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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 3, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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• (1100)

[*Translation*]

## VACANCY

CLOVERDALE—LANGLEY CITY

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely John Aldag, member for the electoral district of Cloverdale—Langley City, by resignation effective May 31.

[*English*]

Pursuant to paragraph 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, the Speaker has addressed a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

### PANDEMIC PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS ACT

The House resumed from March 19 consideration of Bill C-293, An Act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-293.

As members know, this bill is divided into three main parts.

First, the bill “enacts the *Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness Act* to require the Minister of Health to establish an advisory committee to review the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada in order to reduce the risks associated with future pandemics and inform a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan.”

The bill “also requires the Minister of Health to establish, in consultation with other ministers, a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan, which is to include information provided by those ministers.”

Finally, “it amends the *Department of Health Act* to provide that the Minister of Health must appoint a national pandemic prevention and preparedness coordinator from among the officials of the Public Health Agency of Canada to coordinate the activities under the *Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness Act*.”

Basically, the first part concerns the creation of a committee to review the response to COVID-19. While the intention is laudable, we in the Bloc Québécois feel that an independent public inquiry would be a better way to judge the government's actions. The second part concerns the development of a pandemic prevention plan, and the third concerns the appointment of a federal coordinator.

The Bloc's criticism of these two elements is the same. We want to ensure that Ottawa does not overstep its jurisdiction. We believe that the federal plan should focus on its prerogatives. As a reminder, Ottawa not only failed in its responsibilities regarding these questions, but scuttled two important preparedness measures: the national emergency stockpile and pandemic detection.

Also, Canada has a guide entitled “Canadian Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: Planning Guidance for the Health Sector”, which was published in 2004 and updated as the various pandemics arose. This plan had been approved by the federal, provincial and territorial deputy ministers. Furthermore, the government inherited a number of plans, reports and recommendations from its departments and the Public Health Agency during previous pandemics, such as the response from the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada to the H1N1 pandemic of 2009.

In this context, we have to wonder what the point is of the plan proposed by this bill. We believe that conducting the public inquiry should be the priority. I would remind the House that the Bloc Québécois voted against Bill C-293 at second reading. It will also vote no at third reading.

An amendment negotiated among the parties sought to amend the bill to compel the holding of a public inquiry into the pandemic. The Liberal members voted against because they do not want to be held accountable on this subject, and the Conservatives, who had called for a public inquiry, abstained, which was so hypocritical of them. As a result of all that, we will not be having a public inquiry, much to the dismay of the Bloc Québécois.

Why does the Bloc Québécois want a public inquiry? First, the COVID-19 pandemic caused 6.5 million deaths around the world, including 45,000 in Canada. There were over 15,000 deaths in Quebec, of which 40% occurred in long-term care facilities.

*Private Members' Business*

The families forced to grieve in appalling circumstances must not be forgotten. In my riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, fear of this pandemic led to roads being closed and managed for emergencies. Indigenous communities took proactive steps by self-isolating, which caused other problems after the pandemic.

The Bloc Québécois believes that such an inquiry is overdue. Many pandemic-related failings have been noted, including in terms of quarantine, border management, national emergency stockpiles and the global public health information network. This more than justifies an inquiry.

Furthermore, certain measures curtailing freedoms, such as mandatory vaccine passports for all federally regulated transportation systems, vaccine mandates for federal employees and denial of access to EI deserve sober, non-partisan scrutiny. It is important to re-establish social dialogue now that the health emergency is behind us.

Finally, from the beginning of the pandemic, the government took action to improve the situation, for example signing agreements with pharmaceutical companies to improve Canada's vaccine production capacity. Therefore, it seems appropriate to do an overview to assess how effective those actions were. These are all good reasons to call for a public inquiry.

• (1105)

Also, certain elements of the bill are problematic for the Bloc Québécois and lead us to vote against it. For example, regarding the scope of the comprehensive review of the COVID-19 response, the bill proposes that Ottawa collaborate with provincial and municipal governments to assess the public health and pandemic response capabilities of those governments.

We in the Bloc Québécois believe that the inquiry should focus on the responsibilities and actions that come under federal jurisdiction. We also think that it is up to Quebec and the provinces to conduct their own assessment. Ottawa interferes enough in areas of provincial jurisdiction as it is. We will not give them an additional opportunity to meddle.

The Liberals are responsible for Canada's lack of preparedness for COVID-19. While the current government likes to fashion itself the champion of the fight against COVID-19, let us not forget that the lack of preparation was entirely their fault. They had axed the main pandemic protection measures in the years leading up to the COVID-19 crisis.

The Global Public Health Intelligence Network, or GPHIN, is an online early warning system that monitors global news sources in nine languages for potential public health risks happening anywhere in the world. It was under the Liberals that GPHIN's mandate was amended in 2018. The Liberals wanted to exert control by imposing top-down approval to authorize alerts and thus control messaging. The alerts ended in May 2019, nearly 400 days before the start of COVID-19. Bravo.

What is more, the Liberals neglected the national emergency strategic stockpile once they came to power in 2015. Their lax approach made it necessary to destroy thousands of personal protective equipment such as N95 masks. Worse still, not only did Ottawa

destroy the emergency stockpile, but it failed to replace it. Consequently, the federal government was caught completely off guard when the pandemic was declared.

In addition, border management during the pandemic was an abject failure on the part of the current government. Its inaction was such that the City of Montreal had to dispatch its own personnel to Montreal Airport to enforce quarantines while the Liberal government, rather than protecting people, wondered whether the concept of borders was acceptable in a post-national state.

Then there is ArriveCAN and its many issues, not to mention the exorbitant cost. People were sent to quarantine in error, when they did not need to isolate. People who did not have smart phones or data did not have the same access, and there were all kinds of bugs that prevented access to the app. In short, ArriveCAN alone is worth looking into.

The management of temporary foreign workers during the pandemic was another disaster. Inspections were rushed and the immigration and refugee protection regulations were breached several times. Even after numerous warnings from the Auditor General, the situation did not improve and the department did not honour its commitments. In fact, the longer the pandemic went on, the worse the situation got. After being slow to shoulder its responsibilities, the government continued to refuse to present a plan to lift the health measures, which exacerbated the already severe difficulties being faced by the tourism sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic also revealed Canada's dependence on vaccine production. From the beginning to the end of the pandemic, the government did some things right, but it made a lot of mistakes. We need to examine what failed, and a public inquiry is the only reliable tool we have. Unfortunately, this bill misses a good opportunity by omitting that option. We could get hit by another pandemic tomorrow morning. A public inquiry would help prepare us for this eventuality and prevent a lot of deaths. It could also spare us the isolation forced on a large swath of the population. Entire communities were isolated, as we were in Nunavik. Nunavik's 14 communities were cut off from the world for weeks, and must never be forced to endure something like that again.

• (1110)

[English]

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we should be contemplating and debating this as it is of the utmost importance. Bill C-293, an act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness, has two components to it, but we need to harken back to the impacts of the COVID pandemic.

*Private Members' Business*

Members will recall that, on March 13, 2020, the House, by unanimous consent, took the dramatic and unparalleled step of suspending its work, as the pandemic raged across our planet. I recall stepping up with the other House leaders and taking that unprecedented step with respect to parliamentary innovations and the changes that took place. For a number of months, we had to operate by unanimous consent. It was an exceptional time in our democracy, which ultimately led to the creation of a virtual hybrid Parliament. Members now, regardless of what emergencies they are experiencing in their ridings or families, can still fully participate across the length and breadth of the world's largest democracy, of our nation.

The impacts were felt, of course, right across the country. Indigenous communities suffered horribly through the course of the pandemic. We saw, particularly in long-term care homes, an appalling loss of life. We saw the images of some of those long-term care homes where the staff had become sick or were simply not present, where people passed away, or were not cared for or were unable to get basic medication or food. It was a terrible tragedy beyond the loss of life. We need to ensure that everything is put into place so that the next time a pandemic hits we are prepared right across the length and breadth of our country.

There are two components to this bill. One is the pandemic prevention and preparedness plan, which obliges the Minister of Health to establish a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan. We know from the impacts on long-term care homes, schools and indigenous communities that we must have this in place. However, there is nothing that prevents the Minister of Health from doing that already. Certainly, we support that idea.

However, to properly prepare for the next pandemic, and with the climate change, sadly, it is likely it will occur again, we need to ensure that we have done a very full and comprehensive review of the response that took place in the last pandemic. That takes a public inquiry. The NDP has been very clear about this. The idea that the minister would put together an advisory committee, which is what is foreseen in the bill, is simply not adequate to the size and scope of what needs to happen.

My colleague, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, who was the previous health critic, has been steadfast in raising in the House the importance of having a public inquiry, as have other parties. I know our colleagues in the Bloc Québécois have also called for a public inquiry into the COVID response. That is what is required. The resources need to be put in place. That is why my colleague, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, tabled the amendment that would take out the idea that we would have some sort of advisory committee doing that COVID response. That is not adequate, it is not appropriate and it is not at all what we favour.

We have the amendment now before the House of Commons. We will be voting on that before we vote on the bill itself. Unless the provision that an advisory committee will be offering suggestions on the COVID response, rather than having a full public inquiry, which is what the member for Burnaby South, the member for Vancouver Kingsway and all members of the NDP caucus have been calling for, is stripped out, we will not be supporting this bill. We believe profoundly that a public inquiry is warranted and needed.

• (1115)

We do not object to the Minister of Health preparing a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan. That absolutely needs to be put into place. However, it needs to come as we are fully investigating all aspects of what transpired during the pandemic.

We need to fully engage with the long-term care sector to know what led to such a terrible loss of life and, quite frankly, a meltdown in many of our long-term care facilities. Imagine seniors, who have given their lives to our country and to their community, not having any care aids around to help them with basic needs, of food and toiletry needs, and then so many of those who passed away in those long-term care homes not even having their bodies cared for after death.

This is an appalling result of a lack of preparation. It is an acknowledgement that the long-term care sector needs to be fully changed. The NDP has been calling for a long-term care act that obliges standards in every part of our country so that seniors are treated with the dignity and respect they should have. We are going to continue to push for that.

We believe in long-term care funding that is adequate across the country. We believe in taking profit out of the long-term care sector. Many of these private institutions, where the conditions were absolutely deplorable, were also multinational corporations that had huge profits in the same year. There is something profoundly wrong with that.

Since the days of Tommy Douglas, the NDP has called for a health care system that is a public health care system and is adequately funded. That is why we pushed for dental care and pharmacare. Later today, we will be considering the pharmacare bill in its final reading before the House of Commons. It is something we celebrate, but long-term care has to be front and centre as well. The idea that a corporation would profit at the same time as we see misery in the long-term care sector needs to be fully investigated in a public inquiry.

Indigenous communities received none of the supports that other parts of the country received. That needs to be fully investigated. Only a public inquiry would get to the bottom of why indigenous communities were so cruelly neglected during the height of the pandemic, and why communities that called out for supports did not receive those supports. Only a public inquiry could fully investigate that.

*Private Members' Business*

We believe profoundly that we need to prepare, sadly, for the next pandemic. The climate crisis sends a very clear message that in the coming years we will be tested again. We need to ensure that everything is in place. The NDP has been using its weight in this minority parliament to push for that so the conditions are in place. Despite the fact that two recognized parties in this place have been pushing to put in place that public inquiry, sadly we have not yet forced the government to do that. That absolutely has to happen.

• (1120)

[Translation]

The amendment we are proposing will eliminate this notion of an advisory committee reviewing all the repercussions of the pandemic. We think it is extremely important that a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan be developed. There is nothing stopping the Minister of Health from developing one now.

Most importantly, however, we need a public inquiry into all the issues related to the pandemic, including the impact on indigenous communities and long-term care facilities. All of these aspects need to be fully examined. The only way to do that is through a public inquiry. That is why we are proposing an amendment that will eliminate this negative aspect of the bill. If our amendment is adopted, we will vote in favour of the bill. If the amendment is not adopted, we will be voting against the bill.

[English]

**Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today with respect to a private member's bill tabled by the member for Beaches—East York, who, in addition to being a very good member of Parliament, is an excellent podcast producer as well. On a serious note, the member has put forward a number of bills in the time we have served together. They have been incredibly thoughtful, ranging from animal welfare when we were first elected back in 2015, which I thought was an excellent bill at the time though many others disagreed, to now a pandemic response bill.

Before my speech, I looked up information on the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is continuing. I know many of us like to think that COVID is over and we have gone back to life as normal. For many of us, we have. However, even last week, 12 Canadians died from COVID-19. In total, 59,382 Canadians died from it. That is more than the number who died in the Second World War. I know that there will be many commemorations of D-Day this week, and rightfully so, and we are still commemorating and remembering it 80 years later.

It is important that the member for Beaches—East York has brought this bill forward, because we do not want to forget what has happened in the last few years, including the lessons that were learned, how provinces, territories, municipalities and society at large were caught flat-footed. We need to do better as a society.

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby raised an excellent point in his speech about the environmental impact of the pandemic response. I believe the statistic is that 75% of diseases are animal-borne. As we are deforesting, as we are as a society globally moving closer and closer into wilderness, we are going to see that inter-

action. As the climate is changing, we are going to see the behaviour of animals, including mosquitoes and disease-carrying animals, change. Diseases that Canada may not expect because of our cold-weather climate may be something that we continue to experience, or will experience, in the future. We need to have a prepared pandemic response.

It would be nice to think that this is a once-in-a-hundred-years type of scenario. The Spanish flu post-World War I really tested Canada back in the 20th century. COVID-19, 100 years later, did the same thing. It would be naive to say that it is not something we have to worry about for another 100 years.

That is why I like what the member outlined with respect to establishing an expert review of Canada's COVID-19 response. We need to look back at what happened. I know that everyone, including provinces, municipalities, corporations and the federal government, did the best they could at the time under the circumstances. The word that was overused was “unprecedented”, but it truly was. We can take the lessons that we have learned about what can happen and apply them to what may happen in the future to ensure we have the proper supplies and vaccinations on hand.

I remember a time when there was unanimity among the parties in the House about the benefits of vaccination. Unfortunately, that unanimity seemingly disappeared. However, I think most of the parties in the House still support that as a core public health message, but we need to ensure that continues, as political opportunists across the country push aside public health and public health expertise when there is a threat to Canadians.

• (1125)

Public health and public health officials have spent their careers trying to protect. Maybe we do not like to hear that we should eat better, should run more, should get all of our shots and should do all the things we know we should do, like drink less. We may say that we will just leave it and that we will be fine, but embedded in that is a desire by public health officials to see us live longer.

COVID-19 has seen and shown, for the first time, declining life expectancies. The life expectancy in Canada is now slightly lower than it was before the pandemic, and this is something we need to address. All governments and all political parties should want to see this as a goal. I think there is an understanding, and I think there is an agreement that we should have as much as we can in place. Bill C-293 would require us to develop and update a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan and to table that plan at regular intervals. That is fundamental.

*Private Members' Business*

We have seen the impact of a pandemic. I would like to think that maybe one will not happen ever again, and I hope for my kids that we do not see one in our lifetimes, but the possibility and the probability exist. We should have that plan to ensure that we have proper equipment in storage and that we have plans in place for that “What if there is a next pandemic?”, because it is not unreasonable to see. Before 2020, we thought it was just something that we saw in movies to concern us about this type of threat to the country, but a pandemic is a direct threat to Canadians.

As I said, nearly 60,000 Canadians have died because of COVID-19, and I am happy to compare our response to other countries' responses, but even within Canada, many provinces did a much better job than other provinces. I recall the army having to go into privately run nursing homes in Ontario, an army that is not trained for that type of task, because, clearly, no one was ready for this type of pandemic; the result was that many seniors died.

This is an important bill to come forward. The third major point that Bill C-293 would require is to appoint a national pandemic prevention and preparedness coordinator to oversee and to implement the plan. We get a lot of plans tabled in the House, and I know that is a surprise to many people here, but it is excellent that there would then be someone in charge to implement it, someone who is keeping an eye on things and ensuring, through a public health lens, that we are ready for the next one, God forbid.

Again, we need to be prepared. We need to be ready. I want to commend the hon. member for his work on this and for his work on many other files, but it is important that Canada stays ready. We can compare our response to other countries' responses in a very favourable way in deaths that were prevented, but that number is still almost 60,000, and we need to ensure that should a pandemic hit again, we protect as many Canadians as possible.

• (1130)

**Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues in the House for this vigorous discussion around Bill C-293.

It is an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Tobique—Mactaquac and the broader concerned citizens across the country today in regards to Bill C-293 and the debate on it.

Although some of the attempts of the bill may be laudable in regards to creating a framework for pandemic prevention and preparedness, there is a big, unfortunate aspect to the bill that would have huge ramifications and potentially even bigger implications with respect to the One Health approach that is being lauded in the bill.

First, I think it is broadly overreaching and going across various jurisdictional lines without giving adequate consideration for the legitimate concerns being raised by provinces, by stakeholders, by those in the agricultural sector and by privacy rights advocates. They all have concerns pertaining to the bill, Bill C-293, and where it could potentially lead. There is a lot of angst, which all of us have experienced at home, in our ridings and among the people we represent across the country. When we talk about COVID, it is almost like there is an element of PTSD that comes with that. People still

can become very emotional when they are discussing COVID and the various responses to it.

It was stated by the previous speaker in the House that it was truly an unprecedented time, and it was. Many of us had never experienced anything like that in our lifetimes, and there were tremendous response efforts made across the country and internationally to address the concerns, to tackle the pandemic that was approaching and, then, as it set in. Various jurisdictions took different measures in ways they felt were best for their people. Coming out of that, I think all of us would have to admit that there were things done right and that there were things done wrong. There were outcomes we did not foresee. There were things done that created some really adverse effects amongst Canadians and amongst families even.

I remember being particularly moved throughout that time as I saw people from various sides of the equation approach me, call my office and reach out with heartfelt letters of expressions on various sides of the issue. They would raise concerns from, I believe, the best of intentions, but the one overarching concern that kept coming through was that they felt that their voices were being ignored and that they were being steamrolled in a process. If they had questions or if there were things they were uncertain about, sometimes they felt as though they were marginalized or labelled because they viewed things differently.

As has been called for by some parties in the House, including ours, we want a full review of the response. We want to look at what we got right and what we got wrong, and we, as Canadians, can be better prepared for a future pandemic, which, hopefully, we do not have to face again in our lifetimes. How can we best position Canada to go forward in response to that? We have called for those reviews, but those reviews have not been undertaken, as of yet. We have not seen an in-depth analysis done that we could examine whether Canada could have done better, whether we could have done things differently, and how we could make sure that we could be ready to tackle this comprehensively, if and when it happens again.

Obviously, there are huge concerns that would arise out of the bill, Bill C-293, being implemented, which would come from our provincial stakeholders, because this crosses into areas of provincial jurisdiction. As we know, different provinces handled the pandemic differently, based on their areas of jurisdiction. We must not undermine areas of provincial authority in response to this. We must work collaboratively on that.

*Private Members' Business*

I think that there is one big lesson that came out of our response here in Canada to what we just went through with COVID-19, which is that there has to be greater connectivity between the various levels of government as it relates to responding to it. We must listen to the concerns coming up from the regions so that it would be less us against them, less one against another, less one approach versus another, less one ideology versus another, and it would become more about how we could tackle this collaboratively and could welcome all voices to be heard so that there would be a transparent approach to the issue. If people felt that they had legitimate concerns, then they would not be marginalized, left out or trampled over, but they would be able to raise those questions and could have serious debate and discussion.

• (1135)

Obviously, we are hearing concerns from people as it relates to this, but this is even getting into a place where it crosses over international issues of jurisdiction. We must be very vigilant about protecting our sovereignty when it comes to our approach on this because we have some of the best of the best scientists in the world right here in Canada. Let us make sure that those voices are heard, that we come up with a Canadian response and that we prepare ourselves so that we have the necessary food security and the necessary supplies in place to protect our citizens when that time comes.

I would be curious to know what steps the current government is taking to make sure that we are ready, that we have the supplies needed and that we can handle it be less reliant on international circumstances or on other countries, which are obviously going to prioritize their own populations. Let us make sure that we, as a Canadian government, are doing everything we can do to prioritize Canada's approach and to have in place all that we need to deal with the circumstance, if and when it arises.

There are major concerns coming out of this bill, Bill C-293, as it has been proposed. It has not only concerns of jurisdictional overreach, but also concerns as it relates to the effects it may have on agriculture and on production of agricultural food. One thing we heard, repeatedly, was about our need to strengthen our own food security within Canada. Obviously, there is also a need to strengthen our energy security within Canada. That will be for another debate. We need to make sure that we have adequate supply chains and readiness available, as they relate to food, energy and health supplies, if and when another pandemic arises.

Let us make sure that we have a made-in-Canada approach to this. That does not mean that we should not work in collaboration with other nations whenever possible and should not do what we can to help others where needed, as well as not be the recipient of help when we need it, but let us make sure we never surrender our sovereignty over the rights to our approach to any kind of a health crisis in this country and make sure that we are best prepared now by learning the difficult lessons to be learned coming out of COVID. I remember getting the phone calls. I remember hearing the stories, as all members do, I am sure.

There are some very important lessons we needed to learn, with one being this: We, as elected officials, must prioritize the concerns of Canadians and must make sure that, even if we personally may agree or disagree, every Canadian feels that their voices are re-

spected and are heard by their elected officials. We must take a responsive approach, not an arrogant approach, not a top-down heavy approach, but a bottom-up, grassroots approach where we let Canadians know that we have heard their concerns and that we get why they were upset. We understand that we are learning more things now about it, as well as about our response, that what was once considered settled has not been settled and that what was once considered to be an absolute certainty, as we found out, was not quite what we thought. In fact, sometimes it was the exact opposite.

With what we have learned, we are willing to adjust our approach so that if at any time a crisis hits this nation, rather than dividing our people, we would strive with everything in us to unite our people. That starts by respecting individuals with different approaches, with different philosophies and with different ways of looking at things. Maybe they see things differently, and perhaps if we listen, we could adjust, learn and develop a more comprehensive, holistic, made-in-Canada approach to solutions.

I appreciate being given the time and the opportunity to address the House on this issue.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this bill that was introduced by a Liberal member.

It must be said that there has been a lot of water under the bridge since the bill was introduced in 2022, when it was clear that we needed to correct past mistakes and take the time to look at what had been done, what was done well and what was done poorly.

The Bloc Québécois's position was clear from the start. We called for a public, independent inquiry into the COVID-19 pandemic in order to learn from our mistakes. Our position has not changed. That is why we have been opposed to this bill right from the start. I will reiterate why.

First, the bill seeks to create the pandemic prevention and preparedness act, which is essentially made up of three parts.

First, the bill establishes an advisory committee to review the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is obviously very commendable. However, here again, we believe that an independent public inquiry would be a much better way of looking into this. What is more, an amendment was introduced that was negotiated among the parties. However, in the end, the government members and the members of the Conservative Party voted against the motion. That shows a lack of transparency on the part of the government and a certain amount of hypocrisy on the part of the Conservative Party, since the Conservatives had also been calling for an independent public inquiry.

The second part of this bill has to do with establishing a prevention plan. The third has to do with the appointment of a federal coordinator.



*Private Members' Business*

We have similar concerns regarding both of those parts. We are worried that the federal government will overstep its jurisdictions. As is the case with most private members' bills that are introduced here, we must ensure that the federal government focuses on its own prerogatives.

Obviously, the federal government had a very large role to play in the pandemic, but there were also roles that Quebec and the provinces had to play as well, because health comes under their jurisdiction.

There are also things that already exist, tools and guides available to the federal government, such as the document entitled "Canadian Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: Planning Guidance for the Health Sector". This guide was published in 2004 and is supposed to be updated as various pandemics arise. It was approved by the federal, provincial and territorial deputy ministers. This seems to be an important existing tool. There are reams of reports, plans and recommendations by the various federal departments that can equip the government to respond to this type of situation.

In the circumstances, however, I would reiterate that the best thing as far as we are concerned—and as far as much of the population was concerned when they called for this near the end of the pandemic when we were starting to get back on our feet—would be to hold an independent public inquiry.

Why? It is very simple. As certain members have recalled here this morning, it was pretty devastating. It is perhaps the first major event in modern times that we can recall. The pandemic left over 6.5 million dead around the world, including more than 45,000 in Canada. There were numerous failures on the part of the federal government, particularly in terms of quarantines, border management, the national emergency strategic stockpile and the Global Public Health Information Network. Certain other measures could also be called into question, such as vaccine passports for the entire federally regulated transportation system, vaccine mandates for federal employees and the denial of access to EI.

These questions are a bit more delicate. One can be for or against, but I think they should be examined in a non-partisan manner, hence the value of an independent inquiry.

Lastly, throughout the pandemic, agreements were signed with pharmaceutical companies to enhance Canada's vaccine production capacity. This also should be reviewed. We should know how this was done and which contracts were awarded to which companies so that we will be better prepared in the future.

• (1145)

According to the Constitution Act, 1867, matters of quarantine are under federal jurisdiction. The federal government is responsible for quarantine issues. Everything else health related is under provincial jurisdiction, except, for example, health care for Indigenous Canadians, military hospitals and the approval of medications. In the case of COVID-19, the federal government was responsible for the quarantine system, and it failed dismally. I will get back to this later.

I mentioned the Global Public Health Intelligence Network. Most of us are familiar with it now. That may not have been the

case prior to the pandemic. The network is an online early warning system that monitors media sources worldwide in nine languages in order to identify potential public health threats around the world. It identifies chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats to public health. In 2018, under the Liberals, the mandate of the global intelligence network was modified. In July 2020, thanks to an article in the *Globe and Mail*, we learned that the alerts had been stopped around 400 days before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was therefore this government that decided to stop the alerts that could have helped us prepare, but unfortunately did not.

The same applies to Canada's national emergency strategic stockpile, created in the 1950s during the Cold War. Its purpose is to store pharmaceutical products, supplies used by social services and during pandemics, medical equipment and supplies and so on. Since the Liberals came to power in 2015, they have neglected our emergency stockpile. Some personal protective equipment, such as N95 masks, were not only destroyed, but also not replaced. That had a considerable impact when the pandemic hit. They could have been more proactive. There is therefore a certain responsibility that lies with the federal government, a certain failure to take the necessary measures.

The same applies, as well, to border management and quarantine measures. As I said earlier, there was a point during the pandemic when the City of Montreal itself had to send staff members to the Montreal airport to ensure quarantine rules were being respected. During this time, the government was waiting and pondering the concept of borders, wondering whether that was acceptable in a postnational state, rather than protecting Canadians. The people and government of Quebec said that borders needed to be closed to non-essential travel, since that would have an impact on our constituents' health and safety. The federal government took its time.

The Auditor General produced a few reports with recommendations and harshly criticized the federal government for the way it handled quarantines. In her 2021 report, she said that the federal government was unable to tell whether 37% of people had complied with their quarantine orders or not. Fully 30% of test results were missing at the border. The federal government had no automated system to track whether people who had to quarantine in a hotel had done so or not. Priority follow-up was not provided for 59% of people who needed it, despite the referrals of such travellers to law enforcement. In addition, 14% of people who tested positive for COVID-19 were not contacted by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The government really messed up in that respect.

*Private Members' Business*

There were clearly official languages concerns. Virtually every time a notification was sent out, it was in English, not French. People found it difficult to access services in French. The same thing happened with ArriveCAN. We have talked about it ad nauseam. It is clearly worth studying the whole issue of the use and creation of ArriveCAN, much like the issue of temporary workers and vaccine production capacity. In short, all this needs to be reviewed in an independent public inquiry. That is what we have been calling for all along.

Of course, this is unlikely to be the last time we will be faced with a pandemic, unfortunately. I think it is fair to say that it is likely to happen again in the next few years. The world and its ecosystem are changing, and I think the federal government has a duty to protect the safety of Canadians and our health. That is where the need for an independent public inquiry comes in.

• (1150)

[English]

**The Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question is on Motion No. 1.

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

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that Motion No. 1 be carried on division.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion No. 1 agreed to)

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.)** moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

**The Speaker:** 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. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the motion be carried on division.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.)** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support to get the bill through report stage. I am confident we will be sending the bill to the Senate. It is very important that we do so and that the bill becomes law. We have lived through a pandemic that no one wants to live through again, and it is important we put measures in place here today, as parliamentarians, to ensure accountability not just in the current Parliament but also in future Parliaments.

