugs, and I applaud the work of my parliamentary colleagues in getting the bill one step closer to a reality for Canadians.

Bill C-64 would allow for nine million Canadians of reproductive age to have better access to contraception and reproductive autonomy. This will help reduce the risk of unintended pregnancies and improve an individual's ability to plan for the future. As I mentioned, cost is the single most important barrier to access to these medications. Bill C-64 would ensure that Canadians will have access to a comprehensive suite of contraceptive drugs and the devices that they need. Similarly, we know that there is no cure for diabetes, but it can be treated with safe and effective medications.

Due to cost, 25% of Canadians with diabetes have reported not following their treatment plan. Improving access to diabetes medication, as outlined in Bill C-64, will help improve the health of almost four million Canadians living with diabetes and reduce the risk of serious life-changing health complications, which can include amputations or blindness. That is what Bill C-64 would do. It would give Canadians access to medications to maintain their health and give them a choice to determine which medication is best for them. In addition, these efforts will help avoid additional costs to the health care system.

In closing, our government will continue to work toward a national pharmacare plan that focuses on the principles of accessibili-

ty, affordability, appropriate use and universality. We will do so in partnership with provinces and territories, and we will do so knowing that Canadians need this immediately to help them access the drugs they need to live a healthy life.

● (2110)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for constituents at home and Canadians wondering whether any rare disease drugs will be covered by anything, as the member mentioned rare diseases, not a single medication will be covered. In fact, the government's own 2019 budget announcement of \$1.5 billion for rare diseases has not covered a single medication for any patient in Canada.

I would ask the member the same question I asked the parliamentary secretary. How many medications has the 2019 budget announcement covered? It has been five years. How many Canadians with a rare disease obtained their medication that was covered by the government's announcement of the \$1.5 billion for rare disease patients?

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I guess my colleague did not hear the earlier part of my speech when I spoke about the project in P.E.I., which certainly did take into account a very successful pilot on the impact of government coverage for rare diseases.

It is really important to understand that with dental care and child care, the government has demonstrated time and time again the ability to work with provinces and territories to allow programs to roll out from the federal government into the province and territory that are able to meet the specific needs of that province. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the reality of our health care system, while there are similarities, is different from what we see in Ontario or on the west coast.

We need to be really careful to understand that what we are introducing in this bill is a starting point. It is two significant parts of pharmaceutical needs for Canadians. We know it is very much an upstream process and, in very short order, which we hear all the time from key witnesses, we will see the benefits to our health care system.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of admiration for the member for St. John's East. I always listen quite attentively when she is speaking because she brings a wealth of knowledge and experience as a registered nurse, and now in her role as the chair of the national seniors caucus.

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I know she spends a lot of time talking to seniors. I would like to know what she is hearing from seniors across our country around the Canadian dental care plan, as it has helped over 120,000 seniors in just three weeks. What is she hearing from seniors in terms of pharmacare, like access to diabetes medications at no cost?

• (2115)

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It highlights some very important aspects of this bill and why I am so pleased to speak about it this evening. As chair of the national seniors caucus, I meet with seniors across the country from coast to coast to coast, and they talk about the need for pharmacare.

I think what we are missing in many of our conversations today is how difficult it is for many people in the country to manage the cost of daily living, housing and medication. They pick and choose what medications they take based on affordability. It impacts their health outcomes.

It is clearly demonstrated that they enter the health care system in points of crisis. It costs our government and our systems disproportionate amounts of money. Preventative care is essential for us to be able to manage our health care system.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I wonder if the member can share how much of this bill would go toward supporting care for indigenous peoples. If there is not enough support, how does this bill need to change? We all know that the health conditions for indigenous peoples are some of the worst compared to other Canadians.

What do we need to do to make sure that indigenous peoples are getting the pharmacare that they need too?

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I worked for many years in a community outreach centre where we saw a disproportionate number of indigenous people who were outside of the supports they needed. Health care and pharmaceuticals for chronic disease management were very much part of that.

I think the agreements between the provinces and the territories, which are clearly laid out in this bill, are going to be important to ensure that every Canadian has access to diabetes medications and contraceptives.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are here to debate Bill C-64 at third reading. It will come as no surprise to anyone when I say that the Bloc Québécois will be voting against this bill. I am the last person from the Bloc Québécois who will be rising today to speak to this bill on pharmacare. We will soon be voting on it and we will see whether it passes.

What we have been saying repeatedly in the House is simple. What the Bloc Québécois wants is for the federal government to stop interfering in provincial jurisdictions. We want the money to be transferred to Quebec with no strings attached and we want full financial compensation. We want health transfers. That is what we want, and that is what we will continue to hammer home. I feel like I have to keep repeating myself in the House and that is not right. All the Bloc Québécois wants is to defend Quebecers' rights and

to simply get the money we send to the federal level back so that we can improve the pharmacare program that we already have in Quebec.

When this bill was being studied in committee, the Bloc Québécois proposed an important amendment. It read as follows:

(4) Despite subsections (1) and (2), a province or territory may elect not to participate in national universal pharmacare, in which case that province or territory remains unconditionally entitled to receive payments in order to maintain the accessibility and affordability of the prescription drugs and related products already covered by its public pharmacare.

I do not think this amendment was unreasonable. Its purpose was simply to uphold respect for jurisdictions. The committee chair rejected the amendment on the grounds that it was out of order. The reason will come as a surprise to many. The chair ruled that our amendment was out of order because, in his opinion, it would have required royal recommendation, which we obviously challenged. In committee, however, we can challenge a decision, but unfortunately, we cannot debate it. The committee therefore voted to uphold the chair's ruling.

I was rather shocked that the committee ruled our amendment inadmissible. The purpose of the amendment was simply to ensure that jurisdictions are respected and that Quebec be given the money that has already been budgeted and set out in the bill. Quebec is simply asking that its share be set aside and that the money be transferred to Quebec so that it can improve the system that already exists in Quebec. It is unbelievable that that was rejected. It makes no sense.

I think the opposite is what should require a royal recommendation. Anything that goes against the Canadian Constitution should require a royal recommendation. That is not the case here. Unfortunately, this bill goes against the very foundations of the Canadian Constitution. Let me explain.

It is rather ironic that it still takes a member of the separatist party to remind the House how the Canadian Constitution works, when the government never misses an opportunity to point out that the Constitution is untouchable and that all the issues related to it are not important to Canadians and Quebecers or that Quebecers do not care about jurisdictions. However, as surely as I stand in the House today, based on the polls we are seeing, I can say that Quebecers want jurisdictions to be respected. Whenever Quebecers are asked who they would prefer to manage services like education or health care, the vast majority of the time, the answer is the same: Quebec.

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It is all the more ironic given that the Constitution I am talking about is the one that was imposed in secret by the father of the current Prime Minister, during the night of the long knives in 1982. That was a little refresher. Since then, the Liberal Party's tendency has grown stronger. Increasingly, English-speaking Canada wants Ottawa to be its real government, the one that manages the bulk of public services. Conversely, Quebec has made a different choice. Quebec wants to manage its own jurisdictions, its own health care system, its own education system, its own day cares and so on. That is the choice that Quebecers are making and that is the clear choice that the Quebec National Assembly made when its members unanimously reiterated that jurisdictions must be respected.

Of course, pharmacare has a noble objective, that of giving every individual, every person who needs medical services or prescription drugs the ability to get those drugs for little or no cost. It is so noble that Quebec has already done it. Quebec already has its own pharmacare program. Taking care of people affected by the difficult economic conditions we are experiencing is very noble. The problem is that these measures are ill-suited to the different realities of Quebec and Canada's provinces.

● (2120)

Even with all the good faith in the world, this was inevitable. Health and housing are not federal matters. The House of Commons has no business getting involved in those areas. That is because Quebecers believe that their real government is in Quebec City. As long as that is the case, the concept of fiscal imbalance will exist. My colleague from Mirabel is very familiar with the concept of fiscal imbalance. We will not stop talking about it in the House. By fiscal imbalance, I mean the fact that the provinces have insufficient financial resources in relation to their own powers, while the federal government normally has surpluses. It is hard to understand why it has these deficits given all the money it collects. Yes, it has services it is supposed to deliver, but they are not exactly high-quality services.

The responsibilities that fall under federal or provincial jurisdictions must be respected. More simply, as Bernard Landry used to say, "the needs are in the provinces but the means are in Ottawa". Even if the federal government tries hard to deny its existence, the fiscal imbalance is a major problem that has been recognized for many years. As the population ages, the cost of Quebec's social programs is rising rapidly. The cost of pharmacare is obviously rising rapidly. It is up to the Quebec government, and the Quebec government alone, to determine where the funds for these programs should go and how to improve the pharmacare program that already exists.

Since Quebec is chronically underfunded, we might wonder, as we often do, if a Quebecer is worth less than a Canadian. The Government of Quebec is shouting itself hoarse asking for health transfers. What does the federal government have to say in response? It responds with even more intrusions into Quebec's jurisdiction. That is what we are seeing again today with pharmacare. Unfortunately, the reason Quebecers prefer to have pharmacare and every area of Quebec's jurisdiction run by Quebec City, is that everything the federal government touches results in failure. Federal equals failure.

I have talked about ArriveCAN several times in the House. I have a question: How much does Tylenol cost when it is 7,500% higher than its cost, like the ArriveCAN app was? It is going to be expensive. That is what is happening with pharmacare. The pharmacare that the federal government is going to create is going to cost us a lot more because the only thing the federal government does is mismanage its programs, run them completely inefficiently, like it did with ArriveCAN.

Quebec's system may be imperfect, but it does not need interference or duplication of costs. It needs more money. That money is in the hands of the federal government. It is a mixed system, a system that works well between a "forgiver" and company contributions and individual payroll contributions. It is not perfect, but it works. It is based on an existing model in France. The federal government is modelling its plan after it. However, instead of simply saying that Quebec has the expertise and skills to run its own pharmacare, the federal government wants to duplicate it and make it less efficient. It is crazy and that is why the Bloc Québécois is against this type of bill and the pharmacare program proposed by the federal government.

I keep hearing my NDP colleagues remind us that the major unions, including the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, have come out in favour of moving forward with pharmacare. Of course, they had their reasons, as I will explain today. The reason is noble, the objective is noble. Improving medical coverage and offering pharmacare to people with diabetes or people who use contraception is noble, but it is not a federal jurisdiction. It is up to Quebec to decide how to do that. It would cost Quebec less to improve its own pharmacare program than to have it managed by the federal government. A ton of evidence shows that the federal government has no idea how to manage its own programs. Does anyone need to be reminded about passports or ArriveCAN? No, I will not go there. It is too late, and if the truth be told, I am a little too tired for that.

In conclusion, once we recognize, first of all, the fiscal imbalance problem, which will continue for as long as Canada is governed by the current Canadian Constitution, and secondly, the need to take steps to help our fellow citizens, the House will have to ask itself some hard questions. When the federal system was set up, important needs came under federal jurisdiction, like participating in imperialist wars. Today, the real needs are in the provinces.

● (2125)

Let us be honest. Instead of voting on pharmacare tonight, why not vote to reopen the Canadian Constitution and finally put an end to this farce of separate jurisdictions?

Let us ask Quebecers to vote again, put an end to jurisdictions, and declare Quebec's independence.

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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, according to the Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances, every dollar invested in contraception saves the Quebec government \$90 in health care costs.

Not all forms of contraception are available at this time. For example, IUDs are not covered by pharmacare. I would like to ask my esteemed colleague what she thinks about increasing access.

It is not a matter of jurisdiction, but rather it is about saying that we will work with Quebec. We want to ensure that all women in Quebec do not have to choose between paying for contraception and paying for groceries. They do not have to choose.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that any Quebecker is really trying to decide between filling their fridge or paying for an IUD.