What do I mean by accountability? I mean that all future governments would have to table a plan in the House to ensure that they are as prepared as possible for the next pandemic and that they take efforts to reduce risks to prevent the next pandemic. We can remember SARS. What happened after SARS? There were reports, studies and recommendations, and some of the recommendations were even adopted, but not all of them. Politicians forgot. Politicians were not studying the reports or calling for renewed action in the wake of the reports, and it fell away.

Were we as prepared as we should have been for the pandemic? Were provinces as prepared as they should have been? Was the federal government as prepared as it should have been? Absolutely not. No one wants to relive what we lived through, but let us remember what we went through, because if we do not remember, we are destined to live through something very similar.

If we remember, we will remember the army having to go into nursing homes. We will remember the fear of the unknown that we all experienced. We will remember the great scale of loss. The pandemic required a wartime effort across levels of government and across parties to do what we needed to do to save lives. The pandemic upended so many lives. There were not just lives lost; it also upended employment. It upended relationships. It made it so hard for so many.

Before I get into the second piece, I want to speak to what the bill would do. Some people have said we could have a plan already, that the bill would be overreaching and get into provincial jurisdiction. What would the plan do? It would do one thing, very simply. It would require the government to table, in Parliament, a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan to ensure that the government and the health minister take a whole-of-government approach and work with ministers across government to turn their minds to how they would take steps to reduce pandemic risk and prepare the current government and future governments for the next pandemic.

I was not going to get into the missteps along the way. I can criticize the way the wage subsidy rolled out. I can criticize different public health measures. I was furious, as the father of kids who are now seven and four years old, when Ontario closed its schools for the final time in a January during the pandemic. However, we should consider the alternative. I know not everyone loves the Prime Minister today, but the Prime Minister stood outside his home on a daily basis and acted like a prime minister. He delivered benefits, putting politics aside, and worked with opposition parties and other levels of government to support businesses and individuals in a time of crisis.

Let us consider the counterfactual, such as if the Leader of the Opposition were the prime minister during a crisis like the one we just had. When faced with questions about the special budgetary measures that were being put in place, everyone else was putting politics aside, but not the leader of the official opposition, the member for Carleton. He said we did not need big, fat government programs. He said we needed to lower taxes and eliminate regulatory red tape. It is as if we pull a string and the doll says the same thing again and again, even in a crisis.

Every other party at every other level of government was willing to work across party lines to save lives and support individuals and businesses through the crisis. Let us imagine if the Leader of the Opposition had been the prime minister at the time and had said, yes, people who own small businesses are having their lives upended and yes, they are losing employment because they cannot go into work because of the pandemic and crisis, but that we are going to lower taxes and cut red tape. Does anyone in the House think that is a serious answer? Absolutely not.

The Prime Minister was acting like a prime minister. Let us forget about supporting the special measures; we know the counterfactual, that a Conservative prime minister would not have supported special measures. What about public health measures? Conservatives at the time were saying two things. They were saying that vaccines were not going to rollout fast enough; they did. Conservatives then undermined public confidence in immunization. Of course, there is a credible debate to be had about certain public health measures, and we can have that credible debate.

• (1155)

We could have had a credible debate at the time, but there should not have been an instance where the local health officers of the regions of the member for Sarnia—Lambton, the member for Haldimand—Norfolk or the member for Niagara West, whether it was the head of Norfolk County's EMS or the public health officer in Sarnia—Lambton, had to issue public statements correcting the record to say that we should defend public health efforts and that people should ignore the comments from one's elected officials and not listen to them. Yes, we can have a credible debate, but we cannot afford to undermine public confidence in immunization.

What happens if we do? We see what is happening. In Ontario, there has just been the first death in years from measles. Why did it happen? It is because vaccination rates have plummeted. That is a direct consequence of the willingness to undermine public health efforts and undermine immunization. Again, debate is warranted and individuals can protest as they like. I, as some people in the House may know, criticized the invocation of the Emergencies Act. What I did not do, though, was bring donuts and coffee and celebrate lawlessness. That is not the conduct we should expect from a prime minister. That is not something we should expect from someone who should be acting as a statesman in a crisis. It is actually the opposite of what we should expect from our leaders.

Just imagine if the leader of the official opposition had been the prime minister. I do not say Erin O'Toole, as I think he would have managed through the crisis just fine. He is a serious person. The individual who occupies the current chair of leader of the official op-

### *Government Orders*

position is unserious and would have managed us through the crisis in the most unserious way.

I want to close with this, because I have heard some members ask about agriculture. One should know what is in the bill, which says that we have got to make efforts to address antimicrobial resistance. We should. Farmers are doing that. Agriculture is doing that. The bill says that we should regulate activities to address pandemic risk.

Conservatives trip over themselves to talk about biosecurity if it means ending whistleblowing on farms, but they do not want to talk about biosecurity when it means reducing pandemic risk, because that is all it is. In fact, farming operations already take pandemic risk incredibly seriously here in Canada, but not all around the world. We see pandemics driven by spillover risks associated with animals. What is a “one health” approach? All it does is recognize and address the fact that animal health, human health and environmental health are interconnected.

I am going to quote the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. I could not believe it. With respect to promoting alternative proteins, there is a huge pulse industry in Canada. It is a good thing to promote alternative proteins. Instead, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke says, “alternative protein is...a far-left dog whistle [for eating] crickets”. I put that to the representative from Soy Canada. He did not really know what to say at committee. Again, the Conservatives are completely unserious. If we want to make efforts to prepare for the next pandemic or to reduce the risk of the next pandemic, we need the act in place, and we should also be very wary about electing certain Conservatives.

• (1200)

**The Speaker:** It being 12:02 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.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I request a recorded division.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 5, at the expiry of time provided for Oral Questions.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### PHARMACARE ACT

**L'hon. Dan Vandal (for the Minister of Health)** moved that Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, be read the third time and passed.

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to begin the debate at third reading stage of Bill C-64, an act respecting pharmacare. The legislation, as people know, is a priority for the government. It would establish the fundamental principles for implementing a national pharmacare program in Canada. Additionally, it would outline our plan to work with participating provinces and territories to deliver universal single-payer coverage for various contraceptives and diabetes medications.

*[Translation]*

This is an important step toward a national universal pharmacare system, as well as a historic event in the evolution of health care in Canada.

*[English]*

The core principles outlined in the bill are accessibility, affordability, appropriateness and universality. Accessibility ensures that Canadians can access pharmaceuticals regardless of location or income, while affordability aims to minimize financial barriers.

*[Translation]*

Appropriate use prioritizes patient safety and health outcomes, while ensuring the sustainability of the health care system.

*[English]*

Last, the legislation would advocate for universal coverage across Canada. These principles would shape our collaborative efforts with provinces, territories and indigenous communities to establish national universal pharmacare.

Our government has repeatedly and consistently demonstrated our commitment to public health care. Budget 2023 announced \$200 billion over 10 years to better support the health and well-being of Canadians with a strong and effective health care system. More recently, in budget 2024, we committed \$1.5 billion over five years to launch the new national pharmacare plan. The plan would help provide support for Canadians seeking access to contraception and for those living with diabetes. Let me focus some of my time on contraception.

- (1205)

*[Translation]*

Canada has more than nine million women of child-bearing age, who account for nearly a quarter of our population. For many of them, access to safe and reliable contraception is essential.

*[English]*

It would grant them the autonomy to be intentional about their family planning and pursue their aspirations for the future. This may involve advancing their education or their careers, delaying starting a family until they feel prepared or choosing not to have children at all. Affordability has been recognized as the primary obstacle in accessing birth control. This can lead to individuals' not using it consistently and may discourage them from opting for the most reliable method available.

Consider oral contraceptives as an example. This type of birth control is priced at roughly \$25 per month and carries a typical use failure rate of 9%. Compare this to IUDs, which cost up to \$500 per year. Although IUDs are a higher initial investment, they provide coverage for five years and have a use failure rate as low as 0.2%. Women should be able to make the choice between different types of contraception, regardless of whether they can afford it.

Many Canadians are just simply not in a position to pay for these upfront investments. For example, a young, part-time worker who does not have drug coverage from their employer would struggle to pay for a \$500 IUD. With limited income from sporadic employment, which is typical for many young adults, even the monthly prescription cost can present a significant financial burden. This is the reality for many Canadians, and it is a reality I have heard from some of my constituents in Ottawa Centre.

One study indicated that women and girls from lower-income families tend to use less-reliable contraceptive methods or opt out of using contraception altogether. This disparity emphasizes how socio-economic factors intersect with access to reproductive health care, identifying gaps in our health care system and perpetuating cycles of systemic inequality. Additional research has even shown us that providing contraception through public funding can actually result in public cost savings. The University of British Columbia estimates that implementing no-cost contraception has the possibility of saving the B.C. health care system around \$27 million per year.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with Planned Parenthood Ottawa in my community of Ottawa Centre. Our conversation focused on a broad range of issues, but in particular we spoke of the impact Bill C-64 would have on the health of women here in our community. What became clear to me in that conversation was that contraception is not merely a matter of personal choice. It is an integral aspect of health care. It is a fundamental aspect of reproductive health, and it plays a pivotal role in advancing gender equality.

It was also made clear to me that, by ensuring affordable access to contraception, this legislation would advance gender equality. Preventing unintended pregnancies would enable more Canadians to participate in the economy, which would result in greater prosperity for all. This is crucial for building a more equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

I want to thank Planned Parenthood Ottawa for the good work it does, day in and day out. I was really happy to speak to its representatives recently to let them know of a funding grant it is receiving to continue doing this important work in our community. I am thankful for them for meeting with me and for educating me further on the impact Bill C-64 would have on women here in our community and across the country.

Moving on to the impact on diabetes, we can apply the same cost-saving principle that I was speaking to in the case of contraception to medications that treat diabetes. Diabetes is one of the most prevalent chronic disease in Canada, impacting 3.7 million individuals at present. There are projections that this number will continue to grow.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Many of us know someone with diabetes and have seen the devastating effects it can have on a person's quality of life. While diabetes has no cure, treatments are available to control it.

[*English*]

These treatments are not always affordable or accessible to those who need them. We know that 25% of Canadians with diabetes have identified that the cost of their medications has impacted their ability to stick to their treatment plans. Neglecting proper management of this disease can result in devastating consequences.

When we made the announcement introducing Bill C-64, I was honoured to join the Minister of Health and many community advocates, who have been working in this area for some time, at the Centretown Community Health Centre, which is also located in my community of Ottawa Centre. Prior to the announcement, we met with some of the social workers, the primary health care practitioners and nurses who work at the Centretown Community Health Centre, which is a fabulous institution in my community. In fact, I used to serve on the board of the Centretown Community Health Centre some time ago.

When we met, we talked about the impact of this legislation. With regard to diabetes, we spoke to a specialist there who told us countless stories of individuals who she meets, and treats, who ration their diabetes medication. They are unable to afford the cost of their medication due to their current circumstances. It was made clear that, when diabetes is not properly managed, it can result in severe complications, such as heart attacks, strokes, blindness and even amputation.

In 2018, the total cost incurred by the health care system due to diabetes was estimated to be around \$27 billion, a figure that we can expect to increase to \$39 billion by 2028. These figures emphasize the urgent need for effective measures to mitigate the impact of diabetes and its associated costs on both individuals and the health care system as a whole. Independent of the legislation, the Government of Canada revealed its plan to collaborate with the provinces and territories to establish a diabetes devices fund. This initiative aims to guarantee that individuals with diabetes will have access to the essential medical devices and supplies they need to manage their treatment, including syringes, glucose-monitoring devices and insulin pumps.

This, along with the framework outlined in Bill C-64 for universal single-payer coverage for first line diabetes medications, would prevent any person living with diabetes in Canada from having to ration their medication or compromise their treatment. These actions will benefit all Canadians by helping diabetics control their disease, making it less costly to treat over time.

### *Government Orders*

I want to address the concerns that pharmacare might affect private drug coverage, something that came up in the conversation when we were considering this bill at committee. Bill C-64 does not mention private drug insurance or regulate any of its activities. I want to be really clear about that. Our work with provinces and territories to offer universal single-payer coverage for contraception and diabetes medications would benefit all Canadians needing those drugs, regardless of their insurance status. Since the initiative is focused, benefits provided by private insurance are expected to remain unchanged. That choice remains in place.

[*Translation*]

As the two examples just mentioned show, the high cost of medication has become a pressing concern for too many people in Canada. For them, access to affordable medication is still a major challenge.

[*English*]

When medicare was first introduced in the 1960s, prescription medicines played a smaller role in the overall health care system. They were primarily administered in hospital settings, and those distributed beyond hospital confines were generally low in cost, but that is not the reality today.

Today, medicines are a vital and regular part of maintaining one's health. We know that roughly 1.1 million Canadians lack access to private or public drug insurance. That is approximately 2.8% of our population. In 2021, Statistics Canada found that one in five adults in Canada did not have the insurance they needed to cover the cost of the medication. In other words, 21% of adults in Canada face out-of-pocket drug costs that create a financial burden. This can lead people to forego their basic needs, such as food or heat, or even lead people to ration their medications or choose not to fill their prescriptions at all. Canadians should not have to choose between buying groceries and paying for medication. Being forced to make choices like these has serious consequences. Whether they are skipping meals or doses of medication, or opting to go without, sets off a chain reaction of adverse effects on the health of individuals and can heighten the strain on our health care and social support systems.

We can do better and we must do better. While it entails a financial commitment, the alternative, which is not investing in our pharmacare, would result in far more severe health and financial repercussions, as we can see with the two examples I presented earlier.

*Government Orders*

It is worth also noting that Canada has one of the highest per capita rates of prescription drug usage globally. Despite recent improvements, the elevated drug costs and the fragmented nature of drug coverage pose significant barriers for many individuals in Canada when it comes to accessing the prescription medications they need. In acknowledgement of these concerns, in December 2023, our government announced plans to advance the establishment of a Canadian drug agency, in short the CDA, with an investment of \$89.5 million over five years, starting in 2024-25. The CDA will be built from the existing Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health in partnership with provinces and territories. The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health publicly announced its transition to the CDA on May 1.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

Canada's drug agency, or CDA, will play a central role in leading and coordinating initiatives designed to improve the sustainability and readiness of Canada's drug system for the future. Bill C-64 sets out three main tasks for the CDA.

[*English*]

Initially, the agency would prepare a preliminary list of prescription drugs and related products to guide the establishment of a national formulary. This formulary would outline the range of prescription medications and associated products that Canadians should be able to access under the universal, national pharmacare.

Additionally, Bill C-64 would entrust the agency with formulating a national bulk purchasing strategy for prescription drugs and related products in co-operation with partners and stakeholders, including provinces and territories. This plan would explore methods to lower the cost of prescription drugs, which could help alleviate financial pressures for both individuals and the health care system. The agency would be required to finalize both the preliminary list and the strategy no later than the first anniversary of the day on which this act receives royal assent.

Last, the agency would aid in the publication of a pan-Canadian strategy concerning the appropriate utilization of prescription drugs and related products. This report would be released within one year of the bill receiving royal assent. Canada's drug agency would also be obligated to provide updates on the progress of implementing the strategy every three years.

As we know, national universal pharmacare cannot be accomplished without the contributions of the provinces, territories and indigenous peoples.

[*Translation*]

Given Canada's size and diversity, each province and territory has unique needs and specific challenges.

[*English*]

To establish a national pharmacare program that is both effective and fair, it is crucial to foster strong collaboration between the Government of Canada and all partners. Each stride toward national universal pharmacare will be made hand-in-hand with these partners. Future funding to support pharmacare will be allocated to provincial and territorial governments by way of bilateral agree-

ments. This funding would supplement, rather than replace, existing provincial and territorial investments on public drug benefit programs.

In the immediate future, we will draw insights from ongoing initiatives as we persist in our efforts to enhance accessibility and affordability for all Canadians through a national pharmacare program.

Since August 2021, for example, our government has been working with the Government of Prince Edward Island to reduce drug costs for patients through the improving affordable access to prescription drugs initiative. Since then, P.E.I. has expanded access to over 100 additional medications on its roster of covered drugs, including treatments for cancer, heart disease, migraine and multiple sclerosis, just to name a few.

As of June 1, 2023, P.E.I. lowered copayment costs to \$5 for nearly 60% of commonly prescribed medications for its residents. As a result of this initiative, within the first nine months alone, P.E.I. residents have saved over \$2.8 million in out-of-pocket costs for over 330,000 prescriptions.

In addition to the progress being made on a regional level, I am happy to also share some of the work being done on a national level to support our pharmacare efforts. Bill C-64 builds on the work we have done to make drugs for rare diseases more accessible.

In March 2023, we launched Canada's first-ever national strategy for drugs for rare diseases. Supported by federal funding of up to \$1.5 billion over three years, this strategy aims to enhance accessibility and affordability for medications for rare diseases, ensuring they are in reach for those who need them.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

It marks the beginning of a national approach seeking to meet the need for drugs used in the treatment of rare diseases.

[*English*]

As my time is winding down, I want to say in conclusion that, in Canada, it is our belief that everyone should receive prompt access to the health care they need, when they need it, irrespective of financial needs. This principle is a core Canadian belief, and we are dedicated to defending it.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-64 is a major step forward in our commitment to guaranteeing all Canadians access to affordable, high-quality drugs.

*Government Orders*

[English]

Our plan for universal coverage of contraception and diabetes medications would be life-changing for individuals, families, society and our health care system. While there is a lot of work ahead, we have already made substantial progress, from regulatory modernization to enhancing access to drugs for rare diseases, establishing Canada's drug agency and collaborating with the provinces and territories.

Passing this legislation would allow us to build on this momentum. We stand at the threshold of a new era in Canadian health care. We should seize this opportunity to invest in a stronger Canada.

[Translation]

I thank members for their attention.

[English]

I encourage all members of the House to vote in favour of Bill C-64.

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am curious, and I hope that the member will give me a direct answer on this. There has been some real concern, because the way the bill is structured does suggest, as it talks about being single-payer but very limited in the scope of coverage, that it could have the potential of taking away current coverage that up to 97% of Canadians already have. This is something that I am hearing about from my constituents, who are concerned about the way the government has brought forward this legislation, the way it has partnered with the NDP, and that it has not had the conversations with private plan providers. There is real concern that Canadians would actually be worse off after the Liberals have passed the bill.

I am hoping that the member could provide some specific details around whether he shares the concern that up to 97% of Canadians could see less coverage after the bill passes than they currently have.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member directly that this is not going to happen. The choice is maintained in this bill. He asked for a direct answer, and I am giving him the direct answer. In fact, at the committee, we discussed this matter at length. The minister was very clear, saying that the choice will always be maintained.

As I said in my remarks, there is no reference to private health insurance. That is within the prerogative of individuals who have private insurance. In fact, it was also accepted by those who were representing private insurance and those who were representing organizations such as Diabetes Canada. They have been given that insurance, and they do not see within the legislation any provision that relates to the taking away of private insurance. That is how this legislation is structured, and Canadians across the country will be able to maintain their private insurance if they choose to.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague talked about the contributions needed from Quebec and the provinces. Would he not agree that, when it comes to pharmacare, Quebec is already making a significant contribution with its hybrid program, which does cover everyone? Even people

with no income are covered by the public component. We do have a public component.

First, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on whether it would be more cost-effective for the federal government to give us our share so that we can improve our own system based on the federal government's objectives, in order to avoid harmonization issues.

Second, given that any duplication really bothers me, I would like to know what the Canadian drug agency is going to do that the Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux, the Quebec institute for excellence in health and social services, is not already doing in Quebec.

• (1225)

[English]

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely clear that we will work along with provinces and territories. Delivery of health care is a provincial responsibility. I think we all accept that, and we are all together in our desire to serve Canadians better across this country in provinces and territories and to make sure that they have the best health care accessible to them. That is why, given the diverse programs that exist across the country, and the member opposite gave the example of Quebec, it is important that we work with provinces and territories as soon as this legislation is passed into law, so that we can ensure that, when it comes to diabetes and contraceptives, there is universal coverage for all Canadians in all provinces and territories, and the manner in which it is provided is, of course, working in tandem with the systems that are in place within those provinces and territories.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if anybody wants to see the deterioration and disappearance of public health care, they can come to Ontario. Last year, we had 1,000 emergency closures. This year, it is going to be higher. Now, if the poor emergency wards could only sell Budweiser, they might get the attention of Doug Ford and his grifter government, who are more interested in beer cans than they are in health care.

I raise this because of my concern that, while we are talking about improving health care for every Canadian, we see one party, the Conservatives, steadfast against it. We see the record of Conservatives in province after province of undermining, threatening and attacking public health care, and here they are, standing up in the House day after day, attacking pharmacare.

At least with Doug Ford, we know we are going to get a can of beer out of it. With the Conservatives, we are going to get totally rooked.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member knows my view on Doug Ford's government and how we can be better served in Ontario.

*Government Orders*

When I was knocking on doors in the last election, one of the messages that I heard repeatedly from my constituents was to work with all members of this House, all political parties. My constituents were absolutely clear on ensuring that we get things done. I am really glad that we have found a common path with the NDP when it comes to introducing pharmacare and the Canadian dental care plan, because in my riding of Ottawa Centre, and I am sure it is true in all constituencies across the country, that is what Canadians want. They want politicians to work together to find ways of improving their lives. This legislation would do this. It would ensure that, for once, Canadians would start getting access to pharmacare. This is framework legislation that starts with contraceptives and medications and that would improve the lives of millions of Canadians.

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the benefits of being Canadian is that we come together and work together to build national programs. Historically, through the provinces and the federal government collectively, we have built a strong health care system. Provincially, we have a universal education system. These things work. Over the last few years, we have seen the introduction of benefits for pharmacare and child care. We have seen the introduction of a disability benefit tax credit and, of course, many additional programs.

Why is it important for us, as Canadians, to stick together and build these types of national programs? What does it do to the long-term impact of Canadians and this country as a whole?

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Don Valley East, who had the honour of serving in the provincial legislature. He will remember when we worked together to create OHIP+, which started providing universal access to pharmacare for young people, which was a game-changer. It was unfortunate that Doug Ford gutted that program.

The member for Don Valley East is absolutely right. Our number one job and responsibility to Canadians is to make sure that we make their lives easier, and the way we make their lives easier, whether it is affordable child care or seniors being able to access a dentist or dental hygienist to look after their oral care, is to have programs available to make their lives better. That is what we all hear at people's doors. Those are the kinds of things people are concerned with, and that is the job we have been given.

In particular, in this Parliament, as we come out of the once-in-a-lifetime pandemic that we all lived through, so many structures within our society have been shaken as a result of the pandemic that we have to do this extra work, whether it is through Bill C-64 bringing pharmacare into our country, through \$10-a-day child care, a Canadian dental care program or the unprecedented investment that we are making in our public health care system to ensure that Canadians know that their government is actually paying particular attention to their day-to-day needs, and this is exactly what we are doing.

• (1230)

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity for follow-up, because the member said Liberals promised that it will not happen, but what are the assurances that this is in fact the case? Time and time again, we see a litany of broken promises by

the government, partnered with its coalition partners in the NDP. What assurances are there beyond their word?

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Mr. Speaker, in the legislation, the choice is clear. There is no conversation about taking choice away whatsoever, so I encourage the member to have a look at the legislation.

Second, I would ask the member to support this legislation, to make sure that Canadians have access to pharmacare, to stop spreading misinformation, to stop creating fear among Canadians and to focus on initiatives like this one, which should not be a partisan issue, to help as many Canadians as possible from coast to coast to coast.

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to be able to stand in the people's House and to talk about the issues that are so important to them. I appreciate also the opportunity to have had a couple of questions to that previous member. If I could sum up, when I posed what are very legitimate questions about the plan that the Liberals have presented to Canadians, he basically said, "Do not worry about it. Just trust us, and we will take care of it, so there is no need to discuss it any further."

I am sorry, but that is not how democracy works and that is not how this place works. I would suggest that this is part of the reason why, over the last nine years of the current Liberal government, we have seen a litany of failures on virtually everything that the Prime Minister and the government, propped up by their coalition partners in the NDP, have tried to accomplish. There is scandal. There is failure, and there is a series of broken promises that go along with it. As a result, we are seeing an erosion of trust in our institutions and outcomes for Canadians being decreased. At every step of the process, we are seeing that Canadians are worse off today than they were when the Prime Minister was first elected in 2015 on all these fluffy promises with zero substance. When it comes to the bill that we have before us, it is simply another example of that.

I will take us on a bit of a journey, if members would allow me. During the 2021 election, which the Prime Minister said would not happen but did anyway, and we all know what that is, Conservatives said very clearly that a vote for the Liberal Party was a vote for a coalition. We said that during the election, and yet the Liberals and the NDP said that it would never happen, that there would be no agreement and there was no chance. Those were their words. In fact, the media even started criticizing Conservatives for suggesting that this would be the case, yet it was only a number of months after the election in 2021 when we saw the so-called confidence and supply agreement, which is really just a very poorly negotiated coalition agreement.



*Government Orders*

Ultimately, we saw that the NDP gave away any bargaining power that it could have had in the context of a minority Parliament and just gave carte blanche to a Liberal Prime Minister and his government to do with that power what they wanted. There is the NDP, backing them up every step of the way. We have seen over the last two years or so that the consequence of that is a series of poor public policy outcomes, where the Liberals will stand up and peacock all day long about the success that they are showing and the work that they are doing for Canadians and whatnot, and yet when we look into the details, we see some of the most shallow policy outcomes, which I would suggest have a very small chance of even being actualized when it comes down to it. The joke that I have heard from a number of constituents, so I will share it with members, is about George Strait's song about having some oceanfront property in Arizona, and it is certainly that sort of sale. It seems like the New Democrats would be quick to buy anything that the Liberals are offering, specifically when it comes to pharmacare.

It is very relevant to the conversation, because it was at the last New Democratic convention where members—

• (1235)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Morrison):** There is a point of order from the member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I think we need an appropriateness of quoting lyrics. I like George Strait, but it would be more credible if the member were actually accurate. It would be Simon and—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Morrison):** That is debate.

We will carry on.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure members that neither this House nor any Canadian wants to hear me sing, so I will spare members of this House and Canadians that. I would suggest that it was when—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Morrison):** There is a point of order.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Timmins—James Bay is himself out of order when he raises these irrelevant points about the lyrics, when the sole purpose of this is to interrupt the remarks of others. It is shameful. He ought to apologize to the House for his consistently shameful behaviour.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Morrison):** The member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to apologize to my honourable colleague that his own backbench is interrupting him while he is trying to make sense of something that is not sensible. It is no wonder the member wants to interrupt.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, it was audible by everybody here that the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston referred to the member for Timmins—James Bay as a “moron”. I would suggest that you, Mr. Speaker, ask that he withdraw that comment, because that was extremely unparliamentary. He should apologize as well directly to the member.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to withdraw the remarks, and I do deeply apologize to the member for Timmins—James Bay who is indeed the model of decorum for all of us here. He sets the standard for all of us, along with the member from Kingston and the Islands—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Okay, I will accept it as having been said.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that when I start talking about the record and the failures of the NDP, all of a sudden they are quick to cause disorder. I would suggest that it is the embarrassment of their record that offends those New Democrats and why they seem to be so quick to buy anything that that Liberal Prime Minister is selling. I will outline specifically the definitive proof of why that is the case.

When those New Democrats, late last year, had a convention, they drew a line in the sand, saying that they would get out of that coalition agreement, they would not have confidence in the leader, the member for Burnaby South, and that was enough, they did not want anything to do with those Liberals and this coalition confidence and supply nonsense if they could not get the job done.

However, what was the first thing that the leader of the New Democratic Party did? Well, he paused and effectively said, “Well, you know, we simply need more time. We are working out the details of what that might look like.” Then there were some very concerning allegations about changing some of the electoral system and whatnot. We then saw that there were some red lines, which certainly members of that party talked a lot about, on how they were going to have this fulsome program that was going to be announced and it was going to solve every Canadian's problem. There was going to be no issue with it.