It would be good if every contraceptive method was covered. Obviously, we are in favour of contraceptives being covered, but it is up to Quebec alone to decide whether or not they will be covered. The only role the federal government has in this is to send Quebec the money that it collects from Quebeckers and Quebec taxpayers, so that the province of Quebec, the nation of Quebec or the future country of Quebec can run its own pharmacare system.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always like listening to my colleague.

It seems to me that Bloc Québécois MPs should at least listen to Quebeckers. There are at least two million of them united in the largest coalition in Quebec. They are specifically asking that Bill C-64 be passed by the federal government. They are very critical of the current pharmacare situation in Quebec. They talk about co-payments. They talk about all the problems that exist in Quebec. All the community and union organizations are asking the federal government not to give in to the provinces and territories that are asking for an unconditional right to opt out with full financial compensation. They are saying that because they want Bill C-64 to pass.

Why is the Bloc Québécois not listening to Quebeckers?

• (2130)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I will simply answer with a piece of advice. Why does the member not just go talk to the National Assembly and explain to its members how pharmacare would work for Quebec?

I am sorry, I forgot, they already offered. How did the National Assembly respond? It told the NDP to mind its own business. The health care system is Quebec's responsibility. The NDP has nothing to teach the Quebec health care system about how to operate.

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from the Bloc for a very well-prepared and articulated speech, with its constitutional elements. Obviously, this bill is another example of federal intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, and I agree with her on the points in her speech.

Does she find the federal intrusion into provincial jurisdiction a unifying factor in this country? I hear that it is not. Does she find that taking the money would unify our country more? Is she in favour of more unification through the federal granting of funds to the provinces?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his wonderful and inspiring question. Respect for jurisdictions is important, of course.

Unfortunately, I would still like to remind the House that when we moved a motion to respect jurisdictions, his party voted against it. I find that really unfortunate. We used to have a Conservative Party that respected jurisdictions. However, all we see in the Conservative Party now is a willingness to interfere in Quebec's policies. That is really unfortunate.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member could comment on the fact that Ontario, where I come from, does have a program. Quebec has a great program. Will the program presented by the federal government cover more or fewer medications for Quebeckers?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I really liked the premise of my colleague's question. I noticed that he said that Ontario has a program and that Quebec has a great program. I would like to congratulate him on recognizing the quality of Quebec's program.

If the Ontario program is meant to be the same, then members from Ontario should vote in favour of respecting jurisdictions next time.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a historic day: We are going to be voting on the first steps toward universal pharmacare. The Liberals have been promising pharmacare to Canadians since 1997, and for decades Canadians have been waiting to have access to essential medication.

I want to start off by sharing a story. In 2021, I was out door knocking in a subsidized housing complex. When I knocked on one of the doors, the first person to come to the door was a little girl. She was holding two mermaid dolls and she was adorable. She might have been three or four years old, and she smiled up at me. Then her siblings came running out, and they called for their mom. When I talked to her mother, she had these bright eyes, and she was listening and staring up at us. Her mom said she had not a chance to think about policies or what needs to happen because she was so stressed about how much the devices for her little girl's diabetes cost and how much the medication costs.

This family had been struggling to afford essential medications, and the costs were so high that this mother was wondering how she was going to care for her little girl. I do not know how anyone could look that little girl in the eye and say that she does not deserve access to life-saving medication. I promised that mom that I would come here to Ottawa and fight for universal pharmacare so that her little girl would have her medication covered. I am so proud to be part of a team that is delivering on that promise.

For that family and their struggle, and for families across Canada that are in the same position, it is not inevitable. They are working hard. They are doing everything right. They are trying their best to provide a good life for their kids. However, with the choices of Liberal and Conservative governments for decades, they have decided to side with the biggest pharmaceutical companies instead of everyday Canadians, instead of that little girl.

Liberals have promised this for decades, but it is only now that New Democrats are in a position of power and are able to force the government to deliver on pharmacare. While the Conservatives try to do whatever they possibly can to stop people from getting access to life-saving medication, we are going to keep fighting to deliver on the promise to that mom, to that family and to families across Canada who deserve pharmacare.

I once shared a bit of that story and then asked the Leader of the Opposition how he could look that little girl in the eye and say that she does not deserve access to diabetes medication, that she does not deserve access to life-saving devices. His answer was to spew misinformation. He said that pharmacare will “roll back the rights that unions have fought so hard and so long to secure. Our labour movement fought too hard to secure private drug plans, and we will never let a big, centralizing, bureaucratic government in Ottawa take those rights away from workers.”

However, the major unions in Canada are calling for universal single-payer pharmacare: the United Steelworkers, CUPE, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and Unifor. I could go on. Many of these unions have specific campaigns advocating for single-payer universal pharmacare. Unions across Canada came out celebrating the fact that the NDP was able to force the government to first provide contraception and diabetes medications and diabetes devices, but also to lay the legislative framework for universal pharmacare.

• (2135)

This is a huge step, and I think about some of those huge steps. Tommy Douglas had a vision of universal health care. It was New Democrats who fought alongside Tommy Douglas to get our coun-

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try to a place where if a person broke their leg, they were not going to be turned away because they could not afford to fix it. I think about young kids, and we know that dental surgery is the most common surgery at pediatric hospitals. If people have essential dental costs or if they have tooth pain, then for the first time in our country's history, there would be people accessing dental care who could not afford it. We would have people like that family I talked about accessing diabetes medication and not worrying about whether they could afford it. They would not have to choose between putting food on the table or paying the rent and could access life-saving medication. This is a historic, huge step forward for our country. I am so proud to be part of the team that is making this happen.

I want to also take a moment to talk about providing contraception across Canada and what that means for women and for gender-diverse people. It is huge. I want to give a special shout-out to Devon Black and Teale Phelps Bondaroff, who are the co-founders of AccessBC, and who fought, pushed and advocated, and were successful in bringing this issue to the attention of the provincial government. I am proud that the B.C. NDP has already paved the way, offering British Columbians access to free contraception. We know that countries around the world have been doing this for decades, and finally, the federal government acknowledges that contraception is health care.

It is not surprising that the Conservatives are fighting tooth and nail to stop women from having control over their reproductive health. We know that their MPs have brought forward legislation that is trying to bring back the debate around a woman's right to choose or a woman's control over her own body. A Conservative MP went out and spoke at the rally that was calling to end abortion access in Canada. I would hope that we were past a point in Canada when a major political party is accepting of its members of Parliament calling to end abortion access. Abortion is health care. Contraception is health care.

Now, in Canada, we could start expanding our universal coverage to essential medication and to dental care. I would like to see it also expanded to mental health care. We could have a system in Canada that, if a person is sick and they need health care, they could access it.

I want to end by calling on all MPs in the House to take a moment and to think about the historic steps that we are taking. This would make a tangible difference in the lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I think about that family, that little girl and what this would mean to her. I am so proud to be voting in favour of pharmacare tonight. I am grateful to be able to work alongside 24 other New Democrat MPs who have fought tooth and nail to get this piece of legislation to this point. We are going to take it over the finish line to ensure that every Canadian would be able to access the medication they need.

Privilege

• (2140)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the passionate speech by the member from the NDP. I agree that this is really a milestone. There are medications for rare diseases, which are very expensive. There are medications for cancer treatment, which are very effective but cost hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. How would this national pharmacare program help to ensure that these medications are affordable to our society? I would give a hint: It is probably because it actually looks like a national pharmacare system would end up saving health care dollars rather than costing.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, the member stole my thunder a little.

We are talking about a universal, single-payer pharmacare program. The reason it is so effective, the reason experts and labour unions have been calling for this, and the reason civil society has been calling for it is that it would save Canadians money, and it would give access to essential drugs. It would also mean that when we buy as a single payer, we would get to negotiate prices as a single payer. It would mean that we would have so much more negotiating power.

That is why pharmaceutical companies are so opposed to it. They do not want to lower our drug costs and make less money. By ensuring that we have a single-payer system, it means those kinds of drugs are going to be more accessible to Canadians. It means that Canadians would be paying less, and it would save money over time.

• (2145)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's comments around the young lady and the child who did not have diabetes coverage. That is actually the reason I got into politics and fought with the Saskatchewan Party in 2011 to increase coverage for diabetes, and then again in 2016 to yet again increase the coverage for everyone in Saskatchewan who has diabetes.

Could the hon. member please tell me this: Does she know what age complete coverage for diabetes goes up to in Saskatchewan? Will the member's plan, this fake health pharmacare plan, cover it as well as it is covered in Saskatchewan? Just give the age number, please.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I am a member of Parliament from British Columbia, so I am not familiar with the Saskatchewan program.

However, it is written into the legislation that the federal government is going to work with provinces. Provinces are going to get on board because this is funding, transferring money, to ensure that people have access. We also know there are different age cut-offs in different provinces, and that is not acceptable. We do not want to have someone in one province be able to access medication and another person in another province not be able to access it. We want to be able to deliver health care. Everyone should have access to the medication they need with their health card, not their credit card.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just like the hon. member, I also ran on

pharmacare, both when I was a provincial member in Ontario and federally.

I am really excited to see that our government party is working closely with the NDP to make this a reality for millions of Canadians. During this process, especially through the committee, we heard a lot of fearmongering from the Conservatives, especially when it comes to private health care, that somehow this pharmacare would take away primary health care. That was not the case in the Ontario experience.

Could the member for Victoria respond to the fearmongering that the Conservatives have been raising about the state of people's private health care when we pass pharmacare through this legislation?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that they cannot trust the Conservatives when it comes to health care.

The Conservative team is full of corporate insiders and lobbyists, including their deputy leader, who is a former lobbyist for big pharma. In fact, the Conservatives' national governing body is made up of 50% lobbyists. It is not a surprise that the Conservatives are fighting tooth and nail to keep money in the pockets of big pharma at the expense of Canadians who are paying out-of-pocket for essential medication.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACH OF DEPUTY SPEAKER'S IMPARTIALITY

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to comment on the question of privilege raised this afternoon by the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Having reviewed the so-called advertisement, I can tell the House that it was a Facebook post by an electoral district association other than my own. It was posted on its own Facebook page for a free admission, meet-and-greet event, which I agreed to attend.

The choice of photograph and wording for the free social media post was neither my own, nor was it approved by me. Indeed, it appears to be the photo simply plucked from the House of Commons website and certainly was not a photo that was specifically taken for that purpose.

Had I been asked or shown this Facebook post in draft, I would not have approved it as such. In any event, I have asked the riding association in question to remove the Facebook post.

I will continue to do my best to be impartial, as I have shown in the House time and time again. I am truly sorry for the confusion that this may have caused to the House of Commons.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to respond to the question of privilege raised this afternoon by the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Firstly, I want to thank our colleague, the hon. member for West Nova, for rising in the House and providing a clear first-hand account of his association with the social media post in question.

Unlike the recent controversy over the Speaker's summer rally, where the Liberal response was never directly put before the House, and instead, we had the New Democratic House leader quoting a Liberal tweet addressed to the member for Hull—Aylmer, this is a refreshing change.

For her part, the NDP deputy House leader described the Facebook post as a “Conservative Party advertisement.” It was simply none of those things. It was, in fact, simply a free Facebook post on a riding association Facebook page.

As the hon. member for West Nova just shared with the House, he neither saw nor approved the photograph or wording of this social media post for a free meet-and-greet function.

Unlike the Speaker's famous Liberal Convention video, he did not pose in his gown for a photo specially taken for this Facebook post. No House of Commons resources were used for this riding association invitation. This is a material and very clear distinction. In glancing at the photo used, it simply appears to be a standard photo one could expect to see on the House of Commons website. It seems like the post was probably the result of a volunteer quickly assembling a short posting who may have simply grabbed a flattering, publicly available photo. In fact, when one does a photo search on Google for the member for West Nova, the photograph in question is among the first half-dozen results.