Then, what was announced? I would suggest that if we were to catch any of those New Democratic members off-camera, they would be sorely disappointed about the work that the member for Burnaby South did and the so-called negotiations that led to the program that we have here before us today, which covers little, costs lots and has many unanswered questions about whether the benefit would be actualized to Canadians who need it. I think that that is the proof point that this NDP is interested in nothing more than the photo-ops and the illusion that its members can have a communications plan. It is a sad state of affairs when we have such laziness masquerading as public policy. I would suggest that this debate that we have before us is proof point, and this offends those New Democrats.

In fact, it was interesting, because when we look back at the history of the CCF, and the many involved with that, there was a true desire to see that the social gospel movement was much of the driving force behind the history of why that party even started. Yet, they have abandoned those—

• (1240)

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I find it interesting that the member opposite seems to be obsessed with the NDP and has not yet spoken on the pharmacare legislation at hand. I would ask that he get to relevance.

*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Relevance is a point of order. Actually, it is the best one we have had so far today. Let us stick to the bill before us.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting how calling out the failures of the NDP not only offends New Democrats, but offends Liberal members of Parliament. It truly is telling of the level of absurdity that this place has descended into, when simply calling out the failures of this so-called confidence and supply agreement, this coalition, this poorly negotiated agreement that has propped up one of the most corrupt governments in Canadian history, that NDP and Liberal members would become so offended when we bring forward some things, including talking about the history of those parties. I will be happy to address some of the failures specific to the Liberal Party here in short order, for that member specifically, but it seems like that they do not want to hear those things because they are simply offended that somebody would dare question their pre-eminence.

I will get into the substance of Bill C-64 in just a moment, because the context of it is so important. The Liberals, backed up by the New Democrats, do not want an opposition in this place. That is why the Liberals bought off the NDP. That is why we see so often that the Bloc Québécois are quick to go with them. They want an audience, not an opposition. This is a sad state of affairs. This place has a long democratic tradition, where we should be able to discuss the affairs of the nation and have meaningful debates. Whenever somebody suggests very valid points of criticism, such as those I brought forward to the previous Liberal member, like our concerns about the impact that Bill C-64 would have on the coverage of many Canadians, the government's response has been to ask us to trust it. Many Canadians over the last nine years have clearly communicated their concerns to me and many of my colleagues. I know that many Liberals are hearing the same thing. As I have travelled across the country, in airports or in communities that, in some cases, are represented by Liberals, I have heard from individuals saying they have lost trust not only in the Liberals, but also in the way that the Liberals, propped up by the NDP, have conducted themselves over the last number of years. There is an erosion of trust in our institutions.

For the government to ask us to trust it is not good enough, when there is a real risk that 97% of Canadians, who do have some form of drug coverage currently, may be at risk of losing some of those benefits. That is a real concern for so many Canadians. In this circumstance, the government has promised much and has truly delivered very little. Government members will stand up and bluster about how great this is and whatnot, but when it comes to what Canadians actually need, they are failing to deliver.

A clear proof point on that front comes from the government's work with provinces. The Prime Minister was quick to brag about going around the provinces to deliver his agenda. However, when it comes to the history and the way that this federation was built, health care is provincial jurisdiction. Now, the federal government does play a role in the federal health transfer. We have seen on that front that there is a litany of failures. In fact, the Prime Minister promised to tear up the previous agreement that would have actually resulted in more funding dollars, because it was tagged to infla-

tion, than the agreement that the Prime Minister went around the backs of different provinces to sign. He was quick to talk and puff up his chest, yet he has not met with premiers since those initial discussions, despite saying it was so important to meet with the premiers nearly a decade ago.

We have even seen how different provinces are treated differently. There are some provinces that the Prime Minister has been quick to suggest the government is happy to work with and other provinces that they may not like the party that those people in that province elected. It is not a conversation around whether they should or should not like a particular political party. The government is quick to dismiss any province that would bring forward legitimate concerns. When the government tries to go around the provinces, it ends up ultimately putting Canadians and the care that Canadians expect and deserve at risk.

There is no question that we need to address some of the challenges when it comes to health care. That is why Conservatives have been talking so significantly about some of these things, including making sure that Canadians have access to care, especially when there is a shortage of family doctors. There are so many doctors who are not eligible to work in Canada today because there is no clear process for recognition. The solution to that is very simple.

• (1245)

We need leadership that will bring the country together, to figure out that path forward so that what could be tens of thousands of doctors could actually get to work delivering the care for Canadians, following that Hippocratic oath that they took when they entered medical school. That would be good news for everybody because it would address a shortage. It would increase productivity. One of the challenges, and it is interesting because one does not hear the Liberals talk very much about this, is that we have a massive productivity challenge in our country. When one has wait-lists, when one has long processing times, and this is not limited to health care but includes permitting for houses, benefits, name it, if there is a delay, it has a negative effect on productivity. However, it is specifically impacting productivity on our national workforce when it comes to health care.

Canadians are being forced to wait. A constituent of mine waited three years for a hip replacement because they were in their 40s. Because of the processes and the hoops that they had to jump through, they had to stop working and there were family challenges associated with that. Again, these other parties do not want to hear some of this stuff, because they would rather simply stand on an empty promise than actually address the real challenges that are facing our constituents. When it comes to productivity, if we can address some of those things, we will see our national productivity increase, and we will provide more doctor and nurses. It makes sense that one has a nurse that is trained at an institution and has the training that is required to deliver the quality of care that is acceptable in this country.

*Government Orders*

The proposal that the Leader of the Opposition has brought forward, which he has called the blue seal plan, would give certainty in a process that currently has no certainty. That is just common sense. For somebody who is looking for opportunity, looking for a future, looking to build what used to be known as the Canadian dream, which has been so much eroded under these Liberals, there would be certainty.

A physician, a nurse or another health care provider could come to this country and have certainty. What the Leader of the Opposition has talked about is that within 60 days they would be given the thumbs-up or thumbs-down so they could get to work or at least know then, going forward, what upgrading and what training needed to be done so that they could deliver that care that, obviously, they want to give to Canadians.

It is truly a shame that there are so many talented immigrants in this country who are not able to do the work that they trained so hard to do. That is an absolute disgrace, yet, with some political will, some collaboration and working with provinces, as opposed to pitting them against each other like what the Liberal government does on a daily basis, we could see solutions and better outcomes for Canadians.

There are serious concerns that I hear about, and I know many of my colleagues do as well. Because of the potential impacts of the passing of this bill, there would be an erosion or outright dismantling of private drug plans. That includes publicly funded drug plans that are delivered by private companies, as everybody in this place, and all public servants, the 400,000 of them or so, are experiencing, as well as with provincial and other levels of government.

In this process, we have not heard clarity. The Liberals will say that they addressed that at committee. Yes, it was asked. The questions were asked, but the answers were not given in any way that would provide certainty.

What does this mean? The bill talks about being single-payer, which may be simply fanciful language from the Liberals to appease their coalition partners in the NDP and means nothing. I would suggest that this is just as bad, because it is abusing the democratic process and just speaks to the poor negotiating tactics of the leader from Burnaby South, but we will leave that, because I think I addressed that appropriately in the beginning of my speech. This could practically mean that private companies would then be changing the way that they deliver those specifics. It would put employee benefits at risk, including when somebody signs up for a job. When somebody signs a contract for work, the benefit package is a part of the compensation package.

• (1250)

The Liberals have not done their job or their homework in terms of making sure that all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed, as the saying goes. What they are doing could put some of those things at risk and directly impact the ability of Canadians from coast to coast to coast to access the drugs they already have.

That could mean simple issues, such as the pharmacist saying, well, this certain drug is not covered, but this one is, or outright not being able to get it covered altogether. This can be a huge issue in some cases. Further, it could scrap coverage plans, and there is no

question that it will force Canadians onto the government plan. We see this as well when it comes to the dental care plan.

We have yet another example where there is big talk but little in terms of actual deliverables for Canadians. In fact, it is interesting. When we listen to the Minister of Health, he talks about how many people have signed up for the program. Even last week, he said how many people had registered for potential appointments. The language he used was truly a cop-out.

If the government want to deliver health care for Canadians, then it should get to work and work with provinces to ensure that provincial plans can be complemented and whatnot. However, that is not what the Liberals did. They signed an agreement, seemingly on the back of a napkin, to keep the NDP happy. This does not fulfill the promises and the objectives that they so publicly brag about.

The result is a very real potential that, in terms of outcomes, Canadians will not be better off after the Liberals have tried to fix the problem. This is the case when it comes to drug coverage, as we are debating today; when it comes to dental care, as has been and will continue to be debated; and when it comes to so many of the other things that the Liberals have promised.

What is the solution? Well, first and foremost, we need leadership in this country that will bring provinces together to address the challenges we face in ensuring that Canadians can get the health care they need. That includes mental health care. This is incredibly relevant when it comes to this conversation because the Liberal Party promised that there would be a Canada mental health transfer, yet we are now several years into a mandate and that promise has not been delivered on. I guess it was not negotiated on the back of a napkin in this confidence and supply agreement.

This speaks to how little the Liberals care about ensuring that Canadians have access to the care they actually need. We need leadership in this country so we can make sure that every Canadian can, in fact, have those better health outcomes and that Canadians can, once again, start to trust the institutions that we have worked so hard to pay for over multiple generations in this country.

I look forward to being able to answer questions on this and ultimately ensure that we get answers for Canadians.

• (1255)

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member spoke for 20 minutes about many different subjects, but he still did not have much clarity on a very simple bill.

Just so Canadians know, the pharmacare bill speaks to supplying people who are diabetic with medicine and supplies, as well as supplying people with contraception.

The member opposite said many different things, and he talked about process. Do you believe that the government should be in a place where it can provide people who have diabetes with medicine and women with contraception, yes or no? It is a very simple question.

*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Speaker:** What I believe in and what I do not believe in is not important. Maybe the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot could answer.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, if the bill were addressing those things, then so be it. However, there are far more questions than answers when it comes to access to drugs that Canadians already have and working with provinces.

When it comes to ensuring that Canadians have access to the care they need, the bill would cost a lot and deliver little. At the rate at which the Liberals have expounded upon failure, we see that Canadians should certainly not have high expectations when it comes to being able to deliver their basics.

I would simply say this: When the Liberals peacock about all their promises, they never talk about deliverables, because they have so little to show for all the dollars they have spent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec realized a long time ago that it needed pharmacare. The Bloc Québécois is calling for Quebec to have the right to opt out with full compensation, so that it can improve its plan. That is also what the Quebec National Assembly called for unanimously, across party lines.

I have a simple question for my Conservative colleague. What are the Conservatives proposing for pharmacare?

[*English*]

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, I think that is part of the questions Canadians have. They elect provincial governments that are responsible for delivering health care. They expect their federal government to work with the provinces. Have we seen that? The simple answer is no, we have not. We see a government that is quick to divide and demonize and that pits one province and one region against another instead of working for the best interests of Canadians. It cares more about political wins and photo ops than it does about seeing results. Not only are the Liberals a dollar short and a day late, but they also have no interest in ensuring that Canadians have access to the health care we pay for and deserve. This has become very clear.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done. The Liberals are failing at it. It is time for leadership at the top to ensure that we can bring accountability and a system that actually works for the best interests of Canadians.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives seem to be ideologically opposed to the contraception components of pharmacare. We heard from the member for Peace River—Westlock, who exposed the Conservative agenda, which is to end access to reproductive freedoms for women and access to abortion. That has been very clear. He spoke out loud something that seems to be a hidden agenda of Conservatives.

I have been to Camrose and talked to people there. They have raised the issue of pharmacare. We know that pharmacare access to contraception and diabetes medications can make a difference of up to \$1,000 or \$1,500 a month. There are millions of Canadians who need access to these important medications. It is true that the bill just talks about those first two classes of medication, but it is going

to make an important difference in the lives of 18,000 people in the member's riding of Battle River—Crowfoot when it comes to diabetes medication, as well as 25,000 people in his riding when it comes to contraception.

Are Conservatives ideologically opposed to helping people, or are they simply being cruel to the people who face the struggle, each and every day, to pay for their medication and put food on the table?

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member wants to talk about ideology when he, along with his leader and every single member of the New Democratic Party, have abandoned any semblance of ideology that once existed. They have abandoned it for the pursuit of some false perception of power. They stand in this place and claim that they are solving all these problems; however, when it comes to the actual deliverables for Canadians, the very people the member is referencing in my constituency, and, in fact, in his constituency and all 338 constituencies across this great country, are not seeing the results that are being promised.

The member is propping up the Prime Minister; he has sold out to a false Liberal agenda that truly is a day late and a dollar short. The NDP and the Liberals are selling Canadians short, not only on the ability to access the care they need but also on the real conversation that needs to take place to ensure that we can have a better health care system that meets the needs of Canadians.

● (1300)

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague's speech and his quite accurate suggestion that there is a massive trust deficit in Canada today. Canadians do not trust their federal government, because of the many broken promises our country has been littered with.

Could my colleague touch on a few more of those proof points that show why Canadians are now so skeptical about the Liberal government, with its NDP coalition partners, being able to actually deliver a pharmacare program in the first place?

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague from Abbotsford. He was a minister in a government that cared not only about making announcements but also ensuring that, at every step of the process, the hard work required to accomplish anything in government would be done. He and many others under the previous Conservative government were willing to roll up their sleeves and get the job done.

There are so many proof points that it would take days to litigate them all, but I would simply suggest this: I hear a very tragic thing from constituents. They say that there was a time when they could respect the institutions even if they did not like the government, but increasingly, because of the scandals, the broken promises and the ego-driven policies of the Liberal government, propped up by the sellout NDP, they have lost trust in our institutions more generally. That is a tragedy.

*Government Orders*

It is going to take work by Conservatives to ensure that we can repair the trust that has been so damaged by the Liberals and New Democrats.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about losing trust. I would like to say that Canadian women have lost trust in the Conservative Party.

You are standing there now, objecting to a program that would give contraceptives to women, when most of your caucus does not want women to have choice when it comes to other issues. For you to now say that we should not be providing contraceptives to 25,000 women in your riding, as well as other women across Canada, is absolutely absurd.

Could you please explain whether you support Canadian women or not?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am not going to explain it. My colleagues should make sure they talk through the Chair instead of directly to other members.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

**Mr. Damien Kurek:** Mr. Speaker, how do we know that Liberals are down in the polls? We know because they are bringing back these divisive issues. They want to play politics as opposed to working for the best interests of Canadians. The member, and so many from both the Liberal caucus and the New Democratic caucus, are terrified about the prospect of not getting their pensions, so they are trying to divide Canadians.

The Leader of the Opposition has been clear: Conservatives are here to work for Canadians, including Canadian women.

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**The Deputy Speaker:** On a point of order, the hon. member for Abbotsford.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to that answer, I could not hear what my colleague was saying. The member for Kingston and the Islands, and many others, such as the member for—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I noticed it was really loud in here.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 66 on Motion No. 57 to concur in the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Finance, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair and at the conclusion of the time provided for debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the motions be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred pursuant to Standing Order 66.

• (1305)

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**PHARMACARE ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, be read the third time and passed.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have risen three times today because I was so eager to speak.

I am pleased to speak today at third reading of Bill C-64. We have been debating this bill for a long time. Clause-by-clause study took place last week, but we do need to wind up the debate at some point.

Before continuing with my speech, I would ask my colleagues to respect my right to speak and not talk over me.

First, to make things clear, if they are not already, the Bloc Québécois's position has not changed one iota: We are against Bill C-64.

I would like to remind my colleagues of the purpose of the bill. Obviously, a bill can have several different purposes, depending on which side we are on. Sometimes it may seem like a bill has a noble goal, but that may not be the case.

I would like to talk about something that is totally obvious to me but that people tend to forget when we get into these debates. Bill C-64 addresses one of the 27 items in the agreement that the Liberals reached with the NDP in 2022 to stay in power by forming a sort of coalition with the NDP. This may have been in the NDP's best interests, although maybe it will want to argue that point.

I would like to remind the House of the wording of the second item in this agreement: "Continuing progress towards a universal national pharmacare program by passing a Canada Pharmacare Act by the end of 2023".

They want to "continu[e] progress". We often hear similar phrases in the House, phrases like continuing to move forward, continuing progress or continuing to do something. That is all very vague, in my opinion. I would imagine that pretty much anything we do is progress, even the bill we are currently discussing. Perhaps that covers the disagreement there was between the Liberals and the NDP on this issue.

As members know, the Liberals dragged their feet on introducing this bill. This bill was in the works for years. They were talking about it in 2022. It was introduced on February 29. They could not agree on the cost of the measure. Of course we would like to see a pharmacare act, but perhaps not at all costs, if my colleagues will pardon the pun.

### *Government Orders*

This bill was introduced on February 29, at the very last minute, to save the agreement and to save the Liberals. I might add that it was also to save the NDP. I must say that I did not hold my breath at the time.

A moment ago, I talked about the purpose of the bill. I think that this bill was introduced purely for the purpose of garnering votes. It could have been introduced sooner, but there was an agreement. The NDP would not want to bring the government down. That is why I was not surprised when the bill was introduced this year, one year away from the election, just before the budget.

I also get the feeling that it may have been because the government is short on ideas. I have spoken many times about the government's lack of vision. It has been eight, almost nine, years since the government came to power. It will have been 10 years by the time the election comes around.

I have noticed that the House is copying the debates taking place south of the border. Take the debates over contraceptives and diabetes medication. It is not that I am not happy to see my colleagues across the aisle and next to me tackling the official opposition, to use a soccer term, here in the House over a woman's right to do what she wants with her own body. I was not unhappy about that. However, it is being done for the purpose of gaining votes. There is one party in the House that wants to limit women's rights. This may resonate with some people, even me, but it should not be done for that purpose alone.

In fact, maybe it was entirely arbitrary. The government did not know what to do, what to propose. It desperately wanted pharmacare, but it had no idea what it really wanted to do, so it thought about what could help it win votes. It figured that it could take certain debates from the U.S. bipartisan system and copy them here to pit the good guys against the bad guys.

● (1310)

In short, I am not saying that these billions of dollars that will be spent by the government are a form of pre-election advertising, but that is what it looks like. Again, Quebecers and Canadians need to be aware of the partisan agenda hidden behind this bill. There is a hidden objective.

I think it takes a certain kind of courage to oppose a bill that seems virtuous. That is what we are being told: If we do not vote in favour of the bill, it is because we are against it. I, of course, am 100% in favour of a woman's right to choose and all methods of contraception. I am a member of the Bloc Québécois. I speak on behalf of Quebec. I am not against the provinces' positions. I do not mind if they decide that the federal government can interfere in their jurisdictions. That is their choice, and I respect it. At the same time, that is not what I want for Quebec. That is why the Bloc Québécois proposed the following amendment in committee:

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.

Our amendment concerns the ability to opt out with full compensation from the pharmacare program. It was not debated because we could not debate it in committee during clause-by-clause study

of the bill. It was not rejected either. I would say that what happened is even worse: It was ruled inadmissible. I wish I could avoid talking about the reasons the committee chair ruled the amendment inadmissible, but I think it is important to go over them because this is just another clear demonstration of bad faith, in my opinion, and the federal government's disregard for the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec.

It was argued that the amendment required a royal recommendation, which is false. What we were told is that it will generate additional costs and that, since we are an opposition party, it requires a royal recommendation. I hate to say it, but that is absolutely false. The amendment did not require a royal recommendation, because the funds had already been committed by the government. The Bloc Québécois's amendment was therefore legitimate and admissible.

This is not the only time that government members have made arguments that do not hold water and that are merely a pretext to interfere in Quebec's jurisdiction. The government did the same thing in the case of Bill C-35, which deals with the child care program. As far as I am concerned, this is not only a sign of disrespect toward Quebec, it is basically an insult, because over the decades, Quebec has built a social safety net that is the envy of North America. We have pharmacare, as well as dental coverage for young people. We have free education and early childhood centres. We have made some huge social advances.

In this case, the federal government is digging in its heels and refusing to allow Quebec to opt out unconditionally with full compensation. As I see it, Ottawa is refusing to recognize Quebec's decades of leadership in this area. The same thing happened with child care centres and Bill C-35. What is more, the federal government is doing all this without having jurisdiction over this area or having any expertise in care and social services. Quebec is being denied something we have every right to request by a government that lacks both expertise and jurisdiction. The government has no compunction about turning us down, but at the same time, it has to follow our example with a view to "continuing progress", as they put it so eloquently. I have no problem with the federal government continuing progress, but I do not want this progress to come at Quebec's expense.

● (1315)

As I said before, Quebec already has a public pharmacare plan for part of the population that the government introduced nearly 30 years ago. I need to repeat this because I think some people have trouble hearing it. This is not the case with everyone, but in the House, it is true of nearly the majority. As far as Canada is concerned, it is trying to catch up. It is behind by 30 years, so now it is encroaching on our jurisdiction. It may be more. We also have a private plan offered by employers, to which workers contribute as well. No one in Quebec lacks pharmacare coverage. People need to stop spreading falsehoods.

The choice was made by Quebeckers. It was not Ottawa that made this choice, it was Quebec. Our plan is also paid for by Quebeckers. The federal government did not give a red cent for this plan. We know what is right for us. We do not need someone else to tell us. We are capable of taking care of ourselves. We do not need paternalistic Ottawa trying to manage a pharmacare plan in Quebec without expertise, without legitimacy and without experience.

I keep thinking that what the Bloc Québécois is asking from the federal government is simple and it makes sense. We are asking the federal government to take care of its own responsibilities, such as foreign affairs, defence and fisheries. It seems to me that the federal government has enough responsibilities. It has more than enough things to take care of.

Perhaps that is not sexy enough for the government. I should ask that question. Is that sexy enough for the government? Health and education are the two areas that affect people the most. Of course, health is a matter of major importance. We talk about the things we care about. If we are not alive, then nothing else matters, obviously. Health is important. These are the two budget items that are most important for Quebec.

The government knows that, for years now, its health transfers have been insufficient. They are shrinking down to nothing. It knows all that. If the government reduces the transfers, the burden will fall heavily on Quebec and the provinces. Who gets the blame when there is a shortage of care and services? Quebec and the provinces, obviously.

Jean Chrétien understood this well. He bragged to the G7 that all he had to do to balance the budget was reduce health transfers. He said that Canadians would look for someone to blame, but that they would not blame the federal government, because health is under Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdiction. They are the ones who would be cutting health care and education. For him, it was simple: Canadians would take it out on the provinces. The federal government would be able to achieve a balanced budget, and no one would hold anything against it. The provinces would pay the price, both literally and figuratively.

It always comes down to this, unfortunately, but as a separatist, I have no other choice. I am a separatist and I am pragmatic. It always comes down to the fiscal imbalance. The federal government collects more money than it needs to fulfill its responsibilities, while the provinces and Quebec are not collecting enough to manage their own jurisdictions. They are short of money, which gives the federal government an opening to spend money on things under Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdiction.

It is unbelievable. It is like the federal government is stealing from the provinces and Quebec. It is strangling them. If they meet certain conditions, it will back off and let them breathe again.

We would not thank anyone who is strangling us for stopping. We understand that interference is always done with a purpose. I mentioned this earlier, but it is still the same thing with the government and its minions.

The federal government swoops in like a saviour, slapping its flag on cheques, which it tosses around like confetti, and the cavalry of government members run around, trumpets blaring, trying to

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solve the problems it created itself. In fact, the more I think about it, the more I like that image. It has definite educational value. However, although we may be laughing over it, it is a hard fact.

While the government is gaily running around, it has forgotten why it was elected. Perhaps it does not know. Perhaps it has forgotten. When a government has no vision, it may take a peek in the neighbour's yard, looking for direction.

● (1320)

Again, interfering in areas of provincial and Quebec jurisdiction has a purpose for them. In fact, the purpose is twofold in this case: one, to keep the government in power, and two, to prepare for the next election.

Until we gain independence, Quebeckers will have to fight to make sure this government respects us, respects our expertise and experience and gives us what is ours, meaning our money and, of course, control over our own jurisdictions. It will also have to respect the fact that we have our own pharmacare program.

Quebeckers are capable of discussing amongst ourselves, at home, and improving our pharmacare plan with our experts, based on our experience and our wishes. It is not up to the federal government to tell Quebeckers what to do. We refuse to let our own tax money be used against us and at our expense.

One way to respect us is to vote down Bill C-64. I may be a member of the Bloc Québécois, but I am not the only one who says so. The Quebec National Assembly has said it too. Christian Dubé, Quebec's health minister, pointed it out the day before the bill was introduced. We do not want this bill. We do not want the federal government to encroach on areas of Quebec's jurisdiction. I would remind the House that the National Assembly alone speaks for all Quebeckers.

In closing, I would therefore like to let the voices of Quebeckers be heard through the unanimous demands of the National Assembly for compensation to be paid to Quebec. That is what the Bloc Québécois has asked for, because the Bloc Québécois speaks on behalf of Quebeckers. The motion unanimously adopted by the National Assembly on June 14, 2019, reads as follows:

THAT the National Assembly acknowledge the federal report recommending the establishment of a pan-Canadian pharmacare plan;

THAT it reaffirm the Government of Québec's exclusive jurisdiction over health;

THAT it also reaffirm that Québec has had its own general prescription insurance plan for 20 years;

THAT it indicate to the federal government that Québec refuses to adhere to a pan-Canadian pharmacare plan;

THAT it ask the Government of Québec to maintain its prescription drug insurance plan and that it demand full financial compensation from the federal government if a project for a pan-Canadian pharmacare plan is officially tabled.

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That was back in 2019, so the Quebec government made its position clear quite some time ago. Today, I am still trying to be a voice for the National Assembly. I hoped that the federal government would respect Quebec's decision to refuse to join the federal plan, for example, in the motion put forward at the committee studying Bill C-64. We respect the provinces that want to take part in the program set out in the bill, since coverage is rather inconsistent across Canada, but in Quebec, everyone is covered by a pharmacare program.

It is up to us to decide what we want to do next. It is not up to the federal government.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am quite fond of the member, but she just said that we need to listen to Quebecers.

However, as the Bloc Québécois members should know, the largest coalition in Quebec's history, namely two million people under the umbrella of all the central labour unions, the Centrale des syndicats du Québec, the Centrale des syndicats démocratiques, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, the Union des consommateurs and all the allied groups around the Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux, is calling for us to pass this bill, Bill C-64.

The coalition members have been very critical of the current program in Quebec, including the fact that there are user fees for the drugs and many people are not covered. There are a lot of problems with the current situation. This broad coalition that the Bloc Québécois seems to refuse to listen to, says the following:

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.

The coalition members want to have the NDP's public, universal pharmacare program.

I have a very simple question. Why is the Bloc Québécois refusing to listen to Quebecers?

• (1325)

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Speaker, I am not at all surprised by my colleague's question. Perhaps others have answered it, but I will answer again.

I have listened to what the coalition of labour unions are saying. I understand that they want improvements to pharmacare in Quebec, but I will repeat that it is up to Quebecers to do that. Yes, there can be a coalition. I understand that, but the fact remains that we have a National Assembly and that is the body that will make the decisions. It is the one in charge.

Sometimes it seems as though Canada may do something worthwhile when it gets involved, and we think that something is going to happen. However, what I would say to my colleague is that there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip when it comes to this bill. There is a really long way to go. There is a committee that is going to meet and hold consultations.

Quebec already has the experience and the expertise. Why not leave the task to a government that already knows how the system works? The federal government can tell Quebecers that it wants to

improve the pharmacare system, but as I said, we will discuss the matter among ourselves. However, the federal government can send us the money that it does not know how to spend because it is unable to take care of its own jurisdictions. We will improve the system.

Quebec has said that it will improve its pharmacare program. I think that the question is irrelevant. I am really pleased that there are ways to exert pressure to help us make gains, but the federal government needs to talk to the ones who are in charge, the Quebec National Assembly and Quebec, when it comes to improving our pharmacare program.

I do not need a paternalistic party telling Quebec what to do.

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has clearly demonstrated, Bill C-64 is much more the expression of an election agreement than of a bill. Why? That would be because a bill of this scope would have required prior coordination, at least with the nation that put a system in place 30 years ago.

Here in the House, the Quebec nation has been symbolically recognized on two occasions, but the moment that that has a legislative impact, it is out of the question. The National Assembly unanimously agreed that it wanted the right to opt out with full compensation to improve its plan. What is so hard to understand about that? My colleague clearly demonstrated that.

The worst part is that, in addition to the first phase of the bill, the government intends to implement something with no accountability. Has anyone ever seen a Canadian prime minister lose their seat in an election because of health care? It has never happened. Why? Because health care has never been their jurisdiction. In Quebec, however, governments have fallen over health care.

The government wants to meddle in the affairs of others, and with no political accountability, to boot. What does my colleague think about that?

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Speaker, it is as though my colleague from Montcalm can read my mind. Obviously, I agree with him. It makes perfect sense.

I tried to bring up the election issue. I know that people may not always want to talk about it in the House, because everyone wants to be above the fray. However, at a certain point, we feel we need to point out some of the blind spots that others may not see. Sometimes we have to point out certain things that have been forgotten.

I mentioned the National Assembly motion. That was in 2019. It has been on the table for a long time, since June 2019. Let us think about it. That was before the election that the Prime Minister called because he wanted to win a majority. That is not what happened. We have been discussing this for a long time. We are just not seeing it. I am not saying that there is not some merit behind it but, as far as I am concerned, it is almost purely electoral. Once again, we refuse to support it.

• (1330)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois appears not to be answering the question. A vast coalition of two million Quebecers told the Bloc Québécois to vote in favour of Bill C-64. Its members are critical of Quebec's existing plan.



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I am quoting them because it is important. I am referring to the Union des consommateurs, the Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec, the Centrale des syndicats démocratiques, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux and the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, which, on behalf of two million Quebecers, are calling on Bloc Québécois members, who are members for Quebec after all, to listen to them and take action by passing Bill C-64, which the NDP introduced in Parliament.

Let us be clear. I am quoting a coalition that the Bloc Québécois seems unwilling to listen to.

We 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.

This coalition is saying that we need to pass Bill C-64 and we need these negotiations.

Why does the Bloc Québécois insist on blocking this bill and refuse to listen to Quebecers who want it to pass?

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is actually the voice of the Quebec National Assembly. My colleague repeated his question, and I will repeat the answer. The Quebec National Assembly is made up of people elected from all parties. This is a unanimous motion supported by all parties, including Québec Solidaire. Everyone agrees that the answer is no, that we want to opt out with full compensation.

I am an elected member of Parliament. I work for all of my constituents. I have a great deal of respect for the unions, and I would even say that I get along very well with them. I share the same values, namely solidarity and fairness. However, I am an elected official, so I represent the people. I do not just represent the interests of unions and other organizations.

It makes me a little uncomfortable to see my colleague siding with organizations, no matter which ones, rather than the people. I am sure the unions will agree with me that they should be the ones to decide for elected officials. Of course, pressure tactics are needed. Let us talk. Discussions are needed, yes, but that can also happen in Quebec.

I want to repeat the essential part my answer, so that it is clearly understood. I represent the Bloc Québécois and the people of Quebec through the National Assembly. That means everyone, and it is legitimate.

[English]

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for me to split my time with the member for Edmonton Strathcona.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Burnaby South.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, today is a very historic day. The New Democrats have been fighting for universal pharmacare for generations. I think about Tommy Douglas. When he led the charge to bring in universal health care in Canada, it was always envisioned that medication coverage should be included. We are the

only country in the world that has universal health care that does not also include medication coverage. Every other country figured out that if it could cover people's visits to the doctor but they could not afford the medication they needed, they would end up getting more and more sick and end up in emergency rooms.

We know that the Liberals and Conservatives have opposed universal pharmacare whenever we have brought this idea up, but the New Democrats have not stopped. We know that the Liberals have promised pharmacare for 30 years and have broken that promise for 30 years, but we have not given up. We know that the Liberals and Conservatives have voted against this idea multiple times, but we have not given up. In committee, the Conservatives tried to block free birth control and free diabetes medication and devices, but we did not give up.

Today we are joined by a number of allies from across the country, labour activists and health coalition activists, who have been fighting for this. I know that the legislation is not perfect, but the legislation would create the foundation for pharmacare in our country. The legislation would create the foundation to move forward with universal pharmacare for all Canadians, starting with free birth control and diabetes medication and devices.

• (1335)

[Translation]

As I was saying, I am very honoured to speak today because it is a truly historic day. Thanks to our party's work, thanks to the unions' work, thanks to the coalition of health advocates' work, we are in the process of passing a bill that will lay the foundation for a universal pharmacare program in Canada.

The Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives are trying to block this bill, but we will not stop our work. We believe that Quebecers deserve a program that covers all drug costs, starting with free access to contraceptives, as well as diabetes devices and medications. Thanks to the NDP and our allies, we are proud to say that this bill will pass today and that we will lay the foundation for a universal pharmacare program.

[English]

One dollar was the price that the Canadian inventors of insulin sold the patent for because they believed that it was more important to save lives than it was to make a profit. Fast forward to today, and pharmaceutical companies are making thousands of dollars off the backs of Canadians to buy life-saving insulin. While big pharma is ripping off Canadians, it looks like Conservatives and Liberals, historically, have been taking their side. Now, we have the Liberals on side, and it looks like Conservatives are backing up big pharma that does not want Canadians to have access to free medication.

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Let us think about how much big pharma is ripping off Canadians just to have life-saving medication. I am concerned that Conservatives are not outraged that Canadians are having to spend money out-of-pocket to buy their medication. People are skipping meals so that they can afford their insulin. People are not taking medication and are becoming more and more sick. Everyone in this room should be angry about that. Pharmacare would save Canadians money and would save their lives.

[*Translation*]

A few years ago, I met a young boy with diabetes. He was around 10 years old. I met him with his father and he shared his story with me. He told me that he had type 1 diabetes, a lifelong disease. He knew that if he did not take care of himself or was irresponsible, he might die. Despite all of that, he was not worried about his disease, but about the cost of the drugs. He was worried about that because those drugs cost his parents a lot of money. In a country as rich as ours, that makes no sense.

While the Liberals and Conservatives focused on defending the interests of pharmaceutical companies, we in the NDP were fighting for this boy. We were fighting to help his parents have access to free diabetes drugs. What we in the NDP want is more money in people's pockets and less money in the coffers of big pharma.

[*English*]

When I think about what free diabetes medication and devices will mean, I think about Scott and Rosemary. Scott is Rosemary's dad. Scott and his partner found out that their daughter, Rosemary, had type 1 diabetes at a year old. She had to be airlifted from New Brunswick to Halifax, and in the hospital, she received life-saving treatment. I remember Scott sharing with me how worried he was about his daughter and how that meant they had to make sure she got the medication and the equipment she needed. Rosemary needs a continuous blood monitor and a pump to stay healthy, to stay alive, and it is a cost for the family. It is something Scott and his partner have to worry about. However, they are not just worried about the cost of that, but also worried about what it means for Rosemary. When she grows up, she will always have to worry about affording this medication. It is not going to go away; it is a lifelong illness. They are worried that she might not make choices to pursue her dreams but that she might instead make choices to find the right job that has the right coverage so that she can stay alive, and they do not want her to worry about that.

I asked Scott what it would mean for him and for his daughter Rosemary if we were able to make sure that she had free diabetes medication and devices. He said that it not only would mean lifting the pressure off him and his partner, as they would not have to worry about the cost, but also would mean that their daughter would have a brighter future. She would not have to worry about the cost of the medication and the devices she needs to stay alive. It would be life-changing for the family now and for the future. That is what we are fighting for.

I think about Linda whom I met in Port Moody—Coquitlam. On the other end of the spectrum, Linda has lived her whole life with type 1 diabetes. She is retired now, but she was diagnosed in her 20s. She has had type 1 diabetes for over 40 years. She was going through her costs, and at many times in her life, she did not have

the best coverage, so it probably cost her a lot more, but she did not have those records. However, as a retired person with some coverage and with some provincial programs available to her, she is spending about \$3,000 a year for the medication and the devices she needs. For her, over a lifetime, she figures that, at a minimum, and it is probably a lot more, she has spent over \$120,000 just to stay alive.

Again, I think about people saying that this is not worth it. To Linda, it is worth it. To Rosemary, it is worth it. This would take away the pressure and the worry. It would mean that people would not be spending money out-of-pocket just to live.

I will talk about what free birth control would mean. Again, this is to Conservatives who say that this does not matter, but to Linda and to Rosemary it matters. When we talk about free birth control, while the Liberals have been in power, access to birth control or access to the right to choose has gone down. It has become more and more difficult, particularly in the Atlantic provinces where clinics have shut down.

We know that the right to choose is fundamental, but access to that right is just as fundamental, and we know that it has been more difficult. The Conservatives have been on a campaign to attack women's rights by bringing in motions that attack women's rights to choose, by supporting rallies that attack women's rights choose and by blocking free birth control. However, New Democrats have been very clear that we want to defend not only women's rights, but also access to those rights. It is fundamental to acknowledge that free birth control means reinforcing and strengthening the right to choose by giving more access to that right, which is fundamentally meaningful.

I will close by thanking everyone who made this possible. A particular thanks to my health critics, both the previous health critic, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, and the current health critic, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby. I thank all the health coalition activists and all the labour activists who made this possible today.

It is a historic day for Canadians when we put the needs of Canadians ahead of big pharma. We say that Canadians deserve a health care system that truly covers them from head to toe, including universal pharmacare for all.

• (1340)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the NDP for his intervention today. More importantly, I thank him and our NDP colleagues for being adults in the room and for working with the government to bring forward meaningful legislation.

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Although I get laughs from across the way, we see this quite a bit, where it is NDP members who are actually helping to make meaningful changes. They have come to this chamber with the objective of improving the lives of Canadians, and I think that needs to be applauded, despite the fact that, in theory, it is what we are all supposed to be doing here.

We have been hearing all day, and indeed, every time this debate has been going on, from Conservatives, that this would not have a big impact on Canadians, that it would not make a big difference because so many people are already covered and that what we are seeing through this legislation would not really do much for Canadians. I completely disagree with that. I would like to hear the leader of the NDP's thoughts on that.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, although New Democrats always want to ensure that we are working toward improving the lives of people, we had to fight hard for this. This was not something that came on its own. We have to acknowledge that both Liberals and Conservatives initially voted against pharmacare when we first presented it. However, we were able to force the government to move forward now. In terms of the question, particularly the Conservatives' critique, I have given concrete stories about particular people who would directly benefit from this.

When we think about the potential of this bill's massive impact, for birth control, nine million women in our country would receive access to free birth control. My colleague worked at a women's clinic, and on the days they provided access to contraceptives, or birth control, there would be lineups for hours. People waited to get access to that free birth control medication and ended up leaving, often without getting access, because there was so much demand. We know that with the cost of living as high as it is, this would be a meaningful reduction in the cost of living. It would save money for women who need access to this medication, and it would also provide them with meaningful access to choice.

For the nearly four million people living with diabetes, this would fundamentally save them money. People who have coverage often do not have complete coverage and still have to spend money out-of-pocket. Therefore, yes; this would save money and would save lives for millions of Canadians. It is meaningful, and I reject the Conservative claim that this would not be good for people.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the House recognized Quebec as a nation. Through a unanimous vote in its National Assembly, Quebec is calling for a right to opt out with full compensation to improve its own program, which it has been administering for 30 years.

Does the leader of the NDP agree with the Quebec National Assembly?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, the offer today is for all Canadians and all Quebecers. We want to give them free contraceptives. That will really help women in Quebec. I know that this is going to be costly, but there is a great need for it.

It is the same thing for diabetes medication. We want to provide free drugs and medical devices. That will help people in Quebec. What we want to do is work together with the provinces and Quebec. We want people in Quebec to get the same coverage as people in the rest of Canada. For me, it is unacceptable to have free diabetes medication in Ontario but not in Quebec. I will not accept a situation where Nova Scotians get free medication but Quebecers do not.

Here is what we want to do. We want to create a situation where everyone across the country has access to free medication. That includes Quebec.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know that the member's riding of Burnaby South is always near and dear to his heart. I wanted to ask, through you, about the impact of this important historic legislation on people like Amber in Burnaby. Amber pays \$1,000 a month for a diabetes medication.

How would this legislation help the member's constituents in Burnaby, like Amber?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, on that great question from my colleague, it is important to point out that although the Conservatives and the pharmaceutical industry will mention there is coverage that people have, many people have coverage that requires a co-pay or that has a cap on how much is covered, and they have to spend money out-of-pocket. Having access to free diabetes medication and devices means it would be entirely free; it would cover that medication.

When we think about the cost, if someone does not take the medication they need, they end up having worse outcomes and end up in an emergency room, and that costs all of us. It is not only a saving for that person, not only a saving for Amber, but also an improvement to the overall health care system if people can stay healthy and can prevent illnesses.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that today is the fifth anniversary of the National Inquiry of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Two-Spirit and Gender-Diverse People. We need to acknowledge today that the government is failing to address the genocide against indigenous people, and that is failing both indigenous people and all Canadians. I certainly hope that the government prioritizes those calls for justice, knowing that to date we have only achieved two of the 231 calls for justice.

Today we are here to speak about Bill C-64. Today is, as my leader, the member for Burnaby South mentioned, historic. It is not just historic because of pharmacare. I do want give a shout-out to the Edmonton Oilers, who are now going to the Stanley Cup finals as of yesterday. It was a very big day.

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I also want to start by saying how grateful I am to our leader. Our leader, the member for Burnaby South, has been a strong advocate for pharmacare for years. Instead of just being an advocate, he rolled up his sleeves, got to work, worked with the Liberals and he forced the Liberals, against all their historic votes, to put this framework in place.

I am so grateful to be a New Democrat today. I am so grateful to work with such a strong leader. I am also extraordinarily grateful to all the advocates who have done so much for decades to move this forward.

I want to start by talking a little about one of my constituents, Pat. He came into my office, and he had a challenge. We are really proud of health care in Canada. Canadians should be proud of our public health care system. However, when Pat came into my office and talked to my team and I, he told us that he had been able to see a doctor and he had been referred to a specialist. The specialist was able to give him treatment. The problem was that the medication for his treatment cost \$400, and he did not have that \$400. While our health care system is a point of pride, thanks to the health care system that Tommy Douglas developed, Pat was able to get part way there, but he was unable to get the treatment that would actually help him. It was never supposed to be this way.

When Tommy Douglas envisioned our health care system, pharmacare was always supposed to be part of that system. We know that Canada is the only country that has a medicare program that does not include pharmacare. It does not make any sense that we will treat Canadians to a certain point, but that we will not get them over the finish line without access to medication.

Today is an opportunity to make pharmacare a reality for millions of Canadians and to lay the groundwork to create a fully universal pharmacare system for all Canadians. It is truly historic.

Pat is not alone. A few months ago, I sat and listened to Albertans share their challenges and experiences at a pharmacare round table in Edmonton. One after another, Edmontonians stood up and they talked about how the lack of prescription coverage had affected their lives, how they had to juggle their bills and how they had to worry about groceries, utilities and rent, on top of their prescriptions. They had to make choices about which of those things they can afford.

As members of Parliament, sitting in this place, every one of us has a health care plan that covers our medication. However, for so many Canadians who do not have that access, this is game-changing. This is the difference between paying their rent and taking care of their health at the same time.

It was not just lower-income Canadians who were speaking out for pharmacare. Business leaders and health care professionals were all speaking about how important pharmacare was for them and why they wanted the government to move fast on this.

I spoke to a paramedic who shared his experience providing emergency care and transportation to hospital for people who could not afford their prescriptions, people who would be doing well if they had taken their medications appropriately, if they had not thought about cutting their pills in half, if they had not thought about taking a pill every second day. Those decisions that people

are making are impacting their health, which in the long run have large costs on our health care system as well.

Doctors are so frustrated that their patients are not getting better because they cannot afford the treatment. Small business owners, despite paying more than minimum wage, can not possibly pay their employees enough in order to afford their medications.

● (1350)

A couple months ago, I sent out a mailer on pharmacare, as we all do in this place. I wanted to know what people in Edmonton thought about pharmacare. The response from constituents in Edmonton Strathcona was overwhelming. Ninety three per cent of people indicated that they were in favour of a universal pharmacare program and only 5% indicated that they were unsure or opposed. This mirrors national polls that put support for implementing a national pharmacare program to provide equal access to prescription drugs for everyone in Canada at 87%.

Last year, an Alberta-wide poll found that 74% of Albertans supported universal pharmacare. As the president of the polling company noted, the overwhelming support in Alberta for a federal program like this was surprising. He said, "Getting three-quarters of a population to agree with any piece of public policy these days, it is a bit astounding. It's very popular in Alberta." He added that approval of the idea largely crossed all demographics and all regions of the province. Canadians understand and they know that we must care for one another. We must take care of each other, and universal pharmacare is a promise to take care of each other.

This legislation is not the end point; it is just the beginning but a very important beginning. We need the bill to create the mechanism for a full-fledged universal pharmacare system that covers all Canadians. No matter how young or how old, no matter where they live and no matter how they make their living, all Canadians have the right to prescription drug coverage, and this legislation is critical in getting it for them. The legislation is always going to be critical, but, right now, with coverage for contraceptives and diabetes medication, these two classes of drugs would impact millions of Canadians.

For example, nearly four million Canadians are affected with diabetes, a disease that impacts every aspect of their lives. In my province of Alberta, individuals with diabetes have had to fight the provincial government repeatedly to ensure they get the care they need and deserve. The bill would mean that people living with diabetes may finally be able to put those battles aside and finally have hope for their future. By treating diabetes with devices and supplies on the same terms as the prescription medication, this legislation would save diabetics hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars each year.

With regard to contraceptives, we know the impact of contraception on women across the country and how vitally important this is. Manpreet Gill, the president of the Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association and associate professor in the division of General Clinical Medicine at the University of Alberta, has written about the importance of contraceptive coverage to health and especially health care in Alberta. Dr. Gill states:

The cost of hormonal therapy (including for birth control) and intrauterine devices (IUDs) is a barrier for Albertan women to receive medically necessary care....

It also perpetuates unfairness in the system, resulting in unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. Universally available contraception would reduce the number of abortions, reduce economic stress on young and poor women and improve child and maternal health. It is estimated that 40 per cent of pregnancies in Canada are unplanned and it seems obvious that those who cannot afford contraception cannot afford to have a child.

The current patchwork system in Alberta is blatantly unfair. First, it is obvious that birth-control costs are primarily borne by women while men bear no such equivalent costs....

Secondly, while it is true that private plans cover birth control, it is worth considering two facts that this reveals. One, birth control reduces the costs to a private health plan, that's why it is offered, and two, those that most [have that] need [are unable to] access...it.

As a woman, as a mother and as a mother of a daughter, I want my daughter, and every daughter in our country, every daughter in this world, to have access to the entire range of reproductive health care, including contraceptives. A system that provides access to some, those who can afford care, while denying access to others is not a system that I can support. Reproductive health care is health care, period.

Finally, I want to thank all the advocates across Canada who have worked so hard and so long to create this legislation. I want to thank Chris and the powerful advocates at Friends of Medicare in Alberta, who have worked not months, not years, but decades for this universal pharmacare. I want to thank the Canadian Labour Congress, the Alberta Federation of Labour and all the labour leaders, organizers and members across Canada who have put the needs of all Canadians, regardless of union membership, at the forefront of their campaigns for pharmacare.

• (1355)

We are here today because of the hard work of so many Canadians and so many leaders in our country. I continue to be delighted and honoured to work with all those leaders to ensure we get this over the finish line.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### CANORIENT

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to attend the 50th anniversary reception of the Toronto Canorient association organized by Senator Andrew Cardozo. The organization traces its roots to the Canorient Christian Association, which was formed in Montreal in 1971.

To serve the Christian community from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, a Toronto chapter, which be-

### Statements by Members

came the Toronto Canorient association, was formed 50 years back. It has been actively serving its members since then.

I would like place on record my appreciation for the late Tony Moscrop, who left a valuable legacy to the association in the form of the Canorient Community Centre. I would like to thank the members of the association, led by its president, Florence Soares, for travelling to Ottawa for the reception.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

### FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this June, communities across Canada are celebrating Filipino Heritage Month. Canada is proud to be the home of nearly one million Filipinos who enrich our social, cultural and economic fabric throughout our nation.

Canadians have welcomed the shared Filipino values of family, faith and freedom for many generations and will do so for generations to come. The important relationship between Canada and the Philippines is strong. In fact, this year marks 75 years of bilateral diplomatic relations between Canada and the Philippines. During Filipino Heritage Month, Filipinos across Canada will celebrate this relationship and their heritage through delicious food, incredible art and vibrant music. On June 12, Filipinos will celebrate 126 years since their people rose up, demanded their freedom and secured their independence.

As vice-chair of the Canada-Filipino interparliamentary group, it is an honour to wish Canadians a happy Filipino Heritage Month. *Mabuhay.*

\* \* \*

### CHEETAHS FOR CHANGE

**Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to salute, for their big dream and optimistic outlook, the wonderful, passionate CPA High students who make up the Cheetahs for Change. Formed in 2020 with the guidance of their teacher Madame Yelena Smith, the Cheetahs' mission is to build a positive, inclusive culture at their school.

They have done this by hosting guest speakers and organizing workshops about mental health, racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia. They foster civic participation by holding Remembrance Day ceremonies and local election debates, both of which I have been honoured to join. In all they do, the Cheetahs emphasize students' commonalities over differences. Their motto is "I am because you are—because it takes a village."

I say thank you to all the Cheetahs.

[Translation]

It is a great start to their future.

*Statements by Members***ENTRAIDE AGAPÈ**

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for 40 years, Entraide Agapè has been a beacon for Beauport—Limoilou.

What began as a soup kitchen in the basement of the Saint-Roch church in 1981 has, over the years, grown into one of the largest community organizations in Quebec City. Entraide Agapè helps vulnerable people get the food they need thanks to its food bank, while the second-hand store operates as a social economy enterprise to fund the food bank.

I would like to commend the extraordinary dedication of Entraide Agapè's employees and volunteers, especially its general manager, Daniel Régimbal, who has been devoted to the cause for many years. Their ongoing commitment to supporting families and newcomers is inspiring and essential to our community.

I thank them for making a positive difference in the lives of so many people. They are a real pillar in Beauport—Limoilou; they are truly outstanding.

\* \* \*

**FESTA DELLA REPUBBLICA**

**Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the *Festa della Repubblica*, observed on June 2, is a symbol of the resilience, courage and self-determination of a people embarking on a new chapter of freedom and democracy.

Shortly after the Italian Republic was formed in 1946, Canada opened bilateral relations with Italy, and the two became partners, working hand in hand within various multilateral institutions. Italian Canadians are a large and vibrant community, active in every aspect of our bilateral relations.

Tomorrow, the Italian flag will be raised on Parliament Hill to mark this day and the powerful ties between Canada and Italy. I invite all my colleagues to join the Canada-Italy Interparliamentary Group and the Italian ambassador to Canada tomorrow morning at 9:30 a.m. in front of the Centennial Flame for the flag-raising ceremony marking the *Festa della Repubblica*.

*A domani mattina.*

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[English]

**SAM YOUNG**

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Sam Young. He was passionate about golf, passionate about his family and passionate about his community. Sam had a lifelong passion for golf as a player, a coach and a builder. When he was done playing, Sam purchased a small nine-hole golf course in the town of Shelburne, which expanded to 18 holes. It is a beauty.

Sam started a spectacular golf academy to teach young golfers. Over 30 young golfers got scholarships to the United States and went on to do tournament play. He was a role model to each and

every one of them, and in 2018, Sam was inducted into the PGA of Canada Hall of Fame.

He was also a community builder. He helped with many projects, like the restoration of the old Shelburne town hall, and so many organizations honoured him for volunteerism. I could not list them all, but here are a few: Hospice Dufferin, Canadian Cancer Society, Diabetes Canada and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

I fondly recall many conversations with Sam. He had such wisdom to pass on. Sadly, Sam passed away. He will be missed, but it was a life well lived.

\* \* \*

**WORLD BICYCLE DAY**

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, please join me in wishing everyone a happy World Bicycle Day. It is a great chance to celebrate the joy and convenience of getting around by bicycle, but it is also an opportunity to highlight the need for safe streets for everyone. Our government created the first national active transportation strategy and fund. It is helping communities large and small to make streets safer for cyclists.

I want to give a shout-out to Toronto's bike mayor, Lanrick Bennett Jr. He has done so much to raise awareness about the need for bike safety and to really talk up for everyone the ways that we can use cycling to get around, such as with cargo bikes. Recently I joined Lanrick on a bike bus with school kids, an opportunity to bring a big group of kids together to ride to school together.

If anyone wants to enjoy a group bike ride to work, they can join on Wednesday, leaving from East Lynn Park at 7 a.m.

Happy World Bicycle Day.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**WORLD MILK DAY**

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, June 1, we all celebrated World Milk Day.

This day is an opportunity to recognize the thousands of families who get up every morning to produce quality milk for all Canadians. I especially want to thank the dairy farmers back home in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. Our dairy farmers are economic drivers for our rural communities. This sector employs nearly 200,000 workers and contributes more than \$16.1 billion to Canada's GDP.

Not only do our dairy farmers contribute significantly to our GDP, but they do so in an environmentally responsible manner. Our farmers have reduced their carbon footprint per litre by 24% since the 1990s, and their emissions in Canada are less than half of the global average footprint of a litre of milk.

I commend their efforts. I thank our Canadian dairy farmers. Let us be proud to support them as we continue to celebrate World Milk Day.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### CANADIAN ARMED FORCES DAY

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Canadian Armed Forces Day, we express our gratitude for the bravery of those Canadians who serve our great nation and protect each and every one of us. We thank them and their families for the sacrifices they make for Canada.

The efforts of the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Navy have been recognized from Vimy Ridge and Juno Beach in the Atlantic to Kapyong and Panjwahi in the Indo-Pacific. Our soldiers, sailors and aircrew have always distinguished themselves through their courage, grit and integrity when deployed to conflicts around the world and during times of crisis right here at home.

This year, we commemorate the Royal Canadian Air Force's 100th anniversary and celebrate the incredible contribution its members make to our safety every day. We thank them for their service and sacrifice over the past century.

Today the forces are in a recruitment and retention crisis. The chief of the defence staff said that if we cannot attract the talent, we will not be able to protect Canada into the future. We must ensure that our forces are ready to meet any situation that threatens our peace, prosperity and security, by investing in the equipment they need and streamlining the recruitment process for today, tomorrow and our future.

\* \* \*

#### ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to recognize June as Italian Heritage Month. Canada is home to over 1.5 million people of Italian descent, one of the largest diasporas globally.

I would like to take this time to acknowledge a tireless labour rights activist and author by the name of Marino Toppan. Marino is the creator behind the Italian fallen workers memorial project, established in 2016, which commemorates nearly 2,000 Italian workers who lost their lives on the job over a century ago. I thank Marino for all that he has done for the families of the Italian fallen workers.

To all the Italian Canadians who have contributed to our wonderful country, including my husband and his family, I say *grazie mille* and happy Italian Heritage Month.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

#### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bill Morneau, John Manley, David Dodge and even future Liberal leader Mark Carney all agree that

#### Statements by Members

our lack of economic growth is making Canadians poorer, and things just got worse. Statistics Canada revised Canada's GDP growth for Q4 from 1.0 to 0.1. Further, our GDP per capita fell again 0.7%, marking the eighth quarter of decline.

While Canada is just barely avoiding a technical recession, Canadians themselves have been in the longest recession since the Great Depression. Canada's stagnating economy is having a devastating impact on Canadians. Food banks are overwhelmed. Students are living under bridges, and workers are living out of their cars.

There is no denying it: After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it is not worth the cost.

\* \* \*

#### CARBON TAX

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today Conservatives will vote for our motion that calls on the government to axe the carbon tax, the fuel tax and the GST at the pumps this summer. After nine years of the “do as I say, not as I do”, high-carbon, hypocritical Prime Minister, fuel prices have surged by more than 50% in Canada. However, despite the historic cost of living crisis his tax-and-spend inflationary agenda caused, and even though 70% of Canadians and premiers want him to spike the hike, he will quadruple the carbon tax to make everything more expensive for all Canadians anyway.

This year alone, the carbon tax will cost Alberta families nearly \$3,000, while one in five Albertans is going hungry and 60,000 Alberta kids have to access food banks to survive. Since 2019, Alberta food bank use has skyrocketed by more than 73%.