However one cuts it, it is a far cry from the circumstances we saw with the Speaker's summer rally invitation published on the red, slick professional Liberal Party of Canada website, which included the following words, “Team [Prime Minister] events are posted by local volunteer teams”.

Just to be clear between the two events in question, first, one event concerned an event organized by the Speaker's own riding association and promoted on a national political party's glossy website. It also featured nakedly partisan language trashing a political party and its leader. The other was a free ordinary Facebook post by a riding association on its own Facebook account and, to be certain, it was not the West Nova Conservative association's. It made zero reference to any other political party and was actually free of any partisanship in its wording.

As the member for West Nova shared, he asked the riding association in question to remove the post, and I have been informed that it was removed promptly this afternoon.

Of course, if the NDP members think this is bad, I would ask them to get their own affairs in order. On the New Democratic Party's slick orange website, one can find, at www.ndp.ca/team, a picture of the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, and if one clicks on it, one will see her title of “Assistant Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole in the House of Commons” along with not one but two “donation” buttons and another link to volunteer for the party. The New Democratic Party is literally fundraising on the fact that one of its members is a chair occupant.

Privilege

• (2150)

However, this is not new behaviour. From the day of her first appointment to the roster of chair occupants on December 8, 2015, the NDP published a press release celebrating her appointment, titled “NDP MP...named Deputy Speaker”. In it, the party gushes, “People in Northern Ontario will be seeing more of [the] NDP MP [for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing] during televised parliamentary debates now that she has been named Assistant Deputy Speaker and Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole in the 42nd Parliament.”

• (2155)

Nonetheless, the NDP deputy House leader, in her zeal for a gotcha moment, neglected to cite or perhaps even assess or review several critical procedural authorities.

First, this question of privilege concerned a Facebook post published on October 31, 2023. That was seven months ago. The hon. member may claim she only just became aware of it, but it was in full, plain sight of the public for seven whole months. This fact alone betrays the NDP's intention in raising this specious argument.

Regardless, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, explains, at page 145:

The matter of privilege to be raised in the House must have recently occurred and must call for the immediate action of the House. Therefore, the Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation.

The member for London—Fanshawe missed this requirement by a long shot.

Second, the hon. member for West Nova is not the Speaker. He is the Deputy Speaker.

As Bosc and Gagnon comment, at pages 361 and 362:

[*Translation*]

While the *Standing Orders* provide for the Speaker's impartiality and independence by prohibiting participation in any debate before the House, there is no such clear statement as to whether the Deputy Speaker and other Presiding Officers should take part in debate. Until the 1930s, it was not unusual for Deputy Speakers to participate actively in debate and there has been controversy from time to time over the extent to which the Chair Occupants, other than the Speaker, should remain aloof from partisan politics.

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In 1931, when a question arose as to the propriety of the Deputy Speaker speaking in debate, it was generally felt that the actions of the Deputy Speaker must be governed by “good taste and judgement”. Since then, and in the absence of any rule or guideline governing the political activities of Presiding Officers of the House or limiting their participation in debate or voting, the degree of participation has been an individual decision. In 1993, Deputy Speaker Champagne agreed to act as co-chair of her party’s leadership convention. A question of privilege was raised in the House by a Member who argued that this decision affected the appearance of impartiality attached to the office of Deputy Speaker and that she was therefore guilty of a contempt of the House. Speaker Fraser ruled that, given the existing practice and the absence of clear direction from the House, Deputy Speakers have used varying degrees of discretion in terms of their party involvement. He clarified that they remain members of their political parties, and unlike the Speaker, may attend caucus meetings, participate in debate and vote. The Speaker ruled that the Deputy Speaker is not “cloaked with the same exigencies that are expected of the Speaker” and that the matter did not constitute a *prima facie* case of privilege.

● (2200)

[English]

To expand on Speaker Fraser’s ruling, found on page 16685 of the Debates for March 9, 1993, I would ask him to add that he also made the following pointed comment: “I am deliberately careful in not extending such a responsibility [for impartiality] by way of *ex cathedra* comments in this decision.”

Indeed, this decision was cited in the ruling we received just three days ago, on Monday, at page 23828 of the Debates, with the Chair saying, “While Speaker Fraser did not find a *prima facie* question of privilege, he did state that the level of impartiality expected of the Speaker should be higher than that of other chair occupants.”

Clearly, it would seem that the New Democratic Party’s brain trust, which is loyally devoted to defending its coalition government with the Liberals at all costs, missed these important points. Indeed, that is disappointing and troubling.

As Deputy Speaker Armand LaVergne told the House on June 19, 1931, at page 2840 of the Debates, “A deputy speaker is not supposed to be impartial when he is not in the chair.”

It certainly seems that the New Democratic Party applies that particular standard when it comes to the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, given the aggressive views of her office on fundraising and volunteer recruitment. In the present case, we had a publicly available photo that was innocently used in a clear and obvious volunteer-run social media page. It was in support of an event for which long-standing authority and precedence make clear that the hon. member for West Nova was at complete liberty to attend. The NDP complaint should be dismissed for what it is: a petty, short-sighted partisan attack.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will congratulate the member for Mégantic—L’Érable. I have been in this house for 20 years and that is surely the dumbest question of privilege I have ever seen raised in the House of Commons, so I—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby, who is an experienced member, to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I was not referring to the member, but I withdraw the comment about his question of privilege. I am not even going to dignify that with a response.

I will come back to the member of Parliament for West Nova. What we have here is a sense that the Conservatives are applying a different set of criteria than they were in the other case I had raised in the House. Members will recall that my immediate concern was whether the Liberal Party had actually been provided the authorization and consent for the posting of that partisan post, and it had not. We immediately demanded that the Liberal Party of Canada apologize for doing something that I felt was disrespectful to you, Mr. Speaker, and disrespectful to Parliament. The Liberal Party posted without your authorization and consent.

We now have the exact same situation. I believe the member for West Nova. He is an honourable man, as you are, Mr. Speaker. He says the post, with him in his Speaker’s robes, was posted without his authorization and consent. He is obviously owed an apology by the riding association, and I hope he will share that formal apology. If it was the Conservative Party that posted it, it should be the Conservative Party apologizing. If it was the riding association posting it without Conservative Party approval, then it should be the riding association fully apologizing. It was not only disrespectful to the member for West Nova, but it was also disrespectful to the speakership and to the House of Commons.

These cases are exactly the same. It is exactly the same situation. The difference, of course, is how it was proposed on the floor of the House of Commons. This afternoon, the member for London—Fanshawe rose and said there is a picture of the Deputy Speaker in his Speaker’s robes for financing and—

● (2205)

The Speaker: That looks like a prop. I will ask the hon. member just to put that paper down.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member for London—Fanshawe raised the issue in asking if it was approved by the member for West Nova, yes or no? We have a response, and we honour it in the same way that we should all, as members of Parliament, honour your response.

The point is that we are talking about the exact same situation. The NDP has treated both situations in the exact same way. I am not going to even dignify what the member for Mégantic—L’Érable said, because it simply does not dignify the House.

The comment from the member for West Nova is something that we should take into consideration. I hope that there will be an apology coming shortly from the riding association or from the Conservative Party. In both cases, we should, as parliamentarians, consider the matter closed.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I would tell my Conservative colleagues to start acting like adults.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets to not take the floor until they are recognized.

[*Translation*]

I thank the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable for his intervention.

[*English*]

I also thank the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby for his point. The Chair will take this under advisement and come back to the House.

* * *

PHARMACARE ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after the NDP House leader, let us get this back on track and talk about the pharmacare bill, Bill C-64. I am pretty happy to take to my feet. I did have the opportunity to sit in committee for five hours a couple days ago and listen to some of the witnesses and some of the comments and concerns around the pharmacare bill, Bill C-64. I want to put some of my concerns on the record. I see the former health minister and I am looking forward to hearing him talk about it, if he is going to get to his feet.

A year ago, I asked the former health minister how many provincial health ministers at an FPT meeting had asked to bring forward a pharmacare bill. Was it on the top of their priority list? At that time, the minister did not have an answer for me. In committee, a couple of days ago, I had the opportunity to ask the current health minister that exact same question. I do believe that health is a provincial jurisdiction.

My question was whether they were able to name any health ministers who proactively came to the federal government to ask for this bill to be brought forward or whether there were other requests.

I know, in Saskatchewan, that we have a shortage of nurses. We have a shortage of doctors. There are a lot of issues, and I think many provinces do have concerns around doctor and nurse shortages. I think we are short 30,000 doctors right now in Canada. That is a pretty big deal. I think around seven million Canadians do not have access to a family physician.

I think that is something that health ministers probably brought forward at the FPT meetings. I believe that is something that we do need to look at: how we can support our provincial partners and have that conversation.

Once again, the current health minister did not answer my question about whether this was a priority at FPT meetings. Tonight, I was able to ask that question again to the member from Winnipeg North. I asked if he could name a health minister who brought this pharmacare bill forward as a priority for the provinces. I have never seen him play hockey but he was pretty good at skating around that

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question. He went full circle, but he never really came to the crux of my question as to whether a health minister had asked for this.

This is not partisan rhetoric. This is a legitimate question around public policy and the priorities of provincial governments. I heard from my colleague from Victoria. She talked about a child who needed diabetes care. I listened to her speech and when I asked her if she could tell me the age of full coverage in Saskatchewan, she could not. That is a very real concern of mine, the fact that they are bringing forward this legislation and that people voting for this bill do not know what the different coverages are out there in different provinces.

That is a legitimate problem. We should know where the coverages are across the provinces. In my home province of Saskatchewan, I have been texting with our health minister, I asked him if this was one of the things he brought forward and he said no, that they just came to them and said they were going to do this, take it or leave it. Then they asked for details. The minister said that they never gave them any details because they did not have any yet. It is surprising for a provincial health minister to not have any details on a pharmacare bill. A pamphlet, in my opinion, is not a bill, as it is four pages long. It covers diabetes and contraceptives, but there is little detail given to our provincial partners and that is a legitimate concern that we have to discuss.

They rammed this through. They bring in time allocation and then they just expect everything to be okay. We all know that this is just what the NDP asked for to keep the government in power for a little bit more time. This is part of the supply and confidence deal. They continue to tell falsehoods to Canadians. It is not coverage; two things are being covered.

For NDP members to bring up Tommy Douglas in the House is laughable. He would be embarrassed by the NDP and the situation it is in right now. He would probably be a Conservative right now. He would be completely embarrassed by what the NDP, the rump of the NDP, has become: a bunch of activists. I think it is very funny whenever they bring forward the name of Tommy Douglas, because he probably rolls over in his grave when that happens.

Being from Saskatchewan, I also had a time to be in government, with the Saskatchewan Party and former premier Wall, which takes me to another point. The NDP-Liberal government continues to bring in bills and then it says it is going to do consultation. I think that is a little bit backward. I remember being in Saskatchewan, and I was a member of the all-party traffic safety committee. We travelled around Saskatchewan for a couple weeks, in all corners, and took feedback from all of the stakeholders.

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• (2210)

We consulted. We gathered feedback. Then we made legislation. Is that not a novel idea? Talk to people, ask what is going on, ask what works and what does not work, and then put forward legislation, instead of bringing forward legislation and then asking if it can work. Sometimes, I just find that some of the things the government does are quite backwards. The same thing happened with nuclear consultations. We started nuclear consultations in Saskatchewan in the first term of 2007 and continued to talk to people and consult before we even got to the point of even the discussion of small nuclear reactors. That was how long we actually consulted with the people of Saskatchewan. Can members imagine having that approach here in this House, to continue to talk to people, instead of ramming things through based on political ideology and what people think they need to stay in power?

Getting back to my point about diabetes, I have a cousin who plays for Regina Thunder. He was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was two. That is why I am such a champion of diabetes care. His mother and father had to wake him up at night and prick his finger when he was a baby and when he was two or three years old. Then he would get insulin pills. Now he has tracking on his arm. He has a pump that is covered by the province of Saskatchewan. That is progress. That is how to listen to people and get things done. I think that is what we should take forward.

The NDP have talked about compassion. Where is their compassion for the 27 million Canadians who have insurance, but who are scared right now that they are going to have less coverage? I know 1.1 million Canadians are under-insured. We can take care of them.

Just imagine if one of the health ministers of the NDP-Liberal government went to a provincial-territorial meeting and asked how to get people insured under their provincial programs. What is the need out there? The Liberal government of the day wants to take credit for everything. There did not have to be a national program. Imagine if it had worked with its provincial partners and then supplemented their programs? Maybe the provinces would have needed extra money. I guarantee that it would not have cost \$1 billion or \$2 billion. This program is going to cost \$2 billion.

There are several public policy reasons why this bill should not go forward in the form it is in. We should continue to work with our provincial partners. I would love for one of these ministers of health to answer how many provincial health ministers asked for this program to come forward. The same could be said for the dental plan.

Today is a pretty special day in my life. On May 30, 1944, my father, Ron Steinley, was born. I am not able to be home with him, but I want to wish him a very happy 80th birthday. He is in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. I am going to try and rip out there, maybe this week or next week, so we can take him out for supper. Happy birthday to my dad and all the best.

• (2215)

The Speaker: Not only do I thank the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan for his intervention, but I would like to congratulate him for two things, one, to wish his father a very happy birthday and, second, how his father's birthday has united this House. Great

job to Mr. Steinley, Sr. I hope you have an opportunity to see him soon.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to start by saying remembering our humanity in this place is really important. I, too, wish a very happy birthday to the member's father. I think it is a beautiful thing to have these opportunities. We are away from them far too long.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind everybody in this House that, in fact, Tommy Douglas was very clear. His first step was going to be medicare, and the second step of his vision was pharmacare. I stand here as a proud New Democrat, feeling that I am carrying a legacy forward in a profound way. I will always be proud of that.

I do not know if the member knows this, but, in my province, the B.C. NDP are making sure that all contraceptives will be covered, knowing that is an important right. When this program is in place, it will actually free up resources so that the province can reallocate funds to a different place. I just hope the member understands that and is looking forward to what his province will receive based on this allocation.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member very much for wishing my father a happy birthday.

The New Democrats talk about Tommy Douglas a lot. I actually had the time in the Saskatchewan legislature to read his master's thesis, which was on eugenics. Is that the third step, then? If they are going to talk about Tommy Douglas, they should talk about all the things he thought health care needed. They never talk about that, which is interesting.

I believe the provinces really do need to work together with the federal government. The fact it is trying to ram this down the provinces' throat is actually quite funny. I can text the health minister right now, who will say that, because he has no idea what is in this plan, he does not know how the province is going to be prepared for it or how much it is going to spend because it has no idea what it actually entails.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is rather simple. If the member believes in respecting jurisdictions and can talk about the pharmacare that exists in several provinces of Canada, then why did his party vote against the Bloc Québécois' proposed amendment to the budget? That amendment sought to require the government to respect jurisdictions in its budget, including Quebec's jurisdictions. Why did his party vote against that amendment?

• (2220)

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about Bill C-64. I think the provincial government has jurisdiction over health care and the federal government should butt out.

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Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate his father on behalf of the Liberal Party. We will share a beer in his honour tonight.

The member at least implied in his speech that he took part in ensuring that young diabetics in Saskatchewan have the cost of their medication paid for. Maybe he could speak a little more about that.

I would also say is that not what we are trying to do with our bill here? Would it not be a good thing if the health minister did this in Saskatchewan? If he did, great.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, in 2011, the Saskatchewan Party made a commitment to campaign on providing coverage for diabetics up to the age 18. Then, in 2016, we campaigned to move that to age 25. That is exactly what we did: we provided coverage for diabetics until the age of 25. The theory behind that was, after the age of 25, a lot of people had their own coverage when they were gainfully employed and had private insurance. There are still other programs to cover people who are less insured.

The problem I have with this is that we do not know what the coverage is going to be. Not all diabetics take the same medicine either, so we do not know which medicines would be covered in this program, as it is not going to be all of them, which goes to my point that consultations should be done before bringing in legislation so we know what works and what does not.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned two important points that are missing here. One is that it was a top-down approach and there was a lack of consultation. The other is how many provincial ministers actually asked about it.

One of the things the member touched on that I thought was really important is that many people in his province have very good coverage already. My question for the member is this: If it becomes a top-down approach, why does he fear the federal government would make it worse for the people who are doing good on their medication?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals always talk about providing coverage for the 1.1 million people, which is important, but they would take away some of the better coverage that 27 million people have. That is fake compassion and the lie of the left.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this issue and this bill, finally.

As others have already pointed out, Canada is the only country with a universal health care system that does not provide some sort of universal drug coverage. Under the British, Australian, New Zealand, French and Belgian systems, basically to some degree or another, people's medications are paid for by the government and they do not have to pay for them. Having said that, admittedly, in some countries there is copay.

This is an important bill. It is the first step in creating a national pharmacare system, and this I truly support. However, I did not always feel this way. As somebody who has long-practised in the health care system, I was a bit worried, because with the health care system as it presently is, we are struggling to pay for it. It occurred

to me that what the government ought to be doing in health care is making sure that this sucker stays on the road. Certainly, I had a bit of trepidation with the idea that we were going to add another cost like pharmacare. However, having thought about it and having sat through committee meetings where we talked to experts, I have changed my mind because I think that a national pharmacare system would save the health care system money, not increase costs.

The current system, as we have it, which is a patchwork of private and public plans, is really inefficient. Multiple studies and recommendations since the 1960s have all basically said that. In fact, one study from the Canadian Medical Association Journal in 2017 concluded that we in Canada pay 50% more for our drugs than people do in 10 other wealthy countries that have national pharmacare programs. In addition, the inefficiency of our pharmaceutical system is demonstrated by the fact that we in Canada pay the second most for drugs of any people in the world. The Americans pay more, but other than that, we pay more for drugs than anyone else.

The inefficiency of our system comes from the fact that we provide pharmacare in Canada like the United States does. We, like the United States, have a patchwork system of private and public providers, and the private providers are often set up through employers. At times, these are non-profits, but for the most part they are for-profit companies. Similarly, there are public systems and public plans, and there are multiple public plans. For example, in Ontario, there is the Ontario drug benefit plan for those over 65, there is a Trillium plan for higher-cost medications and there is OHIP+.

Basically, we pay for our medications in Canada like Americans pay for all parts of their health care system, but our system for paying for medications, like the U.S. health care system, is really inefficient. Americans pay twice as much for health care as Canadians do. On average, Americans pay \$12,000 per person for health care, and in Canada we pay \$6,000 for health care per person, and they have worse outcomes than we do. For example, they have a lower life expectancy than we do in Canada.

I studied health law and policy both in Boston and at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and learned a bit about the health care system. I was certainly impressed by the inefficiency of the American health care system. They have private hospitals, private health care providers and private insurance companies, and each of these organizations has administrators who basically spend half of their time scheming on how they can decrease costs and increase profits. They have to pay for these administrators. Similarly, they have to pay the CEOs and the higher-up executives, who all bring in the big bucks, for working in those positions. On top of that, and most of all, a lot of money goes to the shareholders of corporations, which are legally obliged to financially benefit shareholders. All this money comes out of the health care system, money that ought to be going toward trying to improve the health care of Americans.

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• (2225)

Similarly, in Canada, we currently have 1,100 private and public plans according to a Lancet 2024 study, although according to the Hoskins report, we have 100,000 private plans. If instead of having all these plans, we just had one plan, then surely there would be tremendous savings coming from economies of scale. We would not need 1,100 organizations with 1,100 sets of administrators administering their own plans. We would not need hundreds of CEOs siphoning money that would otherwise go to health care, and there would be no profits going to shareholders rather than going to health care.

There would be all sorts of savings from economies of scale and increased bargaining power. For example, if someone went to a provider or manufacturer of drugs and bought 10 million pills rather than 10,000 pills, I am sure they would get those pills at a cheaper cost, so there are savings there. Also, shipping costs are lower when buying in bulk, and there are fewer inspections needed.

When we add up all these savings, how much do they add up to? Well, according to the 2019 Hoskins report, with national pharmacare by 2027, which is when it would come into effect, total spending on prescription drugs would be \$5 billion lower than it would be without national pharmacare. That is money we could use in the health care system for other things. That means more money to afford expensive cancer therapies, more money to address the long waiting times for either surgeries or diagnostic tests and more money to do research and try to find new cures for things like cancer, ALS, etc.

However, it is not just about saving money in the system. It is also about helping Canadians who struggle to meet the high costs of medications. According to the Hoskins report, between 5% and 20% of Canadians are either uninsured or under-insured, which amounts to two million to eight million people. Furthermore, one in five households reported that a family member in the past year had not taken a prescribed medicine due to its high costs, another three million Canadians said they were not able to afford one or more of their prescription drugs in the past year and almost one million Canadians borrowed money in order to pay for prescription drugs.

For all these reasons, I support this legislation and moving to the next step toward a national pharmacare system. I also welcome that we will be able to provide diabetic medications and contraception to people as one of the next steps in getting to a national pharmacare system.

• (2230)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River is always thoughtful here and mindful of the shortfalls of things the government puts forward. There are a couple of things, though, to think about. At the health committee, we had two of Canada's experts, Drs. Morgan and Gagnon, and as the member well knows, they had no input into but much criticism about this bill. It related to the fact that it would not create a national, universal, single-payer, first-dollar pharmacare system. I heard them say that and I know the member across heard them say that as well.

The other criticism we heard clearly is that the newly formed Canadian drug agency will have absolutely no oversight, especially

from the point of view of an Auditor General's audit, with respect to its activities. We know on behalf of Canadians that at the current time, the time from application to approval for a drug in Canada is one of the longest among the OECD countries.

I would appreciate my hon. colleague's comments with respect to those two things.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Speaker, this is a step toward universal health care. Yes, it does not bring us to that point yet, but it is a step.

With respect to the committee that is going to be involved in this, I thought the member was going to ask me about the fact that those two people were not consulted in the process. That is too bad. However, I agree with the member that how we do this is really important. If we have an efficient system and an efficient bureaucracy, this can save Canadians money. If we create a gigantic bureaucracy that costs a whole ton of money, more than the private system, then it will not end up benefiting Canadians. It is really crucial who we put on that committee and the steps we take in subsequent days, weeks and years.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the member very closely on a number of files, and I know him to be a very honourable member of this place.

He referenced the Hoskins report many times, and of course this is the report that was commissioned by the government to look at this. It found that \$5 billion of savings would be available if we were to put in a national pharmacare program. Like the member, I recognize that this is not a full pharmacare program. This is a framework on which we could build a pharmacare program.

Could the member comment on the medications or drugs that he thinks should be next in the pharmacare program now that we have dedicated this particular step to diabetes medication and devices and to contraceptives?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is very pertinent. I have some background in this. Once upon a time, years ago, I worked in a tiny country in the South Pacific, Vanuatu, on its essential drug list, which was its first essential drug list. The WHO is trying to do this with a lot of countries.

Similarly in Canada, this act calls for the creation of an essential drug list. On that essential drug list, we would have the input of physicians and other specialists from across Canada to determine what the priority drugs are that a government finance system ought to supply its citizenry.

Government Orders

That is an important question, and it is one of the next steps. I, like her, realize that this does not bring us to a national pharmacare system, but it is an important step on the way to that.