Conservatives will axe the carbon tax for all for good, because we know it is all economic pain and no environmental gain and is just not worth the cost. Until then, the NDP-Liberal costly coalition should support the common-sense option to give Canadians just a little bit of a break this summer.

\* \* \*

#### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada. It is a month to celebrate indigenous culture and indigenous contributions to our country. As we celebrate National Indigenous History Month, all parliamentarians could indeed make history by sending the first nations clean water act to committee for study.

*Statements by Members*

Bill C-61 would recognize first nations' inherent right to water, ensure that there are minimum standards for first nations' clean water and protect first nations' water sources from pollution and contamination now and into the future. This historic and crucial legislation would ensure that first nations have the funding and self-determination to lay the groundwork for a water institution led by first nations.

All Canadians would expect access to clean water. Surely on this, the first sitting week of National Indigenous History Month, parties from all sides of the House can agree to support first nations' need for clean water. Let us turn the page on this shameful legacy in Canadian history and give unanimous consent to get the important legislation to committee.

\* \* \*

**PRIDE MONTH**

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is June, and Canadians from coast to coast are celebrating Pride Month. In Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, people are off to a very festive start. This past weekend, Elliot Lake Pride kicked off Pride Month with a rainbow flag-raising, a karaoke night and a rainbow dinner.

[*Translation*]

This is just the beginning of the season. The Conseil des arts de Hearst is presenting *Cabaret Queer* on June 7 with drag queen Mona de Grenoble.

[*English*]

Pride Manitoulin kicks off on June 6, with a parade in Shesheganing First Nation on June 8. Espanola Pride's second pride weekend is on June 21, and the Pride Family Colour Run in Wawa is on June 29.

I also want to take a moment to recognize my constituent Douglas Elliott, who has dedicated his life to the LGBTQ+ community and was instrumental in winning a legal battle against the government for its role in the LGBT purge. Douglas was on hand to break ground for the national LGBTQ+ Thunderhead monument last month.

Wherever we may be, let our rainbow pride shine.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday was the Canadian Open golf tournament in Hamilton.

Clearly that Ontario town learned nothing from the last Grey Cup final and the heartfelt plea from Marc-Antoine Dequoy. At the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, almost all the signage and ads were in English only.

It goes beyond signs. For example, Quebec golfer Marc-Olivier Plasse was introduced by the former president of Golf Québec in

English only. A francophone introducing a francophone competitor in English must be some sort of joke.

Golf Canada is the Canadian national sport federation for golf and therefore subject to the Official Languages Act. It receives subsidies from Quebecers' money. They even received \$15,000 specifically for official languages.

Why the need for this constant reminder that the presence of French at the Canadian Open should be normal?

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a glorious day for hockey fans in Canada. The Edmonton Oilers are on the way to the Stanley Cup finals after sending the Dallas Stars packing.

The spirit of the Oilers' fans was on full display last night with excitement, energy and atmosphere that resembled the cup run of 2006 and the successes of the Gretzky years.

I think every Canadian can agree that the Stanley Cup deserves to be back in Canada. With McDavid, Draisaitl, Bouchard, Hyman and the rest of the team, we know the Oilers will axe the Panthers, build the power play, fix the Stanley Cup deficit and stop the pucks. I ask members to join me in cheering on the Oilers so we can bring Lord Stanley's cup back to the city of champions. The cup has been away too long. Let us bring it home.

\* \* \*

**COMMUNITY SPORT FOR ALL INITIATIVE**

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our community sport for all initiative has delivered accessible, affordable, inclusive and life-changing sport, physical activity and recreational opportunities to Canadians. Today, I met with the leaders who made it all happen at an impact summit here on Parliament Hill.

We partnered with national sport organizations, such as Wheelchair Basketball and Nordiq Canada; networks, such as PHE Canada, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, and ParticipACTION; and charities, such as Spirit North, Right to Play and Jumpstart. Together, we have helped Canadians try new sports and activities.

There are too many barriers between people and physical activity. Whether it is the cost, the anxiety about trying something new or simply not having transportation, the community sport for all initiative has successfully lowered those barriers for over one million participants. That is one million Canadians who have enhanced their physical literacy, met new friends, set some goals and had a lot of fun doing it.



June is also national health and fitness month in Canada, which is a great opportunity for people to try a new activity or get back into one they have not done in a little while.

Once again, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the sport leaders from across this country who deliver sport programming to Canadians of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. I thank them for keeping us all happy, moving and healthy.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### TAXATION

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois is flipping his lid again because I quoted René Lévesque, and with good reason. Neither René Lévesque nor Lucien Bouchard, real sovereignists, would have voted to force Quebecers to pay \$500 billion more to grow the federal government. They would not have voted to hire an additional 100,000 federal public servants or to increase Quebecers' taxes.

Will the Prime Minister make the Bloc-Liberal coalition official?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers understand the importance of climate action. They understand the importance of a child care system and early childhood centres. They understand the importance of a government that can manage these programs.

The only thing the Conservatives understand is cut, cut, cut. The Conservatives want to cut programs that Quebecers need and they want reduce the number of public servants that are working for Quebecers.

• (1420)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are going to cut taxes.

It is odd that a so-called sovereignist party is okay with sending Quebecers' money to Ottawa. Apparently, it does not believe that Quebecers should have jurisdiction over their own wallets. This party actually votes for taxes. While we propose allowing Quebecers to keep their money and decide what to do with it, the Bloc Québécois votes with the Liberal Party, its big boss.

Why not give Quebecers sole jurisdiction over their wallets by cutting taxes?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers, the Quebec nation, understand the importance of a social safety net. They understand that a social safety net is built on social programs.

Revenue is needed to create those programs. That is why Éric Girard has also decided to increase the capital gains inclusion rate.

The Conservatives are against it because they are against the people.

### Oral Questions

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week the health minister went into a wacko rant accusing parents who take their kids on a road trip of locking them up in a car for 10 days straight without a washroom break, causing the whole world to burn, and all because we proposed that the government take taxes off gas so that Canadians could have a summer break.

Will the health minister break into the same hysteria over his boss's use of a gas-guzzling private jet to vacation all around the world?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we face an existential crisis in climate change. I was wrong, and I admit it. It is not 37,000 kilometres that they would have to drive. It would be 44,000 kilometres to get the benefit that the Conservatives are talking about. What the Conservatives want to do is not only cut dental care, child care and pharmacare, but also end our climate action and return to the days when the Conservative Party would go into climate conferences to attack the action the world was taking to save our planet. I will stand for climate change action and so will this party.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's wacko math gets even worse. He is talking about vacations of 44,000 kilometres. Those are the vacations his boss takes in a taxpayer-funded, fuel-guzzling private jet. The vacations for which Conservatives want to give Canadians a break are to a local campground where they can support the local economy.

We know Canadians cannot go abroad. All they can do is get in their small vehicle and have a small break. Why will the government not take the tax off so that Canadians can afford to do that?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it seems that we have, in fact, underestimated the wacko math of the Conservative Party of Canada. Sara Hastings-Simon, an associate professor at the University of Calgary faculty of science, crunched the alleged numbers of the Conservative Party. Based on the savings, and according to her calculation, someone would have to drive 44,000 kilometres, not 37,000 kilometres. Therefore, one could drive from the North Pole to the South Pole and back and they would have some kilometres left. These are the types of mathematics that these people are doing.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if that particular minister had his way, Canadians would not even be allowed to drive to the grocery store because he wants to abolish roads. He says we should not fund any more roads, and then he has the audacity to call other people wacko.

Most Canadians do not want to put on an orange jumpsuit or climb a building. They just want to take their kids for a merciful break from this miserable, broken economy, so will the government accept our common-sense plan to take the tax off gas and diesel so Canadians can have a summer?

*Oral Questions*

• (1425)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one cannot, in fact, drive from the North Pole to the South Pole. There are no roads, let alone the fact that there are two oceans. I am sure the Conservatives will find ways to blame me for that.

However, if one were to drive from Canada's most northern city accessible by road, Tuktoyaktuk, in the Northwest Territories, and then drove to the most southern city accessible by road, Tierra del Fuego in Argentina, one would have to drive 16,000 kilometres. At an average speed of 100 kilometres an hour without stopping, that would take 160 hours, and one would only be halfway to the savings claim made by the Conservative Party of Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, although the member for Alfred-Pellan has been criticized for suggesting the idea of promoting English as an official language of Quebec, he is not the first Liberal MP to come up with it.

In fact, none other than the Prime Minister himself raised the matter back in 2016. At the time, he was objecting to the prospect of the city of Ottawa being designated bilingual because Gatineau, right next door in Quebec, was a unilingual French-language city. He opposed bilingualism for Franco-Ontarians unless Quebec stepped up and made English an official language. In fact, he had to apologize and admitted that he was being cheeky.

Will he ask the member to do the same?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois's comments are very hypocritical.

First of all, the action plan that we put forward to strengthen the French language was the most ambitious ever. The Bloc Québécois voted against it.

In budget 2024, we are investing heavily to create substantive equality between the official languages. What did the Bloc Québécois do? Again, it voted no.

The Bloc could at least have the courage to stand by its position and admit that it says one thing and does the opposite.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to French, the Liberals are a horror show.

It starts with the Prime Minister, who wanted to make Gatineau bilingual. Then there is the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who thinks that people who worry about the decline of French are being extreme and are full of the s-word. Next, there is the member for Mount Royal, who said that it was a disgrace to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. On top of that, there is the member for Saint-Laurent, who thinks that Bill 96 will prevent anglophones from getting care. It is nonsense.

Why are the Liberals systematically incapable of talking about the French language without going off the rails?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what is nonsense is my colleague's question. He voted against the official languages plan and he voted against the budget, in which we are investing money to defend English and French.

Now, I am going to tell him something. Being a separatist does not him person more of a Quebecker than the Liberal members from Quebec, or even the Conservatives from Quebec.

There are Quebeckers who are not sovereignists, but who are proud Quebeckers, proud francophones and anglophones who defend French and always will defend it, no matter what the Bloc Québécois does.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has been five years since the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released its 231 calls for justice. Only two are fully implemented, and the Liberals continue to ignore this ongoing genocide. Commissioners who led this inquiry are giving the government a failing grade. Rates of violence are up. Families are left looking for answers. It has been five years and things are getting worse.

Will the Liberals stop stalling and implement the calls for justice to save lives now?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for her constant advocacy on this issue. Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit and gender-diverse people in Canada are 12 times more likely to go missing or be murdered compared to their non-indigenous counterparts. Urgent action is needed to improve safety, justice and dismantle systemic racism.

Today we tabled the “2023-24 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report”, noting funding for 52 community safety projects, nine safety plans, 47 shelters and a pilot red dress alert system. Progress includes better health services, expanded Internet for over 25,000 indigenous—

• (1430)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona has the floor.

\* \* \*

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, despite promising to do so three months ago, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has failed to issue a notice to exporters telling them that they cannot sell weapons to Netanyahu's government. As Palestinians are starving, as violence in the West Bank escalates and as UN experts are calling for the recognition of Palestine, the Liberals will not act to stop a genocide. Peace requires action. Justice requires action: two-way arms embargo, sanctions on Netanyahu's war cabinet and recognition of Palestine.

*Oral Questions*

When will the minister stop speaking empty words and take action?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the situation in Gaza is absolutely catastrophic. That is why we need the violence to stop. We need an immediate ceasefire. That is why Canada fully supports the proposal by the President of the United States. We need to take a chance on peace.

Along with our allies, we are following what my colleague just mentioned very closely, because our position has been clear when it comes to arms exports. We will make decisions accordingly.

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**TAXATION**

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the level of hypocrisy on that side of the House is nothing short of astonishing. The Prime Minister is literally jet-setting around the world on his gas-fuelled jet, while the health minister has said people should not go on a family trip because it will cause the planet to “burn”. We have the simplest common-sense motion right now that will save Ontario families \$592. That might mean nothing to them, but it means a lot.

Will the government listen, have some compassion and axe the tax so that families can make memories and enjoy their time together?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the savings that the Conservative Party of Canada is claiming are simply not true. Let me quote Dan McTeague, a former Liberal MP, but a vocal opponent to our policies, including carbon pricing, and no fan of mine, I might add. When asked about that proposal from the Conservative Party, he said that he was “in the wilderness” and that there was no way that the savings that the Conservatives were claiming were true, number one. He is at the head of Canadians for Affordable Energy. Number two, it would cost the government “billions of dollars” of taxpayers' money.

When are the Conservatives going to stop that?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nobody believes a word that side of the House says. The Liberals have completely lost the trust of Canadians. They have caused chaos. They have caused crime. They have caused complete despair.

People are using food banks at the highest record level they ever have in their life. Nobody believes what the Liberals are saying. Do members know what 35¢ a litre at the pumps would save? It would save the cost to ship food. It would allow people to actually feed their families. Most importantly, it would take off the stress that is creating mental health crises in this country.

The Liberals stand over there and say that they will fight for this. Will they?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague led her question saying that nobody believes what anyone in the government has to say. It is not us who is saying it. One of the people who spent tens of thousands of dollars to take Conservative MPs on a junket

to London to wine and dine them, so that they would be his mouthpiece in this chamber, is saying that he is lost “in the wilderness”.

There are academics who have studied the Conservatives' proposal. The cost savings that the Conservatives say will accrue to families would mean one would have to go to the North Pole, to the South Pole and back in order to make that a reality.

The member started her question talking about hypocrisy. I would remind her once again that she has been voting against measures and then showing up for the announcements about them in her riding.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister loves to jet-set around the world on his luxury vacations but then stick the taxpayers with the bill. Meanwhile, the Liberal health minister is telling Canadians not to take a summer vacation or the planet will “burn”. This hypocrisy is ridiculous and it is just not true. Conservatives have a common-sense plan to axe all federal gas taxes until Labour Day, ensuring that Canadians can take their families on a summer vacation.

Will the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister stop his hypocrisy, stop his radical policies and axe the tax so that Canadians can take their summer holiday?

• (1435)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, maybe it is the definition of a family road trip. For me, a family road trip is a few hundred kilometres. For the Conservatives, it's 44,000 kilometres in order to realize the benefit that they are selling. That is a pretty big difference.

I will tell colleagues that while Conservatives spent last weekend trying to cut YouTube clips for Instagram or Facebook so that they could try to misrepresent an issue as important as climate change, I was talking to the seniors who they want to deny dental care to and I was talking to the people who need pharmacare. Of course, their focus is not on the facts, but in misrepresenting the issues.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here are the facts.

I was at a senior's home in Claresholm this weekend. They are seeing their rent increased 5% to cover the cost of the carbon tax. This is forcing seniors to make very difficult choices, to either stay in their home, afford food or find other accommodations. Those are the facts.

Common-sense Conservatives are putting forward a plan that would save 35¢ a litre for Canadians. This would save Alberta families \$955 this summer.

Will the out-of-touch Liberals support the common-sense Conservative plan to axe the tax so Canadians can take a well-deserved summer vacation with their family?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what is really hypocritical is running on Erin O'Toole's carbon tax plan and then doing a 180° pivot.

However, let us talk about some stuff we can agree on. I think we all agree we want the Oilers to win the Stanley Cup, and we can all agree that Danielle Smith is a true-blue Conservative.

How do the Conservatives reconcile that with the fact that she has raised the tax on gas by 13¢ a litre?

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a beautiful day out there. It puts parents in the mood to organize a vacation with the kids so they can enjoy some quality time together as a family. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister's inflationary spending, supported by the Bloc Québécois, means that 54% of them have had to change their plans because of the cost of living. People do not really want to pay more at the pump, as the radical Bloc wants them to. People want to pay less and enjoy life more.

Will the Prime Minister help the 65% of Quebeckers who will be heading out on summer road trips and vote to suspend federal gas taxes for the summer, yes or no?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Conservatives do not understand math. Perhaps I should try culture. Consider Isabelle Boulay's beautiful song, *Entre Matane et Bâton Rouge*, which is a distance of 2,800 kilometres. That takes about 30 hours by car. A person would have to drive from Matane to Bâton Rouge, then come back and drive there again, come back and drive there again, come back and drive there again, come back and drive there one more time, and that would be their vacation. They are talking nonsense.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, because of this government's taxes, Quebeckers cannot even afford to drive to Matane.

The Minister of Health completely missed the point when he tried to make kids feel guilty last week. He said, "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." Then he went on to say, "They can enjoy their 10 hours in the car and let the planet burn."

Instead of going after kids and parents, will the Prime Minister call his minister to order and vote in favour of our common-sense motion to suspend gas taxes for the summer?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to save as much money as the Conservative Party claims they would, a person would have to drive at least 320 hours over the summer. I do not know how much vacation time the Conservative Party thinks people have, but a person would have to drive 320 hours non-stop, without stopping to take bathroom breaks or to see the beautiful landscape. That is 320 hours of non-stop driving. What a bunch of nonsense.

They are not good at math, nor are they good at culture, it seems.

• (1440)

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, here we go again, having to talk about the Liberals' blunders when it comes to the French language.

Last week, the member for Alfred-Pellan wanted to promote English to the status of an official language in Quebec. Obviously, he was criticized by the parties in the Quebec National Assembly. Even the Quebec Liberals described it as an attack on Robert Bourassa's legacy. In this Parliament, however, not a single Liberal has spoken out so far against what the member for Alfred-Pellan proposed.

Silence means consent. Will someone finally stand up and put the member in his place?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will say what we on this side of the House stand up for.

We stand up for French. We stand up for bilingualism. We stand up for the anglophone minority in Quebec. We stand up for the francophone minority outside Quebec. We stand up for two strong official languages. We stand up to defend Quebec within Canada.

All they think about is stirring up trouble, making sure that there are divisions to point at. They say they support official languages, but they vote against the action plan. They say they support official languages, but they vote against the budget. It is profoundly hypocritical.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is not a penny more for French in his official languages action plan.

There is only one francophone state in North America. Only one. However, that is one too many for the member for Alfred-Pellan, who wants us to make English an official language.

I will say it again for those sitting at the back who have not yet understood: In order for Canada to be bilingual, Quebec needs to be French. I will repeat this too: There is only one official language that is at risk in Canada and Quebec, and that is French.

Why do the Liberals always want to introduce more anglicization measures?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Quebec is a French province. We have always said that and we have always defended that. We will continue to defend the French fact.

If my colleague had bothered to read the official languages action plan, then he would have seen that there is money there for French. If he had bothered to read the budget, then he might have understood that he is voting against things that he wants to defend.

*Oral Questions*

He needs to be consistent. Does he want more French? Then he should have voted in favour of the official languages action plan. Does he want more money for French? Then he should have voted in favour of the budget.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense.

Unfortunately, it will not be long before the member for Alfred-Pellan's wish to anglicize Quebec comes true. The Liberals are working on it already.

The Office québécois de la langue française reports that the federal government is the worst employer in Quebec when it comes to the right to work primarily in French. Quebec's French language commissioner has proven that integrating immigrants into French-speaking society is impossible if the levels endorsed by Ottawa are maintained.

The Liberals are already acting as if English is an official language. Could that be why they are defending their member for Alfred-Pellan?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows full well, with the modernization of the Official Languages Act, our government has made it abundantly clear that French is declining here in Canada.

I come from Alberta. I studied in French at Campus Saint-Jean. Thanks to investments by the Government of Alberta, and thanks to official bilingualism across the country, I was able to study in the language of my choice, the language of Molière, in the right way.

We are going to protect official language minority communities in every province and in every corner of the country, because French and English matter. Under the act, Quebec is a unilingual francophone nation.

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[English]

**TAXATION**

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister is planning his taxpayer-funded junkets to tropical Caribbean islands, last week, this health minister made the ludicrous statement that families enjoying road trips are somehow complicit in letting the “planet burn”. This is just another example of this government's golden rule: Do as I say, not as I do.

Canada's Conservatives have presented an option: remove the tax on fuel so Canadians can afford to put fuel in their tanks and food on their tables. Will this Liberal-NDP Prime Minister come out of the ivory tower and please vote yes so Canadians can afford basics and maybe even a summer getaway?

● (1445)

**Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a really hard time believing that suddenly the Conservatives have an interest in doing what is best on behalf of Canadian families. If that were the case, they would have supported the Canada child benefit, which will be in-

cluded to inflation next month, supporting Canadian families even more. They would have supported moving forward with early learning and child care at \$10-a-day enabling more parents to get back to work. Their actions are not matching their words.

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one in three Canadians can access the child care. The rhetoric needs to stop. Today, the government has an opportunity to vote for our common-sense Conservative motion to provide a temporary measure of relief for Canadians over the summer. It would help families, single parents, seniors, students and everyone in between. Pausing the tax on fuel would benefit all Canadians. In Ontario, this would mean the government would leave nearly \$600 in the bank accounts of Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister vote in favour of the motion and allow Canadians to have a simple getaway, yes or no?

**Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in terms of what we just heard, it is quite the contrary. We know that 750,000 Canadian families are now able to access affordable, inclusive, accessible child care through our child care plan. That translates into thousands of dollars of savings each and every year for Canadian families. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure more spaces are created, but this is how we help Canadian families.

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians such as Tammy in my riding are being squeezed for every last penny. Families are paying hundreds of dollars every month on a tax plan that has not hit a single target. While Liberal ministers get chauffeured around town, they lecture Canadians and say the planet will burn if they drive to work or drive their kids to school.

Will the Prime Minister quit exploiting families for trying to get by, cut the carbon tax catastrophe and vote for the common-sense Conservative plan to help Canadians this summer by axing the tax?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: Albertans get the most back from the Canada carbon rebate, and there is a rural top-up that is going to double thanks to our budget. When we had a minor increase in the price on pollution this year, guess who increased the price of fuel by 13¢? It was the premier of the Province of Alberta, Danielle Smith. Guess what she did? She offered no rebate and zero dollars back.

The Canada carbon rebate puts more money in the pockets of Albertans, while Danielle Smith and the Conservatives do absolutely nothing.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**HOUSING**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis is a source of stress for many people. There is a shortage of affordable houses and apartments. For years, Liberals and Conservatives have neglected truly affordable housing. Experts tell us that we could ease the burden by converting federal buildings into housing. That is a good idea, but people are still going to have to be able to afford the rent.

Can the Liberals guarantee that 100% of available federal land and buildings will be devoted to social and affordable housing?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to thank my colleague for his interest in building affordable housing.

I share his concerns. That is why we created the housing accelerator fund, which includes an agreement with Quebec that will result in the construction of more than 8,000 affordable housing units.

Also, we have an opportunity to use public land to create affordable housing. I look forward to working with my colleague to work out the details and build plenty of affordable housing across our country.

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[English]

**GROCERY INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while a record number of families are turning to food banks, grocery CEOs have never been richer. The Liberals are not cracking down on the corporate greed driving up food prices. As for the Conservatives, they would not dare touch the profits of their CEO donors.

Canadians deserve better. The NDP is giving the Liberals a chance to put an end to corporate greed by making rich CEOs pay what they owe so that we can invest that money back into Canadians.

Will the Liberals vote in favour of our motion to make rich grocery CEOs pay what they owe?

● (1450)

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all recognize in this country that families are having a hard time when it comes to groceries. That is why we have acted, with the Minister of Finance, to present to this nation the largest revamp of our competition law in the country.

Guess who voted against it? The Conservatives did. They are the ones who are standing and saying they want to help families. If they want to do something to help us, they should stand with us in asking Costco and Walmart to sign the grocery code of conduct.

That is the best way to bring fairness into this country. We will keep pushing, and I hope the Conservatives are going to join us in that endeavour.

**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the fifth anniversary of the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples, a reminder of the deep-seated and systemic violence faced by indigenous peoples. It is a time not only to reflect on the past but also to assess our work towards meaningful change.

Can the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations provide an update on the progress made in implementing the calls for justice?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just came from the front lawn of Parliament Hill where I heard from Bridget Tolley. Her mother was stolen from her over 20 years ago, and she has been seeking justice ever since. This is the story of many indigenous families and survivors across this country. On this fifth anniversary of the national inquiry, we stand with people such as Bridget. While there is a lot of work to do, we will continue to ensure that each and every call to justice is fulfilled.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, never before has so much been spent to achieve so little. Despite a doubling of the national debt, today, Statistics Canada confirmed that GDP per capita has fallen again for the sixth time in seven quarters. Under the Prime Minister, Canadians have seen one of the steepest falls in the standard of living in our history.

Why is the Prime Minister spending so much to make Canadians so poor?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives just cannot resist talking Canada down. That is why we are not hearing from them about inflation being within the Bank of Canada's target range for four months in a row and, in April, the lowest it has been in three years, at 2.7%. That is why we are not hearing from them that, last year, Canada attracted the most foreign direct investment per capita in the entire G7. The other things we are not hearing about from them are all the programs they are going to cut, starting with the national school food program.

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the Canadian standard of living is declining. In the United States, GDP per capita has grown more than 8% since 2019. Our economy is now underperforming the United States by the widest margin since 1965, while under the Prime Minister, the government has grown morbidly obese. More Canadians are visiting food banks than ever before. This is economic malpractice.

Why is the Prime Minister spending so much to make Canadians so poor?

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yet again, the Conservatives are relentlessly talking Canada down and concealing their austerity agenda. The reality is that Canada has added 1.3 million more jobs than we had before the pandemic. The Canadian economy is 104% the size it was before the pandemic, a rate of growth second, in the G7, only to the United States. We have preserved our AAA credit rating with a stable out—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the latest number from Stats Canada shows that, under the Liberal government, Canadians have seen one of the steepest falls in living standards in our country's history. This means that our quality of life has now dropped to the same level it was eight years ago, while the unemployment rate is up from last year. After nine years of the Liberal government, Canadians are worse off. They are working twice as hard to take in half as much. In fact, Canada's economy has stagnated and Liberal policy is to blame.

Why is the Prime Minister spending so much to make Canadians so poor?

• (1455)

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to hear the Conservatives talking down Canadians, Canada and our prospects. Around the world, people are talking about Canada. Do we know what? As my colleague said before, we have received the largest level of investment in our economy. Do we know why? It is because we have the best workers in the world, because we have renewable energy, because we have trade agreements with our G7 partners and because we know how to make things in this country.

While they talk down Canada, on this side of the House, we will keep pumping up Canada, we will keep improving this country, and we will bring jobs in this country.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are ruining the economy. Production of made-in-Canada goods and services has declined for the fourth straight quarter; the latest drop was by 0.7% in the first three months of this year. Canada remains last of 37 market-based countries that have not recovered from before the pandemic. In fact, Canada underperforms the American economy by the widest margin since 1965; sadly, Canada's economy continues to stagnate under the current Prime Minister's uncontrolled spending and punishing taxes.

### Oral Questions

Why is the Prime Minister spending so much to make Canadians so poor?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to talk to representatives of the hundreds upon hundreds of Canadian companies that have come with me to many markets around the world where we have excellent trade agreements. They are taking their services, they are taking their goods, they are taking their innovations, they are taking their creations, and they are selling. Canadian companies are selling Canada around the world. Does the member know what they are doing by doing that? They are creating jobs from coast to coast to coast. We need to keep talking up the Canadian economy and Canadian businesses. We are doing that on this side of the House, and I want to know why you are not.

**The Speaker:** I am certain the hon. minister was not referring to the Speaker, but I would encourage all members to ensure that the questions and answers are directed through the Chair.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

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[Translation]

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the cost of natural disasters is going up every year with climate change. The question becomes whether it is up to taxpayers to foot the entire bill or whether those who are largely responsible should be asked to pay a portion of it.

Vermont just adopted legislation to make the oil companies pay for climate change-related damages. Canada could take a page out of their book.

Since the oil companies are the primary greenhouse gas emitters and since they are making record profits from polluting, why not force them to pay for climate change adaptation measures?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question and the fact that, unlike the Conservatives, she thinks that climate change is indeed a significant problem that we need to address.

I would remind her that we are the only G7 country to have cut fossil fuel subsidies, two years ahead of schedule no less. We are the only ones to have done that.

Just this morning, we announced a \$530-million fund with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to work with our communities across the country. This is going to help 1,400 municipalities across the country to deal with the consequences of climate change.

### Oral Questions

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on one side of the border, we have Vermont, which is passing a law to force oil companies to pay for climate damage. On the other side of the border, we have the Liberals and the NDP, who again last week voted in favour of giving \$30 billion in additional tax giveaways to those same oil companies.