• (2235)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being recognized again.

It is a great honour for me to work with the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River on the HESA committee. Given his medical and legal background, I find him quite beneficial to me for my understanding of a lot of health care issues.

One of the things we heard a lot about at committee is the impact of this framework legislation on private health insurance. There was a lot of fearmongering on the Conservatives' part that somehow it would disappear.

Could the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River comment and give us his views on what impact this bill would have on private health insurance?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the very perceptive question by the member from Ottawa.

This is a very important point. We heard from a lot of people, and there was a lot of concern about having a basic system. What if we needed more expensive medications for certain things? Would we be getting rid of private drug plans? That is not necessarily the case. There will be a public plan, but I think there would still be the option, if people wanted, to pay additional money for a private plan that would cover all the things that are not currently insured, as there is for other kinds of health care at the moment.

The Speaker: Before I go to the member for Nunavut, who will be joining us virtually, I want to let members know that I have tried to provide members with about 40 seconds to ask and answer questions so that we can do the full rotation. It is really important that we all try to keep to that so that everybody can participate. I am also providing some flexibility, because questions are interesting and I want to hear as complete an answer as possible, as I am certain a person who asks a question would like that.

The hon. member for Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, before I begin my speech, I will take this opportunity to congratulate Sharon DeSousa, who just became the first racialized national president at the Public Service Alliance of Canada. I first met her when the Iqaluit Housing Authority Inuit workers had their 136 days of striking to advance the rights of workers, not just for Iqalumiut, but also abroad. I am excited about Sharon's election.

I will get to my speech. As the member of Parliament for Nunavut, Bill C-64, an act respecting pharmacare, put me in a bit of a personal dilemma. I wondered if I should support a bill that would do too little for the majority of my constituents. Through my speech this evening, I will share how I came to support the importance of this bill.

As an Inuk from Nunavut, I continue to see the impacts of what happens when the federal government purposefully underinvests in indigenous peoples. The lack of investing in housing means that people live in overcrowded housing conditions. Many live in

mouldy homes. These conditions create poorer health outcomes and deep-rooted social issues, such as increased violence, substance abuse and the continuation of intergenerational trauma being passed on to our children and our grandchildren.

Having lived through these hurdles, I am always analyzing bills and debates with sensitivity to how all too common my experience is for indigenous peoples in Canada. I know all too well what it means to suffer. I hope when Canadians hear me, that they do their part to act on reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

When I became the member of Parliament for Nunavut, I learned to act on solidarity. Before I was an MP, it was just a word. I wholeheartedly thank my colleague and friend, the member of Parliament for Hamilton Centre. This is what I am doing in supporting this bill. I am compelled to act knowing this bill, when it is passed, will help so many Canadians. It will help women and gender-diverse people access contraceptives. It will help many Canadians pay for diabetes medication.

On another note, I must express my view regarding the Bloc's position on this bill. Its main concern seems to be that of jurisdiction and telling the government to stay out of its jurisdiction. I do hope its members reconsider their position because, regardless of jurisdiction, this bill can help more Canadians. This bill sets a foundation to create a universal single-payer system across Canada.

This reminds me of Jordan's principle. I take this opportunity to honour the family of Jordan River Anderson, who this program is importantly named after. Jordan died a preventable death. He died while different jurisdictions were fighting over not having jurisdiction to cover his expenses and care. Because of Jordan's principle, care for first nations and Inuit has improved.

While the Liberal government's responses take too long and it allows funding to lapse, Jordan's principle has made significant impacts for Inuit and first nations. Bill C-64 is an opportunity to model Jordan's principle so women and gender-diverse people have immediate access to contraceptives and people with diabetes can stop stressing about their finances knowing they can rely on this program for diabetes medication.

Government Orders

I must share my criticism of the bill. I am dismayed to see that, once again, when it comes to indigenous peoples, we are forced to wait. While I appreciate that Bill C-64 would require the Minister of Health to initiate discussions based on essential medicines lists with provinces, territories and indigenous peoples, this work must start immediately.

● (2240)

While first nations and Inuit have the non-insured health benefits program to have services such as dental care, eye care and mental health services paid for, much of the investments in Nunavut go toward medical travel because of the lack of health care in Nunavut. Children are flown thousands of kilometres to access basic care and dental care. This program funds millions of dollars to the airline industry. Ensuring pharmacare improves on the NIHB program will be very important in making sure that Nunavummiut, northerners and indigenous peoples see better care closer to home.

The pharmacare bill must avoid the pitfalls that we have seen in NIHB. I remember, for example, my colleague and friend, the MP for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, bringing to me a witness when the indigenous and northern affairs committee studied the non-insured health benefits program. She brought forward a pharmacist, Rudy Malak, who struggled to get paid for providing eligible people the drugs covered under the non-insured health benefits program. The proposed act must ensure that pharmacists would be paid immediately without worrying about closing their doors because the federal government may take too long to pay its bills.

I conclude by reminding everyone that, when it comes to helping Canadians, we must do so with a foundation of removing barriers for people. As much as I am conflicted about the bill, I must practise what the MP for Hamilton Centre taught me about acting in solidarity, knowing that the passage of the bill will help so many Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's general attitude in recognizing the importance of the legislation to the degree in which it would assist millions of Canadians in all regions of the country. I am wondering if she could expand on why it is so important that Liberals, New Democrats, Bloc members and Conservatives should be behind this bill to help so many of our constituents.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, as I said earlier, having empathy is really important, but acting on that empathy is even more important. When I hear about so many Canadians possibly having amputations because they cannot afford diabetes medication, I feel we all have to do our part to make sure that we act when we can, and it is our duty as parliamentarians to make sure that all Canadians get the drugs and the care that they need, so we can keep making sure that Canada is a better place to live in.

● (2245)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when we are in this place, we have to wrestle with really hard pieces of legislation that benefit some but not all, and I am afraid that in this place, historically, up until today, indigenous people are left out of so much decision-making, and their needs are extensively not met, again and again.

I am just wondering if the member could talk about what she sees as being needed right now to start including indigenous people in a more meaningful way so that we can start to repair the harm that has been done, specifically in this place.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, that is such an important question because one of the answers is what indigenous peoples have been saying all along, and we hear it in some responses, such as co-development, but we have to really make sure that, when it comes everything from laws to program development policies to decisions regarding lands and the health and education of indigenous peoples, we have to be at the table helping to make those decisions, not just because of a legal duty to consult, but demanding it because of reconciliation. We have to make sure that we have more indigenous peoples become parliamentarians, and we have to make sure that there is more participation that does not prevent us from helping to make decisions on these matters.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about Jordan's principle, and I would really love for her to expand on the importance of that within her own community and on the dangers that we see with the government stepping back from the commitment to ensure that the needs of first nations, Inuit and Métis are placed in priority over money and squabbling between jurisdictions.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, Jordan's principle is such an important story to always remember because the implementation of it allows payments to be made up front and for the jurisdictions to discuss who ends up paying for it in the end. We have an opportunity with the pharmacare act for women and gender-diverse people to get their contraceptives immediately, without having to worry about whether it is going to be the provinces or the federal government who pays for it, as well as for people to get their diabetes medication.

I know this kind of system can work because we see it in Jordan's principle, especially when we have discovered, through that program, the atrocities indigenous children are forced to experience and that treatment will happen immediately. We need that same kind of foundation through this pharmacare program.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure for me to stand once again today to speak to this very important bill. Bill C-64 is an act respecting pharmacare.

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The bill contains three key sections. One, it would establish a framework toward a national universal pharmacare in Canada for certain prescription drugs and related products. Two, it provides that the Canadian drug agency work toward the development of a national formulary to develop a national bulk-purchasing strategy and support the publication of a pan-Canadian strategy regarding the appropriate use of prescription medications. The third section is that, within 30 days of hopefully this bill receiving royal assent, the minister would establish a committee of experts to make recommendations regarding the operation and financing of national, universal, single-payer pharmacare.

The bill, along with other investments made by our government, would help millions of Canadians who are struggling to pay for their prescription drugs. Since this bill was introduced, we have heard many facts about access and affordability of prescription drugs within Canada. We know that Statistics Canada data from 2021 has indicated that one in five Canadians reported not having enough insurance to cover the cost of prescription medication in the previous 12 months.

We know that having no prescription insurance coverage was associated with higher out-of-pocket spending and higher non-adherence to prescriptions because of cost. We know that this results in some Canadians having to choose between paying for these medications or for other basic necessities, like food and housing. This is why we have consistently made commitments toward national pharmacare and have focused efforts on the key areas of accessibility, affordability and appropriate use of medications.

Let me start with the pharmacare act, which references the foundational principles of access, affordability, appropriate use and universality. We have heard a lot about these four principles this evening, but it is important to continue this conversation. Bill C-64 recognizes the critical importance of working with provinces and territories, which are responsible for the administration of health care. It also outlines our intent to work with these partners to provide universal, single-payer coverage for a number of contraception and diabetes medications.

This legislation is an important step forward to improve health equity, affordability and outcomes, and has the potential of long-term savings to the health care system. In our most recent budget, budget 2024, we announced \$1.5 billion over seven years to support the launch of national pharmacare and coverage for contraception and diabetes medications. I would like to highlight the potential impact the two drug classes for which we are seeking to provide coverage under this legislation would have on Canadians.

We have heard of stories or know of someone in our constituency who is struggling to access diabetes medications or supplies due to lack of insurance coverage through their work, or of an individual who has limited insurance coverage so they cannot choose the form of contraception that is better suited for her.

For example, let us talk about a part-time, uninsured worker who has type 1 diabetes and is also of reproductive age. For this individual to manage her diabetes, it would cost her up to \$18,000 every year, leaving her potentially unable to afford the \$500 upfront cost of her preferred method of contraception, a hormonal IUD. With the introduction of this legislation, this individual would save mon-

ey on costs associated with managing her diabetes and would be able to access a hormonal IUD at no cost, with no out-of-pocket expenses, once the legislation is implemented in her province.

Studies have demonstrated that publicly funded, no-cost universal contraception can result in public cost savings. Evidence from the University of British Columbia estimated that no-cost contraception has the potential to save the B.C. health care system approximately \$27 million per year. Since April 1, 2023, B.C. is the only province in Canada to provide universal free contraceptives to all residents under the B.C. pharmacare program. In the first eight months of this program, more than 188,000 people received free contraceptives. That is wonderful.

● (2250)

With respect to diabetes, it is a complex disease that can be treated with safe and effective medications. One in four Canadians with diabetes has reported not following their treatment plan due to costs. Improving access to diabetes medications would help improve the health of some of the 3.7 million Canadians living with diabetes and reduce the risk of serious, life-changing health complications, such as blindness or amputations.

Beyond helping people with managing their diabetes and living healthier lives, we also know that, if left untreated or poorly managed, diabetes can lead to high and unnecessary costs on the health care system due to diabetes and its complications, including heart attack, stroke and kidney failure. The full cost of diabetes to the health care system could exceed almost \$40 billion by 2028, as estimated by Diabetes Canada.

The bill demonstrates the Government of Canada's commitment to consulting widely on the way forward and working with provinces, territories, indigenous peoples, and other partners and stakeholders to improve the accessibility, affordability and appropriate use of pharmaceutical products by reducing financial barriers and contributing to physical and mental health and well-being.

Beyond our recent work under Bill C-64, I would like to highlight one or two initiatives, depending on my time, that the government has also put in place to support our efforts towards national pharmacare.

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On a national level, our government has launched the first-ever national strategy for drugs for rare diseases in March 2023, with an investment of up to \$1.5 billion over three years. As part of the overall \$1.5-billion investment, our government will make available up to \$1.4 billion over three years to willing provinces and territories through bilateral agreements. This funding would help provinces and territories improve access to new and emerging drugs for Canadians with rare diseases, as well as support enhanced access to existing drugs, early diagnosis and screening for rare diseases.

I would also like to highlight another initiative under way, which involves the excellent work by P.E.I. through a \$35-million federal investment. Under this initiative, P.E.I. is working to improve the affordable access of prescription drugs, while at the same time informing the advancement of national universal pharmacare.

The work accomplished by P.E.I. has been remarkable. Since December of last year, P.E.I. has expanded access to over 100 medications to treat a variety of conditions, including heart disease, pulmonary arterial hypertension, multiple sclerosis, psoriasis and cancer. In addition, effective June 1, 2023, P.E.I. reduced copays to \$5 for almost 60% of medications regularly used by island residents. I am pleased to share that through this initiative, P.E.I. residents have saved over \$2.8 million in out-of-pocket expenses as of March of this year.

Finally, on December 18, 2023, the Government of Canada announced the creation of Canada's drug agency, with an investment of \$89.5 million over five years, beginning this year. Built from the existing Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, and in partnership with provinces and territories, the CDA will provide the dedicated leadership and coordination needed to make Canada's drug system more sustainable and better prepared for the future, helping Canadians achieve better health outcomes. I am pleased to share that as of May 1, CADTH has been officially launched as Canada's drug agency.

In closing, we can see the extraordinary amount of work that has been and will continue to be dedicated to our commitments related to national pharmacare that focuses on accessibility, affordability and appropriate use of medications.

Bill C-64 represents the next phase of helping Canadians receive the medications they need, and we look forward to working with all parliamentarians to ensure its successful passing.

• (2255)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member did mention rare diseases, and I cannot pass up the opportunity to clarify a couple of things.

It is only mentioned once, in clause 5 of the legislation. To all my constituents back home, and all the rare disease organizations and patients across the country, not a single person will have their rare disease drugs paid for by this legislation, not a single one. It is not in the legislation. The 2023 announcement that the government just made is a reannouncement of its 2019 announcement.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the NDP caucus is heckling me once again. I know the New Democrats get really upset when I raise this. The government is the one that actually cancelled the original rare disease strategy in 2016, and at the time, the head of the organization called it “the kiss of death” for rare disease patients. Does that member agree?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-64 would establish the framework of a national universal pharmacare program here in Canada. It is phase one of the proposed program, which would include prescription drugs and free coverage for contraceptives and diabetes medication, and we are hoping to expand the program.

As well, there are additional elements that would complement the national pharmacare program, which is our national strategy for drugs for rare diseases. Again, it is starting with a \$1.5-billion investment over three years. I believe our intention is that we will be expanding it in the years to come.

• (2300)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is simple, but at the same time I think it is rather complex because I have never gotten a clear answer from the federal government.

Why does the government think that it is better placed to understand the needs of Quebecers than the Government of Quebec, which administers a pharmacare program that has been around for many years?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, this is a national pharmacare program. We know that there are a number of provinces that offer different levels of pharmacare support right now, but what we are trying to do is provide a national pharmacare program based on the four principles that we have been consistently talking about, which are accessibility, affordability, appropriate use and universality. We are trying to move beyond the provinces of B.C., Quebec and P.E.I. to make sure that there is accessibility, affordability, appropriate use and universality for all Canadians.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it pretty rich when Conservatives start talking about expanding pharmacare when they are doing everything they can to block it. Three years ago, they voted against pharmacare. They could have brought forward amendments to expand it to cover people with rare diseases. They did not do that. In fact, they are saying that people are already covered.

Becky in my riding writes, “Our out-of-pocket costs for my son's insulin and devices come to just over \$11,000 per year. It is so expensive sometimes that the pharmacy calls me to give me a heads-up about how much an order will be, as if we have an option. Without it, he will die. Something like national pharmacare would be a game-changer for us.”

Maybe my colleague can talk about if she would be willing to work with the NDP and the Conservatives, with everybody coming together, to include rare diseases. She knows that there is a willing partner right here.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his commitment and passion to the national pharmacare program.

In my riding of Davenport, having a national pharmacare program is very popular. Constituents are very excited about phase one with the introduction of diabetes medication being covered, as well as contraceptives. I know that they are looking for an expansion of this program, which is something I am very interested in as well.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member for Davenport has been a long-time supporter of pharmacare, and just like me, she has campaigned on this. Can she tell me the impact that this legislation would have on her community?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his leadership on the pharmacare act.

I will say that the impact of this legislation on my community would be huge. It is particularly very popular within the senior population, but I know that it is something that would be very helpful.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have another opportunity to address Bill C-64, an act respecting pharmacare. It is an act with respect to pharmacare, and yet it would cover only diabetes and contraception. As a member of the Standing Committee on Health, I can say that the bill, which is really more of a pamphlet than a real piece of legislation, has been the main focus of committee for the last month or so, about as long as it took for the government to draft the legislation.

It is important to make sure that Canadians know what the pamphlet really is and, more importantly, what it is not, since many people are under the impression that Bill C-64 would mean free medications for all Canadians. This is absolutely not the case. Despite what the NDP-Liberal coalition is claiming, the pamphlet would do very little to improve the lives of the majority of Canadians, and overall it could have more negative impacts than positive.

One huge issue that I have with Bill C-64 is the way that it was rammed through Parliament so quickly. Typically when legislation comes to committee, we are given ample time to hear from witnesses and to read all the briefs, submissions and recommendations from stakeholders on the legislation. This is extremely important, as there are many groups that have valuable insight and input on issues as major as pharmacare. We on this side of the House believe that they all deserve to be heard and considered, yet due to closure on what Canadians think should be a piece of legislation intervening in provincial domains, it was rushed through.

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When it comes to matters that would potentially affect a huge portion of the population, due consideration must be given to the opinions of experts. This is not an issue that should be handled by “Ottawa knows best”, which the Liberal-NDP coalition so often does. The Liberals think they know better than the professionals who are said to be the most impacted by the pharmacare pamphlet, so they are fine with pushing the weak legislation through. Why is that? It is because they want to be able to tell Canadians that they gave them universal pharmacare, even though that is blatant misinformation because what the bill would provide is anything but universal.

There were 10 hours of committee time to hear from witnesses with respect to Bill C-64, which was not nearly enough time to cover all the industries, organizations and individuals who would be affected by the poor piece of legislation before us. My inbox was inundated with emails from groups that were pleading with the government to have a chance to give their input at committee. However, because the NDP-Liberals were so desperate to ram Bill C-64 through Parliament, their voices were not heard.

It astounds me that the costly coalition is trying to tout the pamphlet as being historic and groundbreaking, when the Liberals neglected to listen to the very people who would be most impacted by the shoddy work of the file. Many groups who were fortunate enough to appear at committee said they were not consulted by the NDP-Liberals before or during the development of the pharmacare pamphlet. In what world is this acceptable?

It is not just the medical field that the NDP-Liberal coalition failed to consult in advance. One of the biggest industries that would have to deal with all of the changes caused by Bill C-64 is the insurance industry. We were fortunate to be able to hear from some industry representatives on the matter at committee. Mr. Stephen Frank, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association, made some important observations.

Mr Frank said, “The Minister of Health has stated that people who have an existing drug plan are going to continue to enjoy the access they have to their drugs. If that's the minister's intent it's not...clear from this bill. As many of the questions reinforced today, its text is ambiguous, it repeatedly calls for universal, single-payer, pharmacare in Canada with no mention of workplace benefit plans. Read in its entirety the bill could result in practical, and even legal, barriers to our ability to provide Canadians with the drug benefits that they currently have.

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“For the majority of Canadians, therefore, this plan, as it's currently written, risks disrupting existing prescription drug coverage paid for by employers, limiting choice, and using scarce federal resources to simply replace existing coverage while leaving a huge gap for uninsured Canadians who rely on other medications beyond diabetic drugs and contraceptives.”

● (2305)

There are a number of different drug insurance plans out there: government-sponsored plans, employer-sponsored plans, association-sponsored plans and private plans. The Conference Board of Canada found that 36.8 million Canadians, or 97.2%, are eligible for some form of prescription drug coverage. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce indicates that the uninsured population is 1.1 million, or 2.8%, and 3.8 million are eligible but not enrolled. That is basically 4.9 million, a little over roughly 10% of the population, yet Statistics Canada in 2019 indicated that 86.2% of Canadians are covered by at least one type of drug insurance.

When an issue as important as access to medications and prescriptions comes up, it is the minister's job to ensure that all policies are clear and comprehensive and that all possible implications have been considered. Obviously, this is not being done with Bill C-64.

Another witness who appeared at committee and had concerns about the clarity of this bill was Carolyn Eagan, the principal representative for the Smart Health Benefits Coalition. She stated, “thousands of our advisers have received thousands of phone calls and engaged discussion with the misperception that people can go ahead and cancel their plan and essentially replace it by the free plan, not knowing what is on that list of coverage and who it's intended for.

“My own mother, who's turning 80 this year, got her letter. She was completely confused and figured she would cancel her plan and have free coverage with everything included. Luckily, I'm in the business and could explain it to her.

“It is a risk and there's a great risk of employers and Canadians thinking they would lose access to a longer list of medications where their health is stable on the treatment plan that they have been prescribed. Losing that access puts everything at risk. It puts the sustainability and health of Canadians and families, and our workforce and productivity, at great risk.”

This is alarming to say the very least. How many seniors in this country are going to lose their private insurance plan because the NDP-Liberal coalition failed to be clear about what the pamphlet would actually do and cover? How many seniors might have already cancelled their plan? What will stop employers from cancelling the benefit plan they offer and telling their employees to use universal pharmacare, which covers medication for only two things?

These are the questions that were asked at committee, yet the minister was unable to answer. Even more alarming is that only 44% of new drugs launched globally are distributed in Canada, and only 20% of them are covered by public plans. According to a study by Innovative Medicines Canada, which, by the way, asked to present at committee and was denied.

The fact of the matter is that the minister came to committee and gave blatant misinformation to Canadians, telling them that everything is going to be okay and that they must just trust him. After nine years of the Prime Minister's ruining our country, it is absurd that he is expecting public trust. The NDP-Liberal coalition has broken promise after promise, and somehow the minister thinks that he deserves or is entitled to something as sacred as the trust of Canadians.

One of the briefs that was received at committee was sent by Chris MacLeod, a 54-year-old lawyer who has cystic fibrosis. This disease is one that hits home very personally, and I am grateful to Mr. MacLeod for sharing his experiences with public drug plans in this country. He stated that unfortunately Bill C-64 looks like it could be another major barrier to access for patients, especially those with rare diseases, and that notably, the federal government's attempt to force substandard public formulary coverage on everyone across the country could prove to be a disaster, with potentially deadly consequences.

People who live with diseases like cystic fibrosis do not deserve to have their life made even more difficult because of incompetence with respect to the bill. The bottom line is that most Canadians already have solid drug plans that they are happy with and they do not want to have them replaced.

● (2310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for a four-page pamphlet, the member is having a difficult time going through it and recognizing that this four-page pamphlet is going to benefit millions of Canadians who have diabetes and assist millions of Canadians who want to have contraceptives. At the end of the day, I believe there are a number of Conservatives who feel ashamed about what the House leadership has told them that they are going to be doing. They are voting against this so-called pamphlet.

Does the member have any remorse about his vote on this legislation because he is being forced to vote a certain way by his leader?

● (2315)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I find that question extremely interesting from the member, who is being compelled to vote for this piece of legislation as he speaks. If the member was to read this piece of legislation, in four pages, the member would also understand that he is misleading Canadians by saying that this would cover every piece of diabetic medication out there. That is not going to happen. In fact, it would cover less. As a single payer, when that system is put in place, people who have health care plans that cover multiple programs would lose that ability because they would be forced to go on that single-payer plan.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my hon. colleague talked a lot about inefficiency, for example, in the way this program was communicated. Could he also tell us how little confidence he has in this federal program in general, particularly with respect to how it is organized and how it is being rolled out?