While Vermont wants to force oil companies to pay for the damage they are causing, Canada is rewarding them. I thought that the Liberals and the so-called environmentalists in the NDP supported the polluter pays principle.

Why then, when it comes to oil companies, is it the “polluter paid” principle?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, over the past two years, we have implemented a clean fuel standard, something that the Conservatives promised to do the last time, but they flip-flopped again.

We increased the price on pollution, something that the Conservatives promised to do, but they once again flip-flopped.

We are capping greenhouse gas emissions in the oil and gas sector, and we are the only major oil-producing country in the world to do that.

Our emissions are so low that the last time they were so low in Canada was just after the Canadiens won the Stanley Cup.

We have come a long way since then.

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● (1500)

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Liberal government, it is crisis after crisis.

Two-thirds of Montreal's population see their city plagued by homelessness, drugs, street gangs and gun violence. This social disorder has been caused by the Bloc Québécois, which supported Bill C-5 so that criminals could be sent home rather than to prison. This is costing Quebeckers dearly in terms of security.

When will this Prime Minister, backed by the Bloc Québécois, stop imposing misery on Quebeckers?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, keeping Canadians informed is one of our basic responsibilities as politicians.

I would remind members that just a few days ago, the Conservative leader told people in my region that the Canadian dental care plan does not exist. However, two million Canadians, including several thousand in the riding of my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, have registered for the Canadian dental care plan. Some 60% of Quebec suppliers are already registered.

Today, we announced that children under 18 and persons with disabilities will also be able to register as of June 27.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Montrealers are fed up. They are finding used syringes on the doorsteps to their homes, their day cares and their businesses along with human waste on the ground. The reality of the Bloc-Liberal alliance is \$500 billion in reckless spending that has contributed to this homelessness crisis. It is budget chaos and social chaos.

Can this Prime Minister, backed by the Bloc Québécois, stop wasting Quebeckers' money so they can have a safe city again?

**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 am an MP from Montreal and I am very happy to see that my colleague is interested in what is happening there. I am the member for Hochelaga, where there is a homelessness crisis. We are working to address it every day.

On our side of the House, we are putting in place programs that the Conservatives consistently vote against. If they really want to look after the most vulnerable people in our society, they can start by voting in favour of the programs we are putting forward.

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this government, there can be no denying that the Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois are not worth the cost.

Violence in our prisons is getting worse and is spreading. An article in *Le Quotidien* newspaper reports that prison guards in Roberval are threatened and intimidated on a daily basis. Instead of protecting them, the Bloc Québécois is making the situation worse by fully supporting the Prime Minister's policies, which have caused chaos across the country.

When will the Liberals, backed by the Bloc, listen to us and protect Canadians instead letting violence run rampant?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will use the example raised by my colleague. Contrary to what he says, we are working with correctional services specifically to protect the safety of people who work in our correctional institutions.

Along with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Services and Procurement, I had the privilege of visiting a model correctional institution precisely to talk with employees about improvements we can make to keep them safe at all times.

I met with the union representing correctional officers. We are going to keep doing what is necessary.

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### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives continue to deny the reality, but also the impact of climate change, and they have no plan to deal with this crisis, we are making the necessary investments to guarantee a green and prosperous future for our children and a healthy environment.



*Oral Questions*

Can the Minister of Environment tell us the exact nature of these investments that are going to protect our environment and guarantee a future for our children?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question, but also for her advocacy on these issues.

Making our communities more sustainable and more resilient when it comes to climate change is a priority to our government to help plan the cities and communities of the future.

That is why, this morning, together with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, we announced a \$530-million fund, the first fund in the history of Canada devoted to climate change adaptation and resilience. This fund will help serve 1,400 communities across the country to better prepare us and better prepare our communities for the impacts of climate change.

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● (1505)

[English]

**PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Auditor General will table her report on McKinsey. Now, the Liberals will try to hide their preferential treatment of McKinsey, but the procurement watchdog already said that the government creates criteria specifically designed for McKinsey. The Minister of Procurement also signed a \$5.7-million sole-source contract, despite her officials asking her not to, for McKinsey.

At a time when Canadians cannot even take a summer vacation, why is the government so hell-bent on giving \$116 million to McKinsey?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to answer that question. My colleague is well aware that the Auditor General's work is not only very important, but very much appreciated by the Canadian government.

We look forward to her report tomorrow, of course. We already know that it will continue to assist us further in the important work that we all need to do to ensure the proper and timely delivery of public services to Canadians, including the Canadian dental care plan, which is working very well across the country, especially in Quebec.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, corruption, abuse, resignations, multiple investigations and at least \$150 million tax dollars illegally given out by Liberal insiders to other Liberal insiders and to themselves, that is Sustainable Development Technology Canada. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, and the Prime Minister who is just not worth the cost, the Auditor General is set to release a damning report on SDTC tomorrow.

Will the Prime Minister shut down the billion-dollar slush fund? Will he commit to getting Canadians their money back? Will he guarantee Canadians that none of these corrupt executives will get a dollar of severance?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as members well know, from the moment we received the allegation, we started an investigation in order to make sure that we would uncover the truth and that we would restore governance. We suspended funding for the organization. We got a report. The chairwoman resigned. The CEO of the organization resigned. We welcome the findings of the Auditor General. We proactively work with the Auditor General.

One thing I can reassure all Canadians of is that we will restore governance and that we will restore funding to this organization that is helping thousands of Canadian companies in this country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, the member for Saint-Laurent denied the decline of French in Quebec. Then, a Franco-Ontarian member said that witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages were full of you-know-what. Now, the Quebec member for Alfred-Pellan is saying that, in order to be stronger, Quebec should be bilingual.

We are now seeing the Liberal caucus's true colours. The Liberals have neither the desire, nor the intention to protect French and stop its decline.

Will the Prime Minister act now to support French in Quebec and call his members to order?

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, someone pinch me. I heard my colleague opposite comment on French. However, the Conservative Party and francophones from Quebec have accused me of speaking too much French here in the House. Now they are all up in arms.

At some point, they need to decide which side they are really on.

\* \* \*

[English]

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have entered into June, and summer is just around the corner, the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre has already reported that over 300,000 hectares of forest have been burned down. Climate change continues to impact communities in my home province of British Columbia and across Canada at a disproportional—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

*Business of Supply*

• (1510)

**The Speaker:** I am having great trouble hearing, from both sides, the question from the hon. member for Richmond Centre.

[Translation]

I encourage members who want to have conversations to do so behind the curtains.

[English]

The hon. member for Richmond Centre has the floor. I will invite him to start from the top, please.

**Mr. Wilson Miao:** Mr. Speaker, as we have entered into June, and summer is just around the corner, the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre has already reported that over 300,000 hectares of forest have been burned down. Climate change continues to impact communities in my home province of British Columbia and across Canada at a disproportional rate. Drought and warmer-than-normal temperatures are persisting, fuelling the severity of wildfires and posing significant risks to our communities.

Can the Minister of Emergency Preparedness share with Canadians what work our federal government is doing to help communities be better prepared?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, extreme weather events are increasing the frequency and severity of natural disasters, but often, I hear my colleagues across the floor downplay or even deny the reality of climate change and its effects on Canadians. They would rather claim that wildfires are caused by arson. Last year, 59% of Canada's wildfires were the result of lightning strikes. We owe it to the Canadians who were impacted and to the thousands who were already displaced this year to acknowledge the reality of climate change.

Our government has invested more than \$10 billion to help communities better prepare and adapt to climate change, and we are proudly continuing our work to limit our emissions.

\* \* \*

**OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, corporations should not be allowed to lie about the threats that are posed by their products, which is a no-brainer, unless of course we are talking about big oil. Last week, a front group for the oil and gas industry was found guilty of running a massive disinformation campaign on the supposed benefits of burning even more fossil fuels.

The planet is on fire. People are getting sick, yet this Liberal government has never taken on the lies and the greenwashing of big oil. To the Minister of Environment, what is it going to take to end this massively funded disinformation campaign by the fossil fuel industry?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we obviously expect the highest level of governance from corporations that are operating in Canada. However, this gives me the opportunity to remind Canadi-

ans of the investments we have seen in the green supply chain in this country. As we said before, this country has received a record number of investments in the green industry. Even Bloomberg ranked Canada first in the world for the battery ecosystem, ahead of China.

We should all be proud of these investments, which are generational. They are creating jobs. They are creating prosperity, and they are putting Canada ahead of every nation, when it comes to building EVs, in the world.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada sets the average processing times for applications.

However, here is the reality. One of my constituents was begging my office to check the status of his visitor record application, which was submitted on March 4. The official told us that it was still being processed and that the average wait time was 77 days, which brought us to May 20. We called back on May 21 only to be told that the wait time was now 84 days, which meant May 27. We called back on May 28 only to be told that it would take until June 1, which is more than 89 days.

How can the department operate with rules like that?

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I will be pleased to pass it on to my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, so that he can answer our colleague.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY****OPPOSITION MOTION—SUMMER TAX BREAK**

The House resumed from May 30 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:14 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Carleton relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

*Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:*

• (1525)

**Mrs. Marilène Gill:** Mr. Speaker, if I am not mistaken, the member for Ajax voted, but we did not see his photo.

**The Speaker:** His vote will be withdrawn.

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

*(Division No. 793)*

## YEAS

## Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Deltell	d'Entremont
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Jivani	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Lawrence
Lehoux	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Patzer	Perkins
Poillievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shiple
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer — 116

## NAYS

## Members

Alghabra	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains

*Business of Supply*

Baker	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bergeron	Bérubé
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blanchette-Joncas
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lemire	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathyssen	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Pauzé
Perron	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Rayes	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota

*Routine Proceedings*

Sahota	Sajjan
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Sorbara	Sousa
Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vignola
Villemure	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zuberi— 200

## PAIRED

## Members

Davidson	Desilets
Hepfner	Kayabaga
Lalonde	Paul-Hus
Petitpas Taylor	Richards
Sajjan	Trudel— 10

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, 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 14 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

\* \* \*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee of the Status of Women, entitled “Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment in Canada”.

[Translation]

I would like to thank all the witnesses who contributed to this study.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

• (1530)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present the dissenting report that the Conservatives are tabling on behalf of what we call the “Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment in Canada” study done in the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

This is a seven-page dissenting report that we feel is important to put forward, because some of these points were not covered well in the study. There are four main points that we have put into the dissenting report, because one of the key messages that was overlooked throughout this study was the access to affordable, quality child care.

In 2021, when the Government of Canada rolled out its national early learning and child care program, one of the fundamental pillars it presented was making it easier for women to return to the labour force. However, as we heard continuously throughout testimony during this study, it is quite the contrary.

Here is what we heard throughout the study. Women entrepreneurs are being targeted for extinction with no room for private representation; child care operators are closing their doors; parents have lack of choice and face long wait lists; and women's participation in the labour force is declining.

I will conclude with the following, “Canada's child care entrepreneurs are asking...whether they have a place in Canada's national child care program or a future in child care at all.” “It's to the detriment of all women that child care entrepreneurs are being targeted for extinction through the nationalization of Canada's child care sector.” Those are quotes from one of the witnesses, Andrea Hannen.

[Translation]

#### HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in relation to Bill C-322, an act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

**The Speaker:** I would like to remind hon. members that the taking of a deferred recorded division is scheduled for Wednesday, June 5, on the motion to concur in the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

In its 23rd report, the committee requested an extension to consider Bill C-322, an act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program. However, as the bill has been reported back from committee, a decision on the extension is no longer required.

Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 94, the order for the recorded division is discharged and Motion No. 58 to concur in the report is withdrawn.

*Routine Proceedings*

(Motion withdrawn)

[*English*]

## GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the mighty OGGO, entitled “Changeover of the Public Service Health Care Plan from Sun Life to Canada Life”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are submitting a supplementary report to this Canada Life study. We certainly support the ideas, as mentioned in the main report, relative to comparable rates for physio. These comparisons, of course, should be done when a new plan is being revised and implemented. As well, there is the necessity to deliver service in both official languages.

We would also like to add the two points of Canada Life evaluating compensation, not the government, for those who have been wronged by the implementation of this new plan, as well as the discrimination against seniors, those who were unable to use the application in an electronic format and who would prefer to use a paper format. All these ideas, and more, can be found in our supplementary report.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I need to seek unanimous consent to table a supplementary opinion to the report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Mr. Speaker, the supplementary opinion points out that the federal government is unable to properly manage the files under its own jurisdiction, including Phoenix, passports, immigration and more. The Bloc Québécois is also making the following supplementary recommendation:

That the federal government endeavour to pay its employees, provide them with the health care they are entitled to receive and properly manage its own files instead of engaging in open conflict with the provinces by refusing to provide the right to opt out with compensation, while increasingly interfering in their areas of jurisdiction.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

## PETITIONS

## PUBLIC SAFETY

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

I rise for the 40th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The community members of Swan River are demanding that their voices be heard. They live in crime and chaos caused by the Liberal government's soft-on-crime laws, like Bill C-5, which allows criminals to serve their sentences from home. In fact, Manitoba West district RCMP reported that in 18 months, just 15 individuals racked up over 200 charges.

The people of Swan River are calling for jail, not bail, for violent repeat offenders. The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, which directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition from residents of Langdon. There are seven thousand residents in this area and they do not have a post office. They need a post office. Canada Post does not have a post office in this community. The residents are redirected 30 kilometres away. In the wintertime for seniors, this is a very strong hardship. The people in Langdon need a post office. Canada Post needs to have a post office. According to their petition, the residents say that they need to have this done for this community.

[*Translation*]

## PUBLIC SERVICE HEALTH CARE PLAN

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today in the House I would like to present a petition signed by 2,972 people across Canada listing the known problems with Canada Life and calling on the government to commit to resolving these deficiencies and to provide adequate services to all members of the public service.

[*English*]

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to present a petition where petitioners note, first of all, that scientific assessments have already underlined the mix of crises we are facing, including the climate crisis, biodiversity breakdown and resource depletion.

The petitioners note that there is no legislation currently in international law with respect to ecocide. They note that ecocide legislation has been proposed in other jurisdictions already all around the world and that there are growing calls across the country from civil society and faith groups, among others, that are calling for ecocide as a new international law that would require an amendment to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to include ecocide as a crime. Petitioners are calling on the House of Commons and this Parliament to publicly declare their support for the international crime of ecocide.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1540)

## SENIORS

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to present a petition today. The petition states that, whereas in 2018 the Canadian government announced an end-to-poverty plan that would affect all Canadians, the undersigned residents of Canada call upon the House of Commons and Parliament assembled to review and amend the Old Age Security Act, so that low-income GIS benefits would be adjusted in ways that eliminate seniors poverty, including elimination of inequities that exist for those living in the same location, and include ways to provide added funds for those living in other locations where there exist higher living costs, as shown in Statistics Canada table 11-10-0066-01.

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Hong Kongers who are resident in Canada. They are here on the lifeboat scheme, stream A and stream B. The petitioners note that there are 8,000 applications in backlog, and I believe that number is actually growing. The petitioners want to make sure the government is aware that this is a problem. The government is processing about 100 applications a month right now, so it will take years at this rate. The petitioners want to make sure that the government allocates additional admission targets to the Hong Kong pathway to effectively address the backlog.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, petitioners in my riding are calling on the Government of Canada to provide additional funds to support the construction of the Lets'emot Regional Aquatic Centre in Agassiz. The name "Lets'emot" means "one heart, one mind" in the Halq'eme'yem language.

Residents of the District of Kent, Harrison Hot Springs, Seabird Island, the Cheam, Stó:lo, Sts'ailes, Sq'ewlets, Skawahlook, Popkum and Peters first nations, and the Fraser Valley Regional District's electoral areas C and D all support this project.

It is one of the first infrastructure projects in Canada where all local indigenous communities are collaborating with municipalities. I humbly ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities to support it.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to present another petition from health care workers, in particular nurses. The petitioners are highlighting the important role that nurses play, and they are looking at ways to encourage governments and political parties of all stripes to get involved in recognizing the need to ensure that nurses are supported, both financially and with other types of resources.

One of the things that I would note is that there is one little side issue that the petitioners raise, and it is relevant to today, where they are talking about and recognizing the needs of seniors on fixed income for prescribed medicines and the need to deal with that issue too.

**Mr. Jaime Battiste:** Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of the National Indigenous History Month, there have been discussions among the parties and, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion: that, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-61, an act respecting water, source water, drinking water, waste water and related infrastructure on first nation lands, be deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

**The Speaker:** I already hear that there is no unanimous support for this motion.

[Translation]

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

My point of order has to do with one of the usual practices of the House, the Thursday question and the weekly meeting of the parliamentary leaders.

In both cases, the scenario for Bill C-61 was to continue debate at second reading on Wednesday of this week. We agree to refer the bill to committee at the end of the day Wednesday after the debate.

I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion: That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House, Bill C-61—

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable does not have consent.

I would ask members to ensure that they have the unanimous consent of the House before moving their motion. Sometimes members may think they have consensus, but this needs to be negotiated in good faith before members rise in the House.

\* \* \*

● (1545)

[English]

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 2558, 2560, 2564, 2572, 2574, 2575, 2578, 2579 and 2581.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Text]

Question No. 2558—**Mr. Dave Epp:**

With regard to the final contract awarded by the government to the CIMA engineering firm by Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority (WDBA) for the construction of the Gordie Howe International Bridge: (a) what is the total value of the contract; (b) what were the determining factors of CIMA's submission being chosen over that of the Stanley Consultants engineering firm; (c) what are the details of all documents, including briefing notes, meeting minutes, draft documents, presentations, letters, contracts, agreements, communications, emails and recorded meetings regarding the hiring of Stanley Consultants, the dismissal of Stanley Consultants, and the hiring of CIMA; and (d) what are the details of all records, including documents and communications from April 2017 to April 2024, involving the (i) WDBA Board Chairs, (ii) employees of CIMA, (iii) employees of Stanley Consultants, (iv) WDBA Chief Executive Officer, (v) WDBA Chief Legal Officer, (vi) WDBA Chief Operations Officer, (vii) WDBA Chief Relations Officer, (viii) WDBA Chief Capital Officer, (ix) WDBA Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, (x) WDBA Associate Vice President and Chief Bridge Engineer?

**Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the final contract awarded by the government to the CIMA engineering firm by the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority, WDBA, for the construction of the Gordie Howe International Bridge, with respect to part (a), the total value of the contract is \$10,774,981.00.

With respect to part (b), WDBA is unable to respond as Stanley Consultants was not a bidder for the contract in question. We can, however, confirm that there was a technical and financial evaluation of all firms that bid on the project, resulting in a total score. The contract was awarded to CIMA as it had the highest total score.

With respect to part (c), WDBA is unable to respond as it did not have a contractual relationship with Stanley Consultants. Further, proponents were advised that all documents and other records submitted in response to the request for proposals would be considered confidential.

With respect to part (d), WDBA is unable to respond given the scope of this request. The information requested is not systematically tracked in a centralized database. It was concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual collection of information that is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Question No. 2560—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to the Department of National Defence (DND) and existing contracts with IMP Aerospace & Defence (IMP) since fiscal year 2018-19: (a) what are the details of all contracts between the DND and IMP concerning servicing and maintaining search and rescue aircraft, including the (i) contract number, (ii) date of the contract, (iii) contract value, (iv) location of work being done, (v) date by which the contracted work will be completed, (vi) conditions on labour including sick leave requirements; (b) of the contracts in (a), which contracts include (i) minimum pay standards, (ii) minimum staffing requirements, (iii) policies regarding staff mobility, including moving expenses, (iv) limits on overtime hours worked; (c) what reporting requirements exist for IMP to ensure compliance with the contracts in (a); (d) what mechanisms does the DND have to ensure compliance with the contracts in (a); and (e) has the DND used any of the mechanisms in (d) to enforce compliance?

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in response to parts (a) and (b), National Defence has one contract, W8475-00C-SH1/001/BQ, with IMP Aerospace & Defence, IMP, related to the servicing and maintenance of search and rescue aircraft in the period specified. It is the CH-149 in-service support contract, related to

the servicing and maintenance of the CH-149 Cormorant search and rescue helicopter fleet. The active period of this contract is from July 31, 2000, to March 31, 2030, with a total value of \$3,022,748,607.05. Work related to the contract is conducted in Enfield, Nova Scotia; Greenwood, Nova Scotia; Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador; and Comox, British Columbia.

National Defence does not hold details regarding IMP's policies in relation to part (a)(vi) and part (b) of this question. All vendors and subcontractors for the Government of Canada agree to comply with its code of conduct for procurement. Section 8 of the code notes that the Government of Canada expects all vendors to guarantee workers' labour and human rights in their main operations and their supply chains, including guarantees that wages are at or above the legal minimum and that workers can refuse overtime. IMP is also a federally regulated employer. It is subject to the Canada Labour Code, which includes provisions on wages and medical leave.

In response to parts (c) to (e), the CH-149 in-service support contract includes both provisions and reporting requirements to ensure compliance. For example, the contract stipulates that the contractor must perform all inspections and tests to confirm compliance and keep records of these tests and inspections. All material is subject to verification, and National Defence holds regular program review meetings with the contractor to review, monitor, and execute the program. The contractor must also collaborate with a National Defence quality assurance representative to ensure compliance and quality assurance. There have been no instances where IMP has failed to adhere to the terms of the contract, and National Defence continues to utilize all reviewing and monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance.

Question No. 2564—**Mr. Gary Vidal:**

With regard to the new reporting requirements for bare trusts introduced in January 2023: how many T3 Income Tax and Information Returns (T3 returns) including schedule 15 (Beneficial Ownership Information of a Trust) were filed for the 2023 tax year?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the CRA as of April 16, 2024, that is, the date of the question.

The CRA has received a total of 44,034 bare trust returns from January 1, 2024 to April 16, 2024 for the 2023 tax year. The CRA has processed a total of 37,593 bare trust returns containing a schedule 15, beneficial ownership information of a trust.

Please note that as tax filing season is still in progress as of the date of the question, numbers may change over time.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2572—Mr. Dan Mazier:**

With regard to Parks Canada's most recent update to their logo: (a) what were the expenses incurred, in total and broken down by type of expense; (b) what are the details of all contracts with external suppliers, consultants, and professional services related to the updated logo, including, for each, the (i) vendor, (ii) description of the goods and services provided, (iii) value or amount of the contract; (c) when did Parks Canada initially begin the process to update their logo; (d) on what date did Parks Canada submit their new logo to the Canadian Intellectual Property Office; and (e) what are all costs incurred by Parks Canada to replace previous logos, including a breakdown of the costs incurred at each location where the logo has been replaced?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the cost of registration of the mark with the Canadian Intellectual Property Office was \$510 plus taxes, \$526.29. There were no further expenses given the work was done in-house.

In response to (b), all work was done in-house.

In response to (c), work began in early 2021 because new technology started to allow new fabrication methods that eliminated the need for a dedicated signage version of the beaver logo. There had been two different logos used previously, one for signage, without cross-hatching on the tail, and one for other applications, with cross-hatching. By combining these two versions, Parks Canada would see savings in signage production and efficiencies in managing its graphic elements.

The most noticeable change is the removal of cross-hatching on the beaver's tail, which was previously present on the standard logo but not on the simplified version used for signage. Given that the cross-hatching on the tail does not reproduce well on small screens and embroidery, it has not been incorporated into the new, refined version of the logo.

In response to (d), Parks Canada submitted to the Intellectual Property Office its registration request of the new beaver logo on May 29, 2023.

In response to (e), the new beaver logo is being implemented gradually, for example after inventory of printed materials is liquidated or at the end of the regular lifecycle of products, to reduce waste and costs. Digital products, such as PowerPoint templates, social media avatars, letterhead, etc., were amended in-house.

**Question No. 2574—Mr. Philip Lawrence:**

With regard to the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities and the costs associated with its creation, as legislated in division II of the 2023 Fall Economic Statement: (a) what are the total costs incurred to date associated with the creation of the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by type of expense (office space renovation, new signage, branding costs, etc.); (c) what are the total annual costs associated with the ongoing operations of the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities; (d) how many employees work for the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities; (e) how many of the employees (i) are new government employees, (ii) were employed by Infrastructure Canada immediately prior to working for the newly formed department, (iii) were employed by a department other than Infrastructure Canada immediately prior to working for the newly formed department, broken down by previous department of employment; (f) as a result of the creation of the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, how many houses will be built (i) in 2026, (ii) by 2030; and (g) how will the government track and measure the progress and success of the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities?

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

with regard to the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities and the costs associated with its creation, as legislated in division II of the 2023 fall economic statement, with respect to parts (a) and (b), there will be no incremental costs incurred by the government as a result of the change proposed in division 11 of Bill C-59, Fall Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2023. The legislative changes will not impact the department's current operations.

With respect to parts (c), (d) and (e), for further information on Infrastructure Canada's planned spending and human resources over the next three fiscal years, including during the proposed period of transition, please see the Infrastructure Canada 2024-25 departmental plan, at <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/pub/dp-pm/2024-25/2024-dp-pm-eng.html>.

With respect to part (f), the Government of Canada is advancing a broad set of measures that will unlock millions of homes by 2031. These measures build on the significant action and results already achieved since 2017 through the national housing strategy.

Upon the passage of Bill C-59, the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities will continue to assume a leadership role regarding housing policy and program development within the federal government. In partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the department will keep building on existing initiatives and leverage programs to get more affordable housing options to more people.

This includes the budget 2024 announcement of an additional \$15 billion in new loan funding for the apartment construction loan program, bringing the program's total to over \$55 billion. This \$55 billion, in turn, will contribute to the construction of over 131,000 new homes, with commitments in place by 2031-32. Similarly, the over \$4-billion housing accelerator fund is helping municipalities cut red tape and, according to municipal action plans, is set to fast-track the construction of over 750,000 homes in the next decade.

For progress reports on the 2017 national housing strategy and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's initiatives, please refer to <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/progress-on-the-national-housing-strategy>.

With respect to part (g), following standard reporting processes for core federal departments, the Department of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities would be established during fiscal year 2024-25 and would publish its departmental results following the close of the fiscal year.



*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2575—Mr. Gérard Deltell:**

With regard to expenditures on consultants by Parks Canada since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the total amount of expenditures incurred on consultants; (b) what are the details of all such contracts under object codes (i) 0431 (Scientific consultants), (ii) 0446 (Training consultants), (iii) 0473 (Information technology and telecommunications consultants), (iv) 0491 (Management consulting), (v) 0422 (Engineering consultants – Construction), (vi) 0423 (Engineering consultants – Other), (vii) 0301 (Advertising services), (viii) 0351 (Communications professional services not elsewhere specified), (ix) 0352 (Public relations services); and (c) what are the details of the contracts in (b), including the (i) amount, (ii) vendor, (iii) date of the contract, (iv) duration of the contract, (v) description of the services provided, (vi) reason or purpose of the contract?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for part (a), the total amount of expenditures incurred on consultants from November 4, 2015, to April 17, 2024, represents \$516,285,228.42. This amount excludes objects codes 0301, 0351 and 0352 as those include consultant expenditures as well as other expenditures.

For parts (b) and (c), Parks Canada undertook a preliminary and broadly scoped search to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response. This preliminary search identified a total of approximately 5,300 contracts which the agency would need to individually list in its response to this question. Parks Canada concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Please refer to the proactive disclosure website, <https://search.open.canada.ca/contracts/>, for contracting inquiries over \$10,000.

**Question No. 2578—Mr. Jeremy Patzer:**

With regard to the government's creation of the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council, the Regional Energy and Resource Tables, and the Sustainable Jobs Secretariat, through Bill C-50, An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy: (a) has the government made a list of potential candidates for the positions within each of these entities; (b) how many positions will there be within each of these entities, broken down by title of position; (c) are there qualifications required for an appointment to one of these entities, and, if so, what are they, broken down by position; (d) are there criteria which disqualify someone from receiving an appointment or serving their term, and, if so, what are they, broken down by position; and (e) what is the amount of compensation being provided for serving in each position?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, should Bill C-50 receive royal assent, it would create two bodies, the sustainable jobs secretariat and the sustainable jobs partnership council. The Department of Natural Resources would house the sustainable jobs secretariat, which would be staffed by public servants, whereas the sustainable jobs partnership council would be an external advice-giving body comprised of Governor in Council, GIC, appointees.

The composition and number of positions for the sustainable jobs secretariat that would be created should Bill C-50 receive royal assent is under consideration; therefore, no information can be provided at this time.

The regional energy and resource tables, regional tables, are an important initiative contributing to the government's overall sustainable jobs approach; however, the initiative predates Bill C-50.

Created in 2022, the regional tables are joint partnerships between the federal government and individual provinces and territories in collaboration with indigenous partners, and with input from key stakeholders, to identify and accelerate shared economic priorities for a low-carbon future in the energy and resource sectors. An important objective of the regional tables is to understand workforce implications and needs related to the global shift to net zero. As such, they will inform Canada's approach to supporting workers and communities and creating sustainable jobs.

With regard to the sustainable jobs partnership council, partnership council, that would be created should Bill C-50 receive royal assent, in response to (a), the government has not made a list of potential candidates for positions within the sustainable jobs partnership council. The government has implemented a Governor in Council appointment process that is open, transparent, and merit-based. Should the bill receive royal assent, a selection process following these principles would be launched. Information on Governor in Council appointments and selection processes is available at the following: <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/topics/appointments/governor-council.html>.

In response to (b), as of first reading in the Senate, the text of Bill C-50, available at <https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/en/bill/44-1/C-50>, would create up to 13 positions, including two co-chair positions and 11 members. The co-chairs will represent trade unions and industry, respectively. The member positions would be divided as follows: (i) three who represent trade unions; (ii) three who represent industry; (iii) three who represent indigenous peoples; (iv) one who represents an environmental non-government organization; and (v) one who represents another key stakeholder group.

In response to (c), as of first reading in the Senate, the text of Bill C-50 would direct the minister to consider the importance of having members that reflect Canada's diversity, including its regional diversity, and underrepresented groups, as well as the need for members who have knowledge, expertise or experience in at least one of the following areas: (i) the key sectors involved in the shift to a net-zero economy; (ii) the types of issues facing workers in the shift to a net-zero economy, including issues related to industrial change and technological transformation; (iii) the representation of unionized workers; (iv) the indigenous knowledge of indigenous peoples; (v) climate change and climate policy at the regional, national and international levels; (vi) economic and labour market analysis and forecasting; (vii) skills development, training and retraining initiatives at the regional and national levels; and (viii) the governance of advisory boards or committees.

*Routine Proceedings*

In response to (d), as indicated in the text of the proposed Bill C-50, the members of the partnership council would be subject to the provisions of the bill and the terms of reference for the partnership council that would be established by the responsible minister in consultation with the specified ministers. The terms of reference for the partnership council would be made public following passage of the bill. Additionally, the members of the partnership council, as GIC appointees, would be subject to the terms and conditions set out by PCO, which can be accessed at the following location: <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/programs/appointments/governor-council-appointments/compensation-terms-conditions-employment/terms-conditions.html>.

In response to (e), as indicated in the text of the proposed Bill C-50, remuneration for the members of the sustainable jobs partnership council would be fixed by the Governor in Council. The Privy Council Office's remuneration guidelines for part-time GIC appointees in agencies, boards, and commissions provide information on how the GIC sets remuneration for part-time appointees and can be consulted at the following location: <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/programs/appointments/governor-council-appointments/compensation-terms-conditions-employment/remuneration-guidelines-agencies-boards-commissions.html>.

Question No. 2579—**Mr. Scot Davidson:**

With regard to the carbon tax and reports that individuals and families living in provinces and locations without the federal carbon tax are receiving the Canada Carbon Rebate (CCR): (a) how many individuals and families with home addresses in Quebec received a CCR payment in (i) 2023, (ii) 2024, and what was the total amount paid out to those recipients; and (b) how many individuals and families with mailing addresses outside of Canada received a CCR payment in (i) 2023, (ii) 2024, and what was the total amount paid to those recipients?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the CRA as of April 17, 2024, that is, the date of question.

Information regarding the eligibility for the Canada carbon rebate, CCR, is available on the Government of Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/cai-payment/who-eligible.html>.

The occurrences noted below may happen when the address on file for an individual is within a CCR jurisdiction when the payment is calculated and subsequently changed to a Quebec or an international address afterwards.

In response to part (a), in the 2023 calendar year, there were 2,490 individuals and families with home addresses in Quebec who received a Canada carbon rebate, CCR, payment, totaling \$622,000; In the 2024 calendar year, there were 1,000 individuals and families with home addresses in Quebec who received a CCR payment, totaling \$269,000.

In response to part (b), in the 2023 calendar year, there were 4,310 individuals and families with mailing addresses outside of Canada who received a CCR payment, totaling \$1,263,000. In the 2024 calendar year, there were 2,350 individuals and families with mailing addresses outside of Canada who received a CCR payment, totaling \$532,000.

Question No. 2581—**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:**

With regard to Natural Resources Canada's (NRCan) 2016 Ministerial Review of the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project: why does NRCan no longer have a record of (i) the presentations made to the review panel at the public engagement meetings, (ii) the notes taken at the public engagement meetings?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the 2016 ministerial review of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project was carried out by an independent review panel. The report is publicly available on the NRCan website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/trans-mountain/indigenous-engagement/what-weve-done/previous-public-engagement.html>.

\* \* \*

[English]

### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 2559, 2561 to 2563, 2565 to 2571, 2573, 2576, 2577, 2580, and 2582 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in electronic format immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2559—**Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to budget 2023 and the government's action to crack down on junk fees: (a) what are the details of all consultations and meetings with regulatory agencies, provinces and territories on this subject, including the (i) date of the consultation, (ii) agency or officials consulted, (iii) outcomes of the consultation; (b) what indicators and targets does the government use to measure progress on cutting junk fees; and (c) what efforts have been done by the government to (i) set new NSF fee caps, (ii) enhance low-cost accounts, (iii) expand eligibility for no-cost accounts?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2561—**Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to government contracts for services provided by a nutritionist or dietician and services provided by a pharmacist within all federal departments, broken down by fiscal year, since 2017-18: (a) what is the total number of contracts signed for (i) services provided by a nutritionist or dietician, (ii) services provided by a pharmacist; (b) what are the details of all contracts signed, including the (i) agency contracted, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) number of nutritionists, dieticians or pharmacists provided, (iv) duration of the contract; and (c) what is the total amount of extra costs incurred as a result of relying on contracted services instead of employing nutritionists, dieticians or pharmacists directly?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2562—**Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to government contracts for occupational therapy and physiotherapy services provided by occupational therapists and physiotherapists within all federal departments, broken down by fiscal year, since 2017-18: (a) what is the total number of contracts signed; (b) what are the details of all contracts signed, including the (i) agency contracted, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) number of occupational therapists and physiotherapists provided, (iv) duration of the contract; and (c) what is the total amount of extra costs incurred as a result of relying on contracted services instead of employing occupational therapists and physiotherapists directly?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2563—Mr. Gary Vidal:**

With regard to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), since 2015: (a) how many forensic audits (i) have been conducted, (ii) are currently ongoing; (b) which First Nations communities (i) have been audited, (ii) are in the process of a forensic audit; (c) what were the reasons for initiating each of the audits in (b); and (d) for each audit that has been completed, (i) which community was audited, (ii) what were the results, (iii) how can the public access the findings, including the website where they are available, (iv) what action, if any, did ISC take in response to the audit?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2565—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to the eligibility review process of the Canada Child Benefit for shared custody arrangements: (a) what measures are being taken by the Government of Canada to verify the appropriate payment amount based on the percentage of time the child spends with each individual; (b) what guidelines are in place to prevent inequality between recipients; and (c) if completed, what were the findings of the Gender-based Analysis Plus?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2566—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to the Canada Child Benefit: (a) how many recipients currently receive the Canada child benefit; (b) of the recipients in (a), what is the breakdown between (i) spouses or common-law partners who reside in the same home as the child, (ii) individuals in child custody arrangements; (c) of the recipients in (b)(ii), what is the breakdown of (i) individuals who about equally split the time spent with the child with another individual (between 40% and 60%), (ii) individuals who spent most of the time with the child (more than 60%), (iii) individuals who spent less of the time with the child (less than 60%), (iv) individuals who only spent a temporary period (e.g. summer period) with the child?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2567—Mr. Warren Steinley:**

With regard to government information on energy use on Canadian farms from 2005 to 2023, broken down by year: how much energy in petajoules was sourced from (i) electricity, (ii) natural gas, (iii) motor gasoline, (iv) diesel fuel oil, (v) light fuel oil, (vi) kerosene, (vii) heavy fuel oil, (viii) propane, (ix) steam, (x) coal?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2568—Mr. John Nater:**

With regard to the appearance of the Deputy Minister of Public Service and Procurement Canada, Arienne Reza, at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on February 28, 2024: (a) what are the names of the 635 IT firms mentioned by the deputy minister; (b) which departments, agencies, and Crown corporations used the services of the 635 IT firms; (c) what is the total cost per contract awarded to the 635 IT firms; and (d) broken down by each department, agency, and Crown corporation that awarded contracts to the firms, what was the total (i) amount of expenditures, (ii) total number of contracts, with each firm, broken down by year since 2015?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2569—Mr. Scot Davidson:**

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency: in the "Residence Information" section of the T1 Income Tax and Benefit Return, how many taxpayers indicated that they had ceased to be a resident of Canada for income tax purposes by entering a departure date that was between January 1, 2015, and April 16, 2024, broken down by year and income bracket?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2570—Mr. Scott Reid:**

With regard to the final report of the Minister of National Defence's Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination: (a) how and to what extent have the findings in Part III, section 6, entitled "Re-Defining Chaplaincy", been rejected, adopted, actioned, interpreted, or otherwise implemented; (b) how and to what extent has Part III, recommendation 6.1 been adopted, actioned, or otherwise implemented; (c) how and to what extent has Part III, recommendation 6.2 been adopted, actioned, or otherwise implemented; (d) how and to what extent has Part III, recommendation 6.3 been adopted, actioned, or otherwise implemented; (e) how and to what extent has Part III, recommendation 6.4 been adopted, actioned, or otherwise implemented; (f) what published policies, practices, instructions, or orders have

been promulgated, amended, updated, or changed as a result of the findings, observations, and recommendations in Part III, section 6 of the report; (g) how and to what extent have decisions respecting hiring, promotion, evaluation, contracting, or termination in the Canadian Armed Forces been influenced by the findings, observations, and recommendations in Part III, section 6 of the report; (h) how and to what extent have decisions respecting hiring, promotion, evaluation, contracting, or termination in the Department of National Defence (DND) been influenced by the findings, observations, and recommendations in Part III, section 6 of the report; (i) how and to what extent has Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) operational decision-making been influenced by the findings, observations, and recommendations in Part III, section 6 of the report; (j) how and to what extent has DND operational decision-making been influenced by the findings, observations, and recommendations in Part III, section 6 of the report; and (k) how has the composition of CAF chaplains changed since the publication of the report, broken down by number of chaplains and faith or spiritual affiliation of chaplains, as of the first day of January, April, July, and October of 2022 and 2023, and as of the first day of January and April 2024?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2571—Mr. Alex Ruff:**

With regard to government security clearances as of April 1, 2024: (a) how many personnel have an active or currently valid security clearance from the Government of Canada, broken down by (i) institution, (ii) status of employment (e.g. employee, contractor, potential contractor, former employee, etc.), (iii) level of security clearance; (b) how long do Cabinet ministers and other individuals appointed to the King's Privy Council have the security clearances described in the witness statement of the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs before the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions; (c) what process exists to routinely review the authority of Cabinet ministers and other individuals appointed to the King's Privy Council to access classified information on a need to know basis; and (d) does the process in (c) require the same frequency of reviewing and updating that is in place for all other cleared personnel (i.e. five years for Top Secret, 10 years for Secret)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2573—Mr. Blaine Calkins:**

With regard to agreements signed by Parks Canada to allow hunting or trapping within national parks or on Parks Canada land, since 2016: what are the details of each agreement, including, for each, the (i) date it was signed, (ii) names of the parties with whom the agreement was signed, (iii) summary of the terms of the agreement, (iv) start and end dates, (v) website where the agreement is made available to the public, (vi) animals and species permitted to be hunted or trapped?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2576—Mr. Gérard Deltell:**

With regard to operational investments by Parks Canada, broken down by national park, national marine conservation area, and national historic site: (a) what are the details of all capital projects or improvements currently ongoing, including, for each, the (i) costs incurred to date, (ii) project budget, (iii) project description, (iv) start date, (v) original estimated completion date, (vi) current estimated completion date, (vii) reason for the project delay, if applicable, (viii) location; (b) of the capital projects or improvements in (a), which are projected to exceed the original budget; and (c) for those projects in (b), what is the reason the original budget was exceeded?

(Return tabled)

*Speaker's Ruling***Question No. 2577—Mr. Kevin Waugh:**

With regard to surveys commissioned by the Government of Canada since January 1, 2021, broken down by department or agency and by year: for each survey, (i) what was the purpose, (ii) what were all questions asked, (iii) what were the answers received, (iv) what costs were associated with the survey, in total and broken down by type of expense, (v) what external suppliers and consultants were used to commission the survey, (vi) what external suppliers and consultants were used to analyze and collect the results of the survey, (vii) how many responses were received for each survey, (viii) who did the survey target, (ix) was the survey available to all Canadians, and if not, who was able to respond to the survey?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2580—Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:**

With regard to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members based out of Canadian Forces Base Valcartier (CFB Valcartier), each year between 2016 and 2024: how many CAF members out of CFB Valcartier have been discharged, in total, and broken down by release category (voluntary, compulsory, medical, etc.) and by reason (service completed, misconduct, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 2582—Mr. Tony Baldinelli:**

With regard to the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA), which is administered by Export Development Canada: (a) what is the total number of loans and total capital (i) issued from the CEBA program since it was first launched on April 9, 2020, (ii) paid back in full by April 17, 2024, (iii) paid back in full by December 31, 2023, (iv) issued and refinanced before March 28, 2024, (v) repaid in full by March 28, 2024; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by province and territory; (c) for each province and territory in (b), what is the breakdown by each sector of the tourism industry, including (i) accommodation, (ii) transportation, (iii) food and beverage services, (iv) recreation and entertainment, (v) travel services; and (d) how many loans have been referred to collections as of April 17, 2024?

(Return tabled)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**PRIVILEGE**

RESPONSE TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION NO. 2221—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on May 8 by the member for Simcoe North, concerning the response to Question No. 2221.

In his intervention, the member alleged that, through omission, the Minister of National Revenue misled the House. The member stated that he had asked for a specific set of information through Order Paper Question No. 2221, about overpayments of the Canada child benefit in the event of the death of a child. The corresponding response indicated that the information sought by the member was not collected in a way that permitted an answer to his very specific question. However, the member argued that he successfully obtained, through questioning of a government official at a recent committee meeting, the precise information that he had originally sought through his written question. This, he claimed, illustrated that the government did in fact have the information he wished to receive. He contended that the government attempted to frustrate his ability as a member to obtain factual information through the written question process. He argued that this qualified as a question

of privilege that was worthy of examination by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[Translation]

The deputy government House leader countered that there was no intent to mislead the member for Simcoe-North or the House. He explained that the information shared with the member in committee differed from what was asked in question Q-2221, which was about overpayments of the CCB in the case of a death of a child. However, he claimed that what the member asked in committee was a question about cancelled eligibility for the CCB. The government response that was provided to the written question addressed the issue of overpayments in the event of the death of a child, in as full a fashion as the data permitted. The deputy House leader concluded by asserting that the government answered the question that was asked, and that the response was accurate.

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 529, describes the well-established precedent in which the Chair, and past Speakers have consistently responded to complaints about government responses to written questions, and I quote:

There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions. Nonetheless, on several occasions, Members have raised questions of privilege in the House regarding the accuracy of information contained in responses to written questions; in none of these cases was the matter found to be a prima facie breach of privilege.

● (1550)

[English]

The member for Simcoe North knows, as do all members, that the Chair does not parse the responses to written questions, nor judge their quality or delve into their content. The government did provide an answer to its question, though the member argues it was insufficient or incomplete. The member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa also complained about the substance of an answer to one of his written questions. While circumstances differed, the conclusion remains the same. The Chair is not empowered to review the content or the quality of answers provided to written questions.

That said, the Chair would, once again, like to reiterate its expectation that the government, in responding to written questions, be as forthcoming as possible in providing members with the information they require to do their job. Members can always seek clarification about their original questions or ask for additional information by providing new written questions on the Order Paper or even by proposing to a committee that it study the subject of their written questions.

Accordingly, the Chair does not find there to be a prima facie question of privilege. I thank all members for their attention.

[Translation]

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties, as you suggested earlier, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-61, An Act respecting water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on First Nation lands, be called for debate at second reading on Wednesday, June 5, 2024, and at the conclusion of the time provided for Government Orders on Wednesday, June 5, 2024, Bill C-61 be deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

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

It is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

**The Speaker:** I would like to thank the hon. members for taking the time to negotiate in good faith behind the curtains.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### PHARMACARE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak to such an important piece of legislation, our national pharmacare bill, Bill C-64, which was introduced by the member for Ajax, the minister responsible for health care. In my opinion, this particular legislation is a long time coming. When health care, what Canadians have become accustomed to in Canada, was first introduced many decades ago, I think that there was always an expectation that Canada would follow suit with a pharmacare piece of legislation.

Indeed, it is my understanding that Canada is the only country in the world that has a health care plan that does not also have a pharmacare plan. I think that it is incredibly important that this piece of legislation is here. I have been listening to the debate over the last number of weeks regarding this particular bill, and I have found it quite interesting what I have heard in the House about it.

For starters, I want to say that it is a piece of legislation that I see as a starting point. It is a point at which we can start to implement a national pharmacare plan, in particular to help some of the most vulnerable Canadians get access to medications they need. I will address that point in more detail in a moment. More importantly, this is a starting point in the sense that we will start by having two major medications that Canadians use, medications for diabetes and contraceptives for individuals who require them.

I say that because I know that almost four million people in Canada are currently using medications for diabetes. This piece of

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legislation, even though it is only a starting point covering two specific medications, would certainly have an impact on so many people in our country. With the portion that is just for diabetes, that is nearly four million people on its own.

Bill C-64 would establish a framework, and that is the important thing. It is a framework toward a national universal pharmacare plan in Canada for certain prescription drugs and related products, including free coverage of contraception and diabetes medication, as I have already mentioned. The bill would also provide that the Canadian drug agency work toward the development of a national formula to develop a national bulk purchasing strategy and support the publication of a pan-Canadian strategy regarding the appropriate use of prescription medications.

I think that the part regarding the bulk purchasing strategy is so incredibly important because this is where Canadians would see the benefit of having a national pharmacare plan. The idea that we can, as a whole country, purchase medications in bulk would give us that purchasing power that I think is needed to be able to make the purchases at a fair price, a price point that we as Canadians will ultimately be paying for through our taxes.

Finally, the last part of the bill is that, within 30 days of receiving royal assent, the minister would need to establish a committee of experts to make recommendations regarding the operation and financing of national universal single-payer pharmacare. The committee would be required to provide its report of recommendations to the minister no later than one year after the bill receives royal assent.

As I indicated earlier, when one talks about a program that is this big and this complex, it is important to have that proper oversight and to have a committee of experts making recommendations to the government on how to proceed. When we talk about the number of people who would be impacted by this, I find the conversation in the House to be really interesting, and this is something I alluded to a few moments ago, because it would be a benefit that everybody would be covered under the program. The reason why I say that is that I think it is very easy to make comments, such as I have heard from Conservatives in particular, that so many people are already covered. There are already people who are covered under their private plans. I think about 80% of people are covered in one way or another.

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• (1555)

However, not everybody is covered in the exact same way. For starters, at least 20% of people are not covered under any plan, and these would be the most vulnerable because these are people who would have to go to the drug store to pay for their medication out of pocket. On the other end of the spectrum, there are a lot of people who are fully covered, and there are some really good plans out there. There are some really good employers. There are some really good institutions that provide plans to their employees and family members that are going to cover a lot, up to, in many cases, 100% of the cost of medication. Then, there is everything in between concerning what the coverage is and how much coverage there is. This is why it is so important that we talk about universal coverage. Sure, 80% of people might have some degree of coverage, but not everybody is covered the exact same way. I think it is extremely important that everybody has the same basic universal coverage.

When we look at the way we are treated when we go into hospitals, everybody is treated the exact same way. At least, it is supposed to be this way, and it could be argued that provinces are setting up things differently. If we go into a hospital emergency room, we will see triage. The hospital will determine the critical nature of a person's visit, how quickly a person needs to be dealt with, and everybody is treated the exact same way. Most importantly, when we are done and when we leave the hospital, we just go home. There is no one asking for a credit card or a billing address. We have the luxury of having a health care system that covers everybody, which does not ask people to pay when they are in, quite frankly, what would be their most vulnerable state.

I think one of the problems with my generation, and generations after mine and a few before, would be that the idea of having to pay for medical care seems almost foreign. It certainly does to me. I never think to myself, "Wow, I should go get this checked out, but what's it going to cost me to do that?" That is never something that enters my mind.

Members can just imagine that, if I were living in the United States, for example, there would be a lot of people who actually have to make that choice. They say, "Well, I should get checked out, but what is it going to cost me to do that?" This is one of those luxuries that we have with a single universal health care system such that we have here in Canada. It is not something that enters our mind because I think we believe, as a society, that there is a certain onus to take care of each other when it comes to our health care, which is what our health care system provides, notwithstanding the fact that we could get particular about what different provinces are attempting to do now. However, that is the reality of the situation.

When we talk about pharmacare and the drugs that we also need to be healthy, we have to ask ourselves why they are not treated the exact same way. What I see with the bill before us is an attempt to move in that direction.

There are two very important, or at least very popular, medications that a lot of Canadians use to start with. This comes from the same premise that, when somebody needs to take care of diabetes, for example, or somebody wants access to contraceptive medication, they should not have to filter into the equation of the decision

whether they would have to pay for it, for starters, as 20% of the population would, or how much of it they would have to pay for. They should not have to ask, "Do I have to pay for a portion of it? Does my coverage only cover 60%, and so I have to pay 40%? Does that make it worthwhile to do this?" Canadians should not have to think that perhaps they could go against their doctor's advice and not get the medication because they think they will be fine.

These questions should not be asked by Canadians. There are a lot of seniors out there who rely on a lot of medications who should not have to say, "I have to make a decision between getting the medication I need or buying food." They should not be making those choices, and they should not be saying that maybe they will only take half the dosage they have been prescribed because at least then they are still taking something but are not spending as much.

• (1600)

When we talk about health care and pharmacare, it is my position that it should be treated in the same way that we talk about health care and accessing care in terms of going to see a physician or going to the hospital. That is why I think the pharmacare bill is so important, because, as I said, it certainly does not cover every drug. It actually covers only two very important and widely used drugs, but it sets the framework for how things can evolve from here.

One of the things I find really interesting, when we are having this discussion about universality and the fact that it is just two pieces of very important medication, is what I have been hearing from Conservatives to this point. They are getting upset over the fact that it would not cover a lot and a lot of people would not be covered. They are basically saying that more should be invested. I have heard the member from Battle River—Crowfoot talking about how we are not doing enough. Nonetheless, they will still vote against the bill.

I cannot help but wonder why they are saying we need to do more, but then are against the idea fundamentally. I do not know whether Conservatives are doing what we have seen them do a number of times before, which is to start by talking about a piece of legislation and trying to critique it all day long, only to then vote in favour of it when the time comes, or whether they have a plan for universal pharmacare that is even more ambitious than this one. I find myself somewhere in between, trying to figure out what they are really trying to get at with this.

At the end of the day, we know that this is something that would help Canadians. We know, and I strongly believe, that the concept of having a universal pharmacare system, in the long run to cover many more drugs, is certainly my goal. That would be to the great benefit of all Canadians.

The legislation is a huge step forward in delivering better health care to Canadians. As I said, it lays out the plan for universal single-payer coverage for contraception and for diabetes medication. This would mean nine million women and gender-diverse Canadians all across the country could get access to the contraception and reproductive autonomy that they deserve.

Notwithstanding the fact that lately we have heard some Conservatives start to talk and to reopen discussions about reproductive autonomy from decades ago, the reality is that we believe that when somebody makes choices about what to do with their body, in particular when it comes to reproductive aspects, they should be able to make those choices. A woman should be able to make those choices. In my opinion, the government should be there to support them in making whatever choice they think is the best for them as an individual.

Although the piece of legislation before us, as I previously said, would not cover every medication, or a lot more medication as I would ultimately like to see, it certainly would be a starting point, a place to begin. It would be a place to lay the groundwork. It would be a place to engage the experts to provide feedback as to how we could move forward. It would allow us to start somewhere significant, given the number of Canadians it would affect, and then from there, to grow.

I am really looking forward to the day when we can say that our pharmacare and the medications that Canadians depend on so much will be treated in the exact same manner that we see in the rest of our health care system, in particular when we go to visit a doctor or we have to go to an emergency room, as I described earlier.

• (1605)

I really hope Conservatives vote in favour of this at the end of the day, despite some of what I have been hearing. This is a great opportunity to show the country that the bill is not something we will make political and that it is something that truly would benefit many Canadians. It would help the 20% or so of people who might not have some degree of coverage. It would equalize the very well-off people with some of the most vulnerable in our communities by saying it does not matter what one's socio-economic status is and it does not matter what one's income level is. We respect the fact that all Canadians should have access to the medications they need so badly, and that their doctors, through our health care system, could provide it to them.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the place to start with pharmacare should have been with the people who have no money to cover medication, and that is in the catastrophic category of people who need medication but cannot afford it because it is not worth a drug company's while to mass-manufacture the drug. That being said, we have experienced shortages in medication, particularly for diabetics, in the not-so-distant past.

Given that there are so many people with diabetes and that it would be difficult to triage people on a one-on-one basis, how would the government decide who gets the medication and who does not, in the instance of a drug shortage? In other words, how would the government decide who lives and who dies?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, with respect to the first part of her question, the member should know that there is already a program in place that specifically deals with rare diseases and the drugs associated with them. That angle of it is actually already covered.

With respect to her question about shortages, this is exactly why a national program like this, where we could purchase in bulk,

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makes sense. Companies that supply and that bid on bulk sales would know exactly what the demands would be based on what the government is asking for. They would also be helped to be able to produce the devices and drugs.

It does not take somebody who has been in business a long time to understand that when they have a customer, such as a government that asks for a certain product, or they get into a contract to manufacture a certain product, they will have to start delivering that product. I think we would steer away from the shortage problems.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, the member said that it was important to have the expertise required and a committee of experts to analyze things. We do, in fact, have expertise in this area, and it is in Quebec.

My question is simple. What is the problem with the decentralization of funds to Quebec, which could work fully in its own jurisdiction, in an area where it already has a system in place?

It is important to remember that Quebec is ahead of Canada in these areas. That is the case in almost every social area. All of the parties recognize that. Why crush this system with something new when we already have a system that works and that could be improved upon? We have the same objectives and we agree on the basic premise. Why then does the federal government not want to transfer the amounts with no strings attached?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, the member asked what the problem with it is. The problem is that I want to learn from that expertise. He is saying that Quebec already knows everything so Quebec should just be left alone. I am saying that the whole point in bringing the experts together is to learn. I want the experts in Ontario to learn from the experts in Quebec, because I think that, yes, Quebec is very successful at a lot of things. If the member is correct in everything he is saying, the rest of Canada has a lot to learn. I am looking forward to that learning opportunity with the incredible experts who obviously exist in Quebec already, as per what the member just said.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands in his speech observed a unique Conservative critique that we have heard emerge. The Conservatives criticize policies as not being good enough, and then they vote against them entirely. If pharmacare is not perfect, the answer, in their minds, is no pharmacare whatsoever. If dental care excludes some Canadians, instead of amending or improving it, the answer is no dental care unless someone has private coverage. If Canada ranks 62nd out of 67 countries on climate change, then the answer is somehow to have no climate plan.

What does the member make of this unique logic?

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**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I am glad that when I said that, the message got across. I was not exactly sure how to phrase it, but it is exactly what the member is saying. That is what we are seeing. The member for Battle River—Crowfoot said, in his 20-minute speech, that the system would not be a good one because it would not be for these people or those people, and that therefore we need no system.