Why does the federal government believe that it can run a pharmacare program when it cannot even issue passports?

[English]

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, one thing I learned through her colleagues who were at committee was about the importance placed on the great health care program the Province of Quebec provides. It is a tremendous program and is one of the best in the country. It is a plan and a program available because the province provides it. Health care is a provincial issue, and every province is in a position to provide health care. Instead of the government putting the \$1.5 billion in the budget toward this, it should put that money toward those who are uninsured and help those who are uninsured.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will talk about someone who is insured. Sheila wrote to me and said that with two type 1s in the family, with one suffering from multiple complications from 50 years with the disease, their out-of-pocket medical expenses are about \$18,000 a year, and that is with extended medical. Otherwise, it would be about \$30,000. That is one paycheque just to keep everyone alive and well. Maybe my colleague can say a few words to Sheila on why he is blocking getting her the help she deserves and needs.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, to the member for Courtenay—Alberni, who I have worked with on health care many times over the last nine years, I applaud him for his passion and care for his constituents and for his desire to do the best that he believes he can to help. I do believe he is doing what he can to help. Ultimately, though, this piece of legislation is about diabetes coverage. It is not about rare diseases. It is about diabetes coverage, and that diabetes coverage would actually be less than what is available in other programs.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have lived through the NDPs in Saskatchewan. When they were in power the last time, they closed 52 hospitals, closed 1,000 care beds and fired 1,000 nurses. They were an unmitigated disaster, and that is why they will never govern in Saskatchewan again.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Regina—Lewvan is so right. In Saskatchewan, we saw the total destruction of the system under the NDP government. Today, we see the building of beds to be provided for drug addicts and meth addicts. They are being provided by the provincial government because it is the provincial government's responsibility to provide that coverage.

• (2320)

[Translation]

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-64.

[English]

It is a great pleasure to join the debate today about the pharmacare legislation that is going to bring in the first steps of pharmacare in Canada, as well as to be the last person to give a speech before we actually vote on this important piece of legislation.

Quality health care, including access to prescription drugs, is vital to protecting and promoting the health and well-being of Canadians. Prescription medicines allow millions of Canadians to prevent and fight disease, manage chronic illness, ease pain and breathe better; in other words, they allow Canadians to live healthier and more productive lives. I must say, there are few issues that I hear more about than health care. It is a priority for my constituents.

With rising costs, some Canadians are facing difficult choices between paying for their prescriptions and covering essentials, such as food and heat. Nobody should be put in that circumstance. We need to ensure that prescription drugs are more accessible and affordable for Canadians, including those facing the greatest financial barriers to accessing medications. That is why our government has introduced the pharmacare act. The bill proposes foundational principles for national universal pharmacare and describes the government's intent to work with provinces and territories to provide Canadians with universal, single-payer, first-dollar coverage for a range of contraceptive and diabetes products.

When medicare was introduced in Canada in the 1960s, prescription drugs played a relatively limited role in health care. Most drugs outside of a hospital were inexpensive medicines for common conditions. However, in the intervening decades, the development of drugs has surged as pharmaceutical companies have pushed the science further in search of new treatments and cures. Prescription medicines are now an essential part of health care. As a share of overall health care costs, spending on prescribed drugs has risen from six per cent in 1975 to nearly 14% in 2022. This makes prescription drugs the second-largest area of health care spending in Canada, after hospital services.

Government Orders

Today, the landscape of prescription drugs available in Canada is robust and complex, with pharmaceutical companies launching dozens of new products every year. To support effective management, in government-run, public drug plans in Canada, as well as some privately run plans, a formulary is developed, which is a list of drugs and related products that are eligible for coverage under the drug plan. To develop the formularies, public plans consider both how well a drug works and whether these products offer good value for money relative to other treatment options. While there are over a hundred public plans in Canada, there is generally good alignment with regard to the list of drugs that are eligible for coverage across provinces and territories.

Many Canadians are only eligible for public drug coverage with high deductibles or premiums that provide little relief for more routine drug expenses, such as for prescribed contraception and diabetes medications. A national formulary would outline the scope of prescription drugs and related products that all Canadians should have affordable access to under national universal pharmacare.

In 2019, the advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare, chaired by Dr. Eric Hoskins, recommended a national formulary service, one of the standards for national universal pharmacare. He proposed pharmacare coverage to be phased in, starting with a short list of essential medicines. In budget 2019, the government announced funding for a number of foundational steps towards national pharmacare, including the development of a national formulary. Back in 2022, the government announced continued progress towards this by introducing a pharmacare act and tasking the drug agency to develop a national formulary of essential medicines and a bulk purchasing plan. Preliminary work has already been completed, and a framework and process for developing a future national formulary was recommended.

The panel released its final report in 2022, including giving guiding principles for the formulary and a process for bringing it into place, as well as a sample list of commonly prescribed drugs and related products for three therapeutic areas with a high volume of drug use in Canada. These are cardiovascular disease, diabetes and mental illness. This list has been expanded by looking at equity-seeking groups to make sure that we are closing the gaps in access between different communities in Canada.

Actually, this foundational work is already having real-world impacts. In 2021, our government announced that it would work with the Province of Prince Edward Island on the improving affordable access to prescription drugs initiative. Under this initiative, P.E.I. is receiving funding to add new drugs to its list of publicly covered drugs and to lower the out-of-pocket costs for island residents.

I just want to say that, with the legislation, P.E.I. residents have already saved \$2 million in out-of-pocket costs on more than 230,000 prescriptions, and the savings continue. Our government remains firmly committed to taking the next steps in pharmacare, and the legislation today is going to help us do that by providing coverage for contraception and diabetes medicine. This is part of our overall approach to support the provinces to improve health care in Canada, including with a new deal we signed with all the provinces last year to provide better care, as well as making it easier to get access to such things as a medical practitioner in rural ar-

reas, including where I live, by providing student loan forgiveness for people to operate there.

• (2325)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being 11:26 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, May 22, 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. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 6 and 8 to 12.

[*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. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division, please.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (2410)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 791*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Albas
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barrett
Beaulieu	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeschen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Findlay	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin

Government Orders

Goodridge	Gourde	Gainey	Garrison
Gray	Hoback	Gazan	Gerretsen
Jeneroux	Kelly	Gould	Green
Khanna	Kitchen	Guilbeault	Hajdu
Kmiec	Kram	Hanley	Hardie
Kramp-Neuman	Lake	Hepfner	Holland
Lantsman	Larouche	Housefather	Hughes
Lawrence	Lehoux	Hussen	Hutchings
Lemire	Leslie	Iacono	Idlout
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Ien	Jaczek
Liepert	Lobb	Johns	Jones
Maguire	Majumdar	Jowhari	Julian
Martel	Mazier	Kayabaga	Kelloway
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean	Khalid	Khera
Melillo	Michaud	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Moore	Morrison	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Motz	Muys	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Nater	Normandin	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Patzer	Paul-Hus	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Pauzé	Perkins	Lightbound	Long
Perron	Poilievre	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Redekopp	Reid	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Rempel Garner	Roberts	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Rood	Ruff	Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Schmale	Seeback	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Shields	Shiple	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné	McLeod	McPherson
Small	Soroka	Mendès	Mendicino
Steinley	Ste-Marie	Miao	Miller
Stewart	Strahl	Morrice	Morrissey
Stubbs	Therrien	Murray	Naqvi
Tochor	Tolmie	Ng	Noormohamed
Trudel	Uppal	O'Connell	Oliphant
Van Popta	Vidal	O'Regan	Powlowski
Vien	Viersen	Qualtrough	Robillard
Vignola	Vis	Rodriguez	Rogers
Vuong	Wagantall	Romanado	Rota
Warkentin	Waugh	Sahota	Sajjan
Williamson	Zimmer—130	Saks	Samson
		Sarai	Scarpaleggia
		Schiefke	Serré
		Sgro	Shanahan
		Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
		Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
		Sorbara	Sousa
		St-Onge	Sudds
		Tassi	Taylor Roy
		Thompson	Trudeau
		Turnbull	Valdez
		Van Bynen	van Koeverden
		Vandal	Vandenbeld
		Virani	Weiler
		Wilkinson	Yip
		Zahid	Zarrillo
		Zuberi—169	

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer

PAIRED

Members

Bendayan	Champagne
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Fortin
Gallant	Joly
Plamondon	Thériault—8

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2 to 6 and 8 to 12 defeated.

Hon. Dan Vandal (for the Minister of Health) moved that Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion.

Government Orders

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

● (2425)

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

(Division No. 792)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Mathysen

May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
Sorbara	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi — 169	

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	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	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Garon	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hoback	Jeneroux
Jivani	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmieć	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lobb

Adjournment Proceedings

Maguire	Majumdar
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Michaud	Moore
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Poilievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seebach	Shields
Shiplay	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Therrien	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vidal	Vien
Vignola	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Williamson	Zimmer — 132

PAIRED

Members

Bendayan	Champagne
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Fortin
Gallant	Joly
Plamondon	Thériault — 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to request that the decision to extend the next sitting be rescinded, pursuant to the order made Wednesday, February 28.

The Speaker: Pursuant to the order made on Wednesday, February 28, the minister's request to rescind the decision to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

Have a good Friday, everybody, and happy birthday to me.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nobody knows how important a clean ocean is, and how important it is to protect it, better than the Nuu-chah-nulth people in the coastal communities where I live.

I have been so privileged to be able to represent eight of the Nuu-chah-nulth nations in my riding. When speaking on the floor of the House of Commons, I have mentioned Nuu-chah-nulth 102 times. To give some context, the member of Parliament who represented my riding before me for 15 years never once, on the floor of the House of Commons, said “Nuu-chah-nulth”, not one time.

In fact, I have said “Ahousaht” 35 times, and I have talked about the nation of Ahousaht and delivered its message here. The member before me only brought up Ahousaht's issues twice on the floor of the House of Commons. I really am humbled, and I hold the message I carry from Ahousaht and from the Nuu-chah-nulth people very carefully and very delicately.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I tabled a petition about the removal of open-net salmon farms. There were signatories from Ahousaht who had signed that petition. As members well know, when we table a petition in the House, it is not the viewpoint of the member; it is signed by constituents.

The Ahousaht nation was very concerned because it could have been perceived that it supported the direction of the petition, and only the *Ha'wiih*, the hereditary chiefs, are the ones who represent the Nuu-chah-nulth people. I want to make it clear and I want to correct things, because of the perception that happened with Ahousaht.

The Ahousaht people want to make it clear that it is the hereditary chiefs who are the decision-makers on behalf of the Ahousaht and their nation. Also, they are not requesting a compensation package. Their intent has always been to keep the salmon farms there past 2025, providing they continue to address the sea lice and pathogens. With the continued invasion technology coming eventually, they feel sea lice will be eliminated altogether.

If the Government of Canada wants to work with Ahousaht, or if it wants to change its policies, it actually needs to meet with Ahousaht, nation to nation. Ahousaht is calling for a meeting with the Prime Minister. I want to apologize for any confusion I created; mistakes do happen. I want to pass on that apology to the Ahousaht people.

Every minute, two garbage trucks' worth of plastic are dumped into the world's oceans. We have the longest coastline in the world. We just hosted the INC-4 conference and negotiations on plastic pollution. We know industrial waste is choking our coastline, making its way into our food and our vital ecosystems, impacting human health.

The Liberals went ahead and cancelled the ghost gear fund, a \$58-million project, a world-leading project, that we supported in this House. In fact, Mr. Speaker, you voted for my motion, Motion No. 151, in 2018, to tackle plastic pollution, and that was clearly highlighted and identified.