Conservatives do the same thing on just about every issue. I do not know why they are doing this. I wanted to ask the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, if he does not like the proposed pharmacare plan, to tell us about his pharmacare plan, because we know they do not have one.

I just find it incredibly rich to continually hear Conservatives get up to talk down programs, almost implying that they would bring along an even better program. However, I think there is nobody in this room, and no Canadian who looks at this stuff objectively, who would think that Conservatives would be interested in a pharmacare plan, because we know they would not be.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about the fact that the program would be addressing two main elements, contraceptives and diabetes. I am thinking from the affordability angle and would like to hear his comments on that. We know when people are all of a sudden confronted with a huge expense or an unexpected, long-term expense what that can do to their budget. I would like to hear him comment on how the pharmacare program would help.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, the affordability aspect of it, I think, is really important. I do not think it really matters what one's economic background or economic status is, but if any Canadian were to go into a hospital and receive a bill afterward, any of us would be taken aback by that just because of the concept. I have friends who live in the United States. One gave birth recently and received a bill for \$26,000. It is absolutely insane.

The same logic has to apply to the medications we need. It is not even just about helping people with the costs; it is also about the investment. If we help people take care of themselves now, we are not going to have to pay as much when they end up in the hospital because they were not able to afford the medications they were prescribed.

What the bill is really about, and what I tried to emphasize in my speech, is that there are varying levels of affordability right now. Some people, 20% or so, have absolutely no coverage. Some people have the platinum level of coverage where they do not have to pay anything. Then there is everybody else in between. Some people pay 60%, and some people pay 40%, 20%, 10% or whatever it is depending on who is covering them. At the end of the day, in my opinion, the coverage needs to be universal, just like the coverage is universal when it comes to receiving health care from a physician or in a hospital.

• (1615)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Madam Speaker, normally we see a lot of fireworks back and forth from the member to our side, and we did not see that in this speech, which is appreciated.

I have a straightforward question. I think it was brought up by my colleague from the Bloc. Health care is provincial jurisdiction. The provinces are mostly covering a lot of things for low-income people or those who are not covered. Alberta does the same for the items that are in the bill for birth control and diabetes.

The question is this: Because the provinces are already doing that, why not just fund the provinces to allow them to expand their programs rather than creating a duplicate process federally?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, first of all, on the member's comment, I apologize if I was not on my game and did not give him the fiery speech he was expecting, I will work on that for next time.

All I will say is that is a great suggestion. I am sure there is a really good answer to it and that committee could get down to it. I will say to the member that it is the first real question I have heard from that side that I have actually had to reflect on. I do not mind saying that maybe he has a good point. Let us have a debate on that rather than having a debate on the false narratives that are going on.

I know the members of the Bloc would say that they asked me the same thing, but the point is this: I believe that it is just like health care as it relates to physician care or hospital care, which is something that is established by the federal government and the actual implementation is done by the provinces. Can universal pharmacare get to that place and what the member is suggesting? Yes, it might be the case that one day that is where we can get to, but the standard has to be the same across the entire country. That is the really important thing and what I fear might be lacking if we allowed what he suggested to happen.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Saskatoon West, or as we fondly know him, the member from Saskatoon West Edmonton Mall.

I rise on Bill C-64, which is officially called an act respecting pharmacare. I have two other names for it. One is the proper Liberal name of the bill, which is “fake news to satisfy the gullible NDP caucus act,” and then the longer title is the NDP “I hope no one notices we said we would force an election unless we got a comprehensive and entirely public pharmacare program but sold out for little act.” I am being a bit sarcastic here, but this is the truth.

The government has repeatedly stood in the House and said it is extensive pharmacare, but it is not. It is two items. The NDP members have constantly stood up with their colleagues across the way in the senior partnership, or the radical wing of the NDP, and said it is comprehensive pharmacare that is single pay. Despite what they would have one believe, it would just cover two items.



It does potentially cover diabetes drugs and birth control, but we do not know the details. What it would not do is cover the chronic diseases Canadians are suffering from most. The top ones are hypertension, osteoarthritis, mood and anxiety disorders, osteoporosis, asthma, obstructive pulmonary disease, ischemic heart disease, cancer, dementia and, rounding out the top list, diabetes. Only one item would be covered out of the major chronic issues that are diseases or afflictions hurting Canadians. Where is the coverage for those? It is nowhere to be found, which is why the government and other people in the House should not be calling it a pharmacare act.

The Liberals can name it a potential pharmacare act down the road, but they should not be misleading Canadians into believing that this is a pharmacare act. I asked where the coverage was for hypertension. Eight million Canadians suffer from this. Four million Canadians have osteoarthritis, two million have osteoporosis, and four million are suffering from asthma. How many of them would be covered by this so-called pharmacare act? The answer is zero. Two million Canadians are suffering from obstructive pulmonary disease. Not one would be covered. On ischemic heart disease, 2.4 million Canadians are suffering from this. Not one would be covered under this plan. Forty per cent of Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, with 250,000 new cases every year. Not one would be covered under this so-called pharmacare act. For dementia, 750,000 people are affected, and not one would be covered. Where is the coverage?

I want to get back to my admittedly snarky comments about the NDP. I want to quote the National Post, which reads, “NDP members drew a line in the sand by passing an emergency resolution at their policy convention in Hamilton...that says the party should withdraw its support if the Liberals do not commit to ‘a universal, comprehensive and entirely public pharmacare program.’”

If one looks up the word “comprehensive”, the definition is, “complete, including all or nearly all aspects of something”. Is this all or nearly all aspects of pharmaceuticals? No, of course it is not. Anne McGrath, the New Democratic Party's national director, “said getting a bill that has teeth will be her party's biggest priority as parliamentarians return to the House of Commons”.

Canada has about 9,000 approved pharmaceutical drugs. The bill would cover maybe 200, so where are the other 8,800? Anne McGrath further stated, “Weak legislation is not going to be acceptable to New Democrats”. Maybe 200 for diabetes and birth control out of 9,000 seems to be acceptable.

She said, “It has to be strong. It has to have teeth. And I feel like that resolution gave [the NDP leader] and the caucus a lot of bargaining power. It gives them a lot of strength.” I wonder when my colleagues in the NDP are going to be withdrawing their support. They probably will not.

• (1620)

One issue I brought up in an earlier question is that a large majority of Canadians are covered, but some are slipping through the cracks. Some are not covered, and some are only partially covered, but they are covered by the province. Alberta, for example, covers most of the items brought up. Essentially, B.C., Quebec and Ontario do as well. Pretty much every province, except one or two in Atlantic Canada, covers diabetes or birth control for low-income

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Canadians. However, they are not covering the other items of importance, such as hypertension and some of the others.

The initial phase of this is going to cost about a billion and a half dollars. That money could be better used, by either giving it to the provinces for rounding out the services or, better yet, focusing on Canadians afflicted with rare diseases. A couple of families came to my office. Their young children were suffering from SMA, spinal muscular atrophy. It is a horrible disease. Generally, it is a death sentence by the time the child is two years of age. At about the time the children of these two families in Edmonton were diagnosed, a new drug had come out; it is called Spinraza. I have to give points to the pharmaceutical companies for how they come up with these names. Spinraza does not cure the disease, but it extends life to about 18 years old. Children would not have a great quality of life, but they could live to their late teens.

When Spinraza came on the market, Rachel Notley's NDP was in power in Alberta. We went to the local MLAs in the NDP to see if we could speed up coverage for the drug in Alberta; however, the NDP refused to look at this. The same NDP that says it is a line in the sand that it will force an election over refused to help this family. When the provincial United Conservatives were elected, Tyler Shandro was the health minister. He was much maligned, and I am sure a lot of it was probably deserved. However, he managed to get Spinraza approved for the family within two weeks. It is a very expensive drug.

Along came a better drug called Zolgensma. I truly believe it is a miracle drug. With Spinraza, children would spend about a month a year in intensive care, getting spinal taps and everything, for their treatment. Instead of that, Zolgensma is one shot in the arm. It seeks out the bad gene and copy-pastes the good gene over, basically stopping the disease in its track and giving the children a chance at a strong life. It would be about \$45 million a year to treat everyone afflicted with this, everyone born every year in Canada. This is where the government should spend this money. It should focus on that.

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It should not be spending money to replace programs that already exist. About 60% of Canadians have a program delivered through work. Instead of subsidizing that 60%, it should look after people like this in need. These two families had to fundraise for this drug. Ryan Reynolds, who was in *Deadpool*, helped fundraise for these two families. Luckily enough, a corporate benefactor came through and provided for everyone in Canada. This is an example where that billion and a half dollars could be better spent.

Another couple in my riding had a child suffering from PKU, which is a rare inherited disorder. It causes a buildup in amino acid in the body and prevents it from metabolizing protein. Children cannot have protein. It costs \$5,000 a month out-of-pocket. The government should look after covering this.

Twenty-seven million Canadians already have coverage through work. This Liberal single-payer plan is going to subsidize either the companies that are already paying for this or big pharma. It is funny that big pharma just got an extra tax for too much profit through the Liberal government, a temporary Canada recovery dividend to attack big pharma, which it is now going to subsidize. It could also subsidize companies directly, including Loblaws. At the same time as it is demonizing Loblaws in the House, it will end up subsidizing it. Therefore, I do not support the act as it is. There are better ways to do it than the way the Liberals and NDP are doing it.

• (1625)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I disagree with the member across the way, and the Conservative Party's approach in general, in terms of dealing with the issue of pharmacare. The member seems to be saying that we have all these medications that are out there and asking why we are limiting pharmacare to two. The short answer is that this is a very significant first step, and there is a substantial cost to it. The bill would ensure that we do not get a varying patchwork wherein the province in which one happens to live determines what kind of a fee one would actually be paying. We have literally 100-plus different types of plans out there, including public and private; I would suggest there might even be some non-profit stuff out there.

Does the member not recognize the true value of moving forward on such an important issue as pharmacare and that one way he can do so is by supporting the legislation?

• (1630)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Madam Speaker, the reality is that a huge number of Canadians, the majority, are already covered by plans, either through the government or through their work. The government should be looking for and helping those who are slipping through the cracks or those who have no coverage or nearly no coverage. It should not be looking at subsidizing big corporations, so they do not have to provide it to their employees, or subsidizing big pharma for these things. It should look after those slipping through the cracks or those who have no coverage at all.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up with my colleague about the question that I asked earlier and he repeated. It was about health transfers to the provinces and Quebec, which has the expertise in

this area. I would like him to tell me how he interpreted the answer the member gave earlier, when he told me that Quebec has the expertise and that Canada wants to learn from that expertise. Meanwhile, the federal government wants to crush that system with a new pan-Canadian system they claim will have all the facts.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague from the Bloc.

The provinces are responsible for health care. They are mostly providing that already. I look at Alberta: \$2,400 for patients with diabetes currently regularly using insulin; \$320 for diabetic medications for patients at high risk of hypoglycemia; \$160 for medications for patients at low risk of hypoglycemia; and monies for pumps.

The provinces are, by and large, already filling a lot of those gaps. The government, if it wishes to spend the money, should deliver the money to the provinces that are delivering the services so they can fill those last few gaps, rather than creating a whole new level of bureaucracy and potential problems. The government cannot pay its employees. It has messed up the Canada Life switch for public service pharmaceuticals. Somehow, I do not think the government is going to be able to cover 40 million Canadians with a new plan out of the blue.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the Conservative member has been parroting talking points from the big pharmaceutical companies, and while he talks about the majority of Canadians already having coverage, people with diabetes who are covered are still spending thousands of dollars out-of-pocket for essential medication. Why does he not think those people deserve support?

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Madam Speaker, that is funny; I have not once parroted big pharma talking points. I did parrot the NDP, though, with a comment that it would force an election unless a comprehensive plan was delivered. Why is the member still propping up a government that promised a comprehensive plan but is just delivering two items?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Liberals like to wrap themselves in the Canadian flag and proclaim themselves the great deliverers of health care in our country. It gets better. Allow me to read from former Liberal prime minister Paul Martin's 2004 election platform, which he infamously called a "fix for a generation": "The priorities of a Liberal government begin with publicly funded, universally available health care. There is simply no other issue of such vital significance to Canadians. Liberals are proud of their founding role in making medicare a national priority."

That sounded pretty good. It continues on, stating, “The objective of a Liberal government will be to agree with provinces and territories on a national pharmaceuticals strategy by 2006.” I would say that was a fail. That was former Liberal prime minister Paul Martin's 2004 election platform: a “fix for a generation”. Needless to say, national pharmacare did not happen in 2006. In fact, it is a full 20 years, a full generation, later, and we have a health care system that has fallen apart under the current NDP-Liberal government in Ottawa. Having broken our publicly accessible universal primary care system, we now have a Liberal Prime Minister who is setting his eyes on taking a wrecking ball to yet another part of our health care system. Why? In this backward town we call Ottawa, where common sense goes to die, Liberal logic says that if it is not broken, they need to break it.

What are the NDP-Liberals breaking today? It is the systematic dismantling of Canadians' access to their prescription drugs and treatments that are vital to their health. Just like 20 years ago, when that former Liberal prime minister brought disaster after disaster to primary health care, breaking it for a generation, if we follow our current NDP-Liberal Prime Minister down this path, our prescription drug system will forever be broken for generations to come. Rather than calling this a “fix for a generation”, I would say the fix is in.

It is against this backdrop of our broken primary health care system that Canadians need to take a good, hard look at this legislation. Bill C-64, the so-called pharmacare bill in front of us today, is not what the NDP or the Liberals are advertising. It is neither the implementation of universal prescription drug coverage, nor will it improve the options for the two items it promises to cover: contraception and diabetes medications. Instead, it goes out of its way to destroy Canadians' already pre-existing insurance coverage, provincial drug plans and freedom of choice in medication when pursuing treatments.

First, let us talk about federal-provincial relations. It is interventionist NDP-Liberal governments that use their control over the purse strings to force provinces into impossible decisions on patient care. Every time a premier tries to improve health care in their jurisdiction, the Liberal Prime Minister of the day will threaten to cut off health care funding to the province. Let us say a province wants to establish a few clinics offering MRIs outside of a hospital. To the Liberals, this is a mortal sin, and it cannot be allowed.

Earlier this year, the federal Liberal Minister of Health fined my home province of Saskatchewan \$1 million for allowing MRI clinics to operate in 2021. This was an innovative idea that increased the number of MRIs performed at a lower cost. It was brilliant, but not so fast. The NDP-Liberal government saw that as a mortal threat and fined the province. As these clinics are still functioning because they are common sense, we can expect the fines to continue. How ridiculous is that? The answer is as simple as it is sad. They actually do not want the system to get better. They do not want better outcomes for people. The NDP and the Liberals learned long ago that as long as the health care system is broken, they can campaign in elections as the great protectors and saviours of the system. Canadians are not going to fall for that again. Remember, this whole thing depends on the federal government convincing the

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provinces to go along with this scheme, something we already know the Liberals are not good at doing.

Is this bill not doing something good? There is a second important thing to understand. This so-called pharmacare legislation will not bring universal prescription drug coverage to Canadians. Subsection 8(2) of the legislation, Bill C-64, under the heading “Discussions” says:

The Minister must...initiate discussions...with the aim of continuing to work toward the implementation of national universal pharmacare.

Let us break that down. What does the legislation require the minister to do? He must initiate discussions. That is fair enough. What do those discussions do? They have the aim of continuing to work towards a goal. Is that the big reveal? The minister is required to talk to some people to work towards an ideal. That sounds like every scam artist running a Ponzi scheme. Schmooze as many people as possible, and sell them on an idea that is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. This legislation is literally that: smoke and mirrors, conning Canadians into thinking there is a pot of prescription drug gold at the end of the rainbow.

● (1635)

It is not prescription drug gold at the end of this legislation. In fact, every single Canadian would be just that much poorer if and when this gets implemented because it is a direct attack on Canadians' private health insurance and drug coverage. Did members know that, according to *The Globe and Mail*, there are 102 government drug programs operating today, along with 113,000 private insurance programs? Statistics Canada reports that 79% of Canadians currently have health insurance that includes drug coverage.

The completely independent Parliamentary Budget Officer analyzed how much it would cost Canadian taxpayers if universal pharmacare were implemented. Their analysis is that pharmacare would cost about \$40 billion every year. More importantly, that would be about \$13 billion more than is being spent today. Let us keep in mind that pharmacare would replace existing public and private drug plans. Generally, private health care plans have better coverage than public ones. That would leave most people worse off. Therefore, overnight, four out of five Canadians would lose the prescription drug coverage they have through their employer, union, school, spouse, parent or provincial government plan.

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The federal government is paying for it, which means we are paying for it through increased taxes. Either way we look at this, it would result in a multi-billion dollar spending increase paid for by us. Those who would really benefit from this are private companies who provide insurance to their employees because today the companies are paying for private drug insurance. Once this program kicks in, they could cancel those programs because the government would be paying for it. That would save those companies significant dollars. Essentially, it would be a transfer of dollars from the federal government directly to those companies, which is paid for by us.

Of course, the NDP-Liberals always love increasing taxes on unsuspecting Canadians. The other thing they love doing is limiting our choices to fit their narrow world view. There are two classes of drugs that the NDP-Liberals choose to cover in this so-called pharmacare bill: contraception and diabetes medications.

Let us talk about diabetes. Most people know that insulin is a shot given to diabetics to control their blood sugar levels, as needed. However, do people know that metformin is a prescription diabetes pill that is taken once or twice daily to help the body control its blood sugar properly, reducing the need for insulin? Do people know that metformin is prescribed commonly as a treatment for people before they have diabetes? With a daily treatment of metformin, that person may never develop diabetes, and that daily metformin is a dirt-cheap alternative to very expensive insulin. It keeps pre-diabetics from developing the disease, and it costs pennies, compared to insulin. Metformin is not covered.

What about Ozempic? We have all heard of Ozempic as the wonder weight-loss drug, but that is simply a side effect of being a diabetes drug that acts on the pancreas to control blood sugar. We also know that the best way to avoid type 2 diabetes is to be a healthy weight and to not be obese. Ozempic does that, but Ozempic is among the most expensive drugs on the market at about \$75 a dose. Ozempic and metformin are used to prevent the disease of diabetes. Does that mean the NDP-Liberals are purposely going to deny treatment to those folks to prevent them from developing diabetes and are going to wait until they get the full-blown disease? How is that fair? Should that not be a decision for the patient and the doctor, and not for some bureaucrat in Ottawa?

Innovative Medicines did a comparison of the access of drugs covered by private insurance versus those in public plans. The results are as shocking as they are sad. In Canada, private insurance covers twice as many drugs as provincial plans do. The bottom line is that this bill, Bill C-64, proposes to take away people's private drug plan. That is what single-payer means. The result is that private companies and anyone else currently providing drug coverage in a benefit plan would cancel those plans and would force Canadians onto the government plan. Canadians would be stuck with a slimmed-down plan and would be forced to pay out-of-pocket for the rest.

After nine years, it is clear that this NDP-Liberal government simply is not worth the cost to Canadians' health. It has broken our primary health care system, and now with this so-called pharmacare legislation, it is setting out to break prescription drug coverage for 80% of Canadians who already have private insurance.

Conservatives will not stand idly by while the NDP-Liberals systematically break our country. If we form government, we would undertake the task to fix the immense damage this costly coalition has done. We would axe the tax. We would build the homes. We would fix the budget, and we would stop the crime. Let us bring it home.

• (1640)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is concerning now. The Conservatives are trying to maybe do a bit of a backtrack, and they are saying that it is just not good enough. Depending on the depth of the speech, we will find that the Conservatives do not support public involvement at the national level, period. End of story. Let us realize that there are over 3.5 million people with diabetes. About 25% of them have reported that they are not taking all the medications they could or should be taking and that cost is a barrier. There are people with diabetes who will go blind and those who will have amputations. There are all sorts of issues. Why does the Conservative Party not support Canadians' receiving this particular benefit?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Madam Speaker, we need to be very clear on what we are talking about here, which is a system that is proposing to blow up the existing network of private and public health care, pharmacare programs, of which 80% of Canadians already have coverage, at the expense of putting in a generic plan that everybody would have. As I said in my speech, many people would actually lose coverage. It would reduce what they could get.

Certainly, there are people who are not covered, and I would agree that maybe there should be something to deal with those people. However, we should not have a single system that comes in and blows up everything to put in a universal, single-payer program. That makes no sense, and that is something I will not support.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, we have already talked about the fact that Quebec has its own pharmacare plan and that the government refuses to include—

Madam Speaker, am I disturbing my colleagues who are talking amongst themselves? May I ask my question?

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

I would ask members to take their conversations outside. I am sure that hon. members want to listen to the question.

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The hon. member for Beauport-Limoilou.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As I was saying, Quebec has a pharmacare program that may not be perfect, but it is already in place and public servants are managing it.

My question is this. Is it not completely illogical to force a province that already has everything it needs to take care of such a system to pay taxes so that the Canadian government can create other positions and duplicate services already offered to Quebecers, without bringing them any more benefits?

[*English*]

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that great question, and it gets to the core issue, too, of the incompetence of the Liberal government in dealing with provincial-federal relations. We already know that provinces, like the Province of Quebec and others, have said that they are not going to sign onto this program because they have their own programs or they have different ideas. That is also part of the problem. We are going to end up with a patchwork system across the country, as has been mentioned before.

I have no confidence that the current government can actually pull off the negotiations with different provinces to put in a program like this, let alone the fact that it is not a program worth putting in.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the Conservatives seem to fight against anything for women, whether it is menstrual hygiene products or, now, free contraception. This includes some of their backbenchers who are fighting against the right to access safe trauma-informed abortion care.

Why are the Conservatives so anti-feminist and anti-women?

**Mr. Brad Redekopp:** Madam Speaker, I would ask the member questions of my own. The NDP members wanted a complete pharmacare program. This is nowhere near that.

How can the NDP members support this? How can they support the government? How can they keep propping up the incompetent Liberal government?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** 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 Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove, Mental Health and Addictions; and the hon. member for Victoria, Climate Change.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House. Happy Monday. I hope that we and our respective families are doing well. Before I begin, I wish to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg Centre this evening.

I am happy to speak today regarding Bill C-64, an act respecting pharmacare. It is another step for our government to make life more affordable for Canadians and provide the services that they need at this point in our term, and something that I am very proud of as a member of Parliament.

Before I get into my formal remarks, this weekend I was reminded of the work we are doing in helping Canadians, including the wonderful residents that I have the privilege of representing in Vaughan—Woodbridge. Close to my constituency office is one of the regional roads in the city of Vaughan in York Region, Weston Road. Along Weston Road, there are three signs that are placed up by our local dentists, all accepting the Canadian dental care program. Much like what is contained in the contents of Bill C-64, an act respecting pharmacare, here we have another foundational piece that is assisting Canadians in my riding and across the country. We know that over two million seniors have been approved for the dental care plan, and that over 120,000 have actually visited dentists. I have had many conversations with the seniors in my riding over the weekend who have used the plan and are very happy about it.

Along that vein, we are introducing a bill on pharmacare that will again help Canadians, 3.7 million of them, who have diabetes. We know that diabetes costs our health care system north of \$30 billion a year. There are real savings in doing what we are doing and also taking preventative steps and providing contraceptives for Canadians.

This bill sets out the principles that will guide our government's efforts to improve the accessibility and affordability of prescription medicines and support their appropriate use. It also underscores the importance of working together with provinces and territories to make national pharmacare a reality for Canadians. We can all agree that Canadians should have access to the right medicines at an affordable price regardless of where they live.

That is what Bill C-64 does. It represents the first phase toward a national pharmacare, starting with the provision of 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 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 will highlight how important this is to Canadians and, specifically, how important access to contraceptives is to almost nine million women—

● (1650)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Some individuals are having conversations, and I think they seem to forget that they are in the House of Commons right now. Their voices are starting to rise a little bit. I would ask them to take their conversations out for now, because I am sure that others want to hear the speech so that they can ask questions.

The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

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**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, I was just saying how important contraceptives are to nearly nine million women in this beautiful country we live in, nearly one-quarter of the Canadian population.

Contraception, also known as birth control, is used to prevent pregnancy, whether it is required for family planning, medical treatment or overall reproductive health. Improved access to contraception improves equality, reduces the risk of unintended pregnancies and improves reproductive rights.

The single most important barrier to accessing contraception in Canada is cost. For example, the typical cost for select contraceptives for an uninsured Canadian woman is up to \$25 per unit, or \$300 per year, for oral birth control pills, and up to \$500 per unit for a hormonal IUD, which is effective for five years.

Some populations are disproportionately affected by the lack of coverage. Women, people with low incomes and young people, all of whom are more likely to work in part-time or contract positions, often lack access to private coverage. One study found that women from lower-income households are more likely to use less effective contraceptive methods or no contraceptive method at all. Although most drug plans list a range of contraceptive products, unfortunately only a fraction of Canadians are eligible for prescription birth control at low or no cost through a public drug plan.

Bill C-64 would ensure that Canadians have access to a comprehensive suite of contraceptive drugs and devices, because improved access to contraception improves health equality. This means that every woman would have the ability to choose a contraceptive that is best for her, regardless of her ability to pay. This would contribute to her right to have bodily autonomy, which is what this government fully and fundamentally supports.

In addition, ensuring access to a comprehensive suite of contraceptive drugs and devices at no cost to the patient can lead to savings for the health care system. British Columbia implemented this policy at the provincial level last April, and studies from the University of British Columbia suggest that no-cost contraception has the potential to save the B.C. health care system approximately \$27 million per year. In the first eight months of that policy being in place, more than 188,000 women have received free contraceptives.

Sexual and reproductive health is a priority for this government. This is reflected in Bill C-64 but, as I have mentioned, it also goes beyond that to other significant federal initiatives. As part of budget 2021 and budget 2023, the Government of Canada has continued to demonstrate its commitment to improving access to sexual and reproductive health care support, information and services for Canadians who face the greatest barriers to access; and to generating knowledge about sexual and reproductive health for health care providers.

Since 2021, the sexual and reproductive health fund has committed \$36.1 million to community organizations to help make access to abortion, gender-affirming care and other sexual and reproductive health care information and services more accessible for underserved populations. An additional \$16.7 million has been provided to the Province of Quebec.

Budget 2023 renewed the sexual and reproductive health fund until 2026-27. This initiative has funded 21 projects and is currently funding 11. The sexual and reproductive health fund is providing \$5.1 million to the University of British Columbia contraception and abortion research team for a 25-month project from March 17, 2023, to March 31, 2025, entitled the “Contraception and abortion research team access project, advancing access to abortion for under-served populations through tools for health professionals and people seeking care”.

As a segment of the project centres on contraception, the project has partnered with the Canadian Pharmacists Association to develop educational resources that support pharmacists prescribing contraception and assist pharmacists in understanding and tailoring their approach for indigenous and racialized populations, including youth and other underserved populations.

With the support of the University of Toronto youth wellness lab, the project will also engage with family planning professionals, for example pharmacists, family physicians, obstetricians, gynecologists, nurses, midwives and social workers, to optimally design affirming and judgment-free services and contraception information care by, with, and for youth. Additionally, the medical expense tax credit has been included to include more costs related to the use of reproductive technologies, making conception more affordable.

In conclusion, our government is committed to improving the sexual and reproductive health of all Canadians. This includes helping to ensure access to a comprehensive suite of contraceptive drugs and devices for all Canadians. By working with provinces and territories, and guided by the principles within Bill C-64, we can make this a reality.

• (1655)

As we move forward, Liberals will continue to work with the provinces and territories, indigenous peoples and other stakeholders to ensure we get this right. The proposed Bill C-64 lays the groundwork for that process and would guide our collaboration. By passing this legislation, we could continue to build on the momentum we have already achieved. We are well on our way and I look forward to working with all parliamentarians to realize the next phase of Canadian health care.

Whether it is dental care; the Canada child benefit; \$10 day care and the national learning strategy; helping the almost 3.7 million individuals who have diabetes; or providing dental care for seniors, and now moving into another segment of the population, which I believe is individuals with disabilities, we are going to be there and have the backs of Canadians today and into the future.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Madam Speaker, we have said it before and we will say it again: Quebec is ahead of the game when it comes to pharmacare and many other areas.

I would like to know whether my colleague is aware that in Quebec, a