I am concerned that the government is now walking away from it, despite the fact that there is critical infrastructure in place. This infrastructure is in jeopardy. It is going to impact organizations like the Coastal Restoration Society and the Ocean Legacy Foundation. They have removed 2,214 tonnes of plastic. They have helped leverage the Clean Coast, Clean Waters program out of the Province of British Columbia.

Adjournment Proceedings

We cannot get an answer from the government on whether it is going to reinstate the program. We know that if we do not remove polystyrene, it spreads throughout the ecosystem and impacts human health, the mammals, the fish, our food security, the marine food webs that we rely on, and our economy as coastal people.

I am hoping we are going to get an answer today from the parliamentary secretary, since I dragged him here at 12:30 a.m. to talk about this critical issue.

● (2430)

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, good morning and happy birthday.

I have gotten to see, first-hand, the member's work on behalf of his constituents. They are very lucky to have him, in my opinion.

Canada is a proud maritime nation that relies on its oceans as a source of food, jobs, energy, raw materials, maritime trade, tourism and recreation. Fisheries in Canada play a critical role in indigenous and non-indigenous communities and coastal communities. They are an important part of our economy.

We are focused on sustainability and conservation. We are proud of our robust and sustainable, managed and well-regulated commercial fisheries. Ghost gear impacts are long-lasting. Ghost gear is a significant source of marine plastic pollution, which can have a devastating impact on marine mammals and aquatic ecosystems. It has the potential to break down into other forms of pollution, as just mentioned, such as microplastics, and other types of serious navigational hazards.

Our changing climate and extreme weather events are a major contributor to gear loss. This was evident in my neck of the woods during hurricane Fiona. Coastal communities were majorly impacted by ghost gear as a result of the storm.

The Government of Canada recognizes the threat that ghost gear poses in Canada and around the world, and has taken action. In 2018, Canada became a member of and leader in the Global Ghost Gear Initiative.

In 2019, Fisheries and Oceans Canada established the national ghost gear program. The program is focused on working with partners and stakeholders in Canada and around the world to prevent, retrieve and responsibly dispose of ghost gear. Since 2019, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has worked with partners and stakeholders to implement a legal requirement in all commercial fisheries to report lost fishing gear, and created an electronic fishing gear reporting system to help harvesters easily report lost and retrieved gear.

In 2020, the department launched the ghost gear fund to address four key ghost gear challenges: retrieval of ghost gear from our oceans, responsible disposal, acquisition and piloting of new technology to address ghost gear, and international leadership. The fund focused on engaging and working with indigenous partners and the fishing industry on solutions to this decades-old issue of ghost gear and lost gear. Through the fund, Canada distributed \$58.3 million in support of 144 projects domestically and internationally. The work of our partners and harvesters is impressive, with over 2,233

tonnes of ghost gear removed from Canada's waters and more than 858 kilometres of rope retrieved to date.

Through the work undertaken by our dedicated partners, we have reduced the threat of entrapment, ghost gear fishing and the threat of entanglement to marine mammals, including endangered North Atlantic right whales.

The ghost gear fund has been critical in providing data needed to inform management measures to prevent gear loss in the first place. This is a key part of our ghost gear strategy for the future.

We need to address any potential ghost gear threats to the marine environment, as well as establishing regulatory tools and policies designed to effectively prevent or mitigate the loss of gear in Canada. These essential pieces will feed into the ghost gear action plan, which will consider the role of climate change on fishing gear loss and consider methods to strengthen a cyclical approach to plastics used in fishing gear, address regulatory impediments to facilitate lost gear retrieval and develop new tools to reduce the amount of gear lost in the Canadian fisheries.

Through the ghost gear program, Canada is committed to addressing ghost gear into the future, demonstrating the leadership of Canadian fisheries and protecting our marine ecosystems and fisheries for generations to come.

● (2435)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I am sad that I did not get an answer. I do not want to be dragging my colleague, my friend, in here at 12:35 a.m. to try to get an answer and still not get an answer.

I will probably have to do this again, I hate to tell him and inform the House. We know polystyrene and plastic is literally choking our ocean. There was a movie just put out by Rick Smith called *Plastic People*. I recommend everybody watch it. It is affecting human health.

There is a solution. We could create an ecosystem service fee, a small fee on trans cargo shipment units and on the industrial use of plastics in the aquaculture industry, and use that like the government does with marine response. We have West Coast oil response in my community. That could be replicated when it comes to plastic pollution, something that my good colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith, is working on. I am working with her on that as well.

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Maybe the member could speak about a solution that does not end this program and kill all that important infrastructure, and then come back to the House.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member. It is never a chore to address questions that come from that member.

I want to say a couple of things. More work needs to be done. We realize that. Also, we are now using the information, and I think this is important, gathered under the fund to inform our actions for the future, including the development of regulatory tools, policies, and a ghost gear action plan. These will be developed with partners and stakeholders to address the near and long-term solutions to address gear loss.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country. To anyone in my community who might be watching at this late hour, now early the next day, I say hello.

I rise today to speak to the worsening addiction crisis in my province of British Columbia. Specifically, I will speak to the tragic failure of the NDP-Liberal government's drug decriminalization experiment.

The addiction crisis is something I raised in my very first speech in the House of Commons. It is an issue of importance to every resident of Kelowna—Lake Country and British Columbia.

The NDP-Liberal approach to addiction promised to reduce overdose deaths. However, according to the B.C.'s coroner's office, since 2015, the overdose rate has skyrocketed. In 2015, 20 residents of Kelowna and 529 British Columbians tragically perished from drug overdoses. In 2023, the first year of the NDP-Liberal B.C. decriminalization experiment, the coroner's office reported 2,511 deaths, the highest rate of overdose deaths in British Columbia's history. Roughly one person is fatally overdosing every four hours. In Kelowna, overdose deaths have been recorded in the triple digits for the very first time. These are not just statistics. These are our family members and our neighbours.

What the government is doing is not working. The Liberal and NDP members ignore solutions to get addiction treatment and recovery to people suffering from addiction. They did this when they voted down my private member's bill, the end the revolving door act. Dozens of leading addiction physicians have come out imploring the federal government to cancel or amend Canada's "safe supply" policies, citing that the federal government is misrepresenting the programs to the public. All this, yet the Liberal minister responsible for government-funded supply doubles down on their reckless drug policies.

I have spoken in the House on this tragic issue many times and asked how the NDP-Liberal government could continue with its decriminalization experiment, even when B.C.'s top doctor said that so-called safe supply is landing into street-level trafficking and ending up in the hands of children.

That was not the first time I raised this government's failed policies concerning child safety. Last spring, on behalf of parents in my community and from across B.C., I raised concerns about bringing

their children to parks and playgrounds because the government was allowing open drug use. Liberal and NDP members chose to applaud themselves at the time rather than listen to the voices of the parents scared for the safety of their children.

Crime has become rampant in our neighbourhoods, hurting families and small businesses. Now, we have the serious problem of government-supplied, taxpayer-funded hard drugs. They are getting into the hands of organised crime to be trafficked in the black market across Canada, fuelling the toxic drug crisis.

The RCMP in Campbell River, B.C., and in Prince George, B.C., seized thousands of prescription drug pills, many of which were reported as being diverted from the B.C. government-funded supply program. Powdered fentanyl was seized that had been shaped into dinosaur gummies. B.C. nurses have strongly spoken out against the results in hospitals of the illicit drug policy experiment, which was approved by the Liberal government.

The B.C. NDP stepped back some of its drug policies due to an impending election. The Liberals will not commit to never approving again a similar request in another jurisdiction in this country.

Things are getting worse. More people are getting addicted. Families are losing more loved ones, and drug overdose is now the number one cause of death for British Columbia youth. Will this government stop its radical drug policies?

• (2440)

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me wish you a happy birthday. I am sure you will get some quality time with your family.

We remain deeply concerned about the overdose crisis and its impact on individuals, friends, families and communities across the country. In fact, Canadians are concerned about the crisis. Every loss of life is tragic. It is not a partisan issue; it is a health care issue. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the crisis. A complex health and social issue requires a multi-faceted response. This is why we continue to support provinces and territories to build up their health services so they are available when people need them.

Adjournment Proceedings

Building on significant investments made in the full continuum of services to address the crisis since 2017, as well as significant increases in health funding for provinces and territories, budget 2024 announced \$150 million over three years to support municipalities and indigenous communities to rapidly access funds to mobilize efforts and address their urgent needs to save lives now.

The overdose crisis is bigger than any one government or organization. It will take the collective efforts of everyone, including provinces, territories, indigenous leaders, professional and regulatory bodies and health care providers, to stop the needless harm and deaths of Canadians and address the many other costs of substance abuse.

Substance use and addiction are health issues and not criminal ones, as I said earlier. People need care, not jail. Our government has been committed to various approaches that divert people who use drugs from the criminal justice system to appropriate health and social services whenever possible. For example, in August 2020, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada issued guidelines directing that alternatives to prosecution should be considered for personal possession offences, except when there are serious aggravating circumstances.

In addition, as of November 2022, police and prosecutors are legally required to consider alternatives to laying charges or prosecuting individuals for drug possession, such as diversion to treatment, a warning or taking no further action. This means that individuals can avoid being criminalized and can get the help they need to address underlying issues, recognizing that substance use is primarily a health and social issue.

We have also invested in prevention. Youth are more vulnerable to substance-related harm and are more likely than adults to engage in risk-taking behaviours, such as substance use, for a variety of reasons, including the stage in brain development and need for social inclusion. Further, earlier and more frequent exposure to substance use is leading to greater risk of harm.

Through budget 2023, we committed \$20.2 million for a new youth substance-use prevention program to support communities across Canada to build capacity to implement and adapt the Icelandic Prevention Model to Canada. This internationally recognized model focuses on building strong and healthy communities, instead of targeting individual behaviour. It has been shown to be effective in decreasing long-term substance use among youth.

In conclusion, we are committed to continuing to work to find solutions to this ever-evolving crisis. This will require having youth

try innovative actions, monitoring them closely and following the data in order to find what works. We cannot arrest our way out of the crisis. Our response needs to be compassionate and grounded in prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery and, of course, enforcement.

● (2445)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, what the government is doing is not balanced. The member speaks to what he considers successes of the Liberals' illicit-drug policies, but I would ask the member opposite why, if their policies are so fantastic and successful, they have been enacted only in British Columbia.

Residents from my community are at ground zero of the toxic drug crisis's horribly sad results. Only B.C. families and small businesses have been forced to suffer the consequences of the poorly thought-out and increasingly tragic policy. The facts are clear. Overdoses are up, overdose deaths are up and addictions are up. Unsafe drug paraphernalia litter our parks, playgrounds and streets. Government-supplied, taxpayer-funded hard drugs are being diverted to criminals and to children.

A common-sense Conservative government would end the failed NDP-Liberal drug experiment for good and make sure it is not allowed anywhere else in Canada. Conservatives will stop the crime and bring hope through addiction treatment and recovery to bring our loved ones home.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, all of us want to save lives, but what will not save lives is a bunch of slogans, and that is the only thing we keep hearing from Conservatives. We are very much open to new ideas that are going to help people suffering from mental health, substance abuse and addiction challenges. We are not the only ones around the globe who are facing the crisis. All of us are working hard to find solutions. Just yesterday I had a conversation with former senator Vern White on precisely this issue, to look at ways we can ensure that those Canadians among us who are suffering from substance abuse can get the care they need. That will require trying different things to find the perfect way forward.

I can assure members that what is not going to help is a bunch of slogans. We need to address the issue as a health care issue and show the care and the compassion that Canadians deserve so that we can save Canadian lives.

The Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:47 a.m.)

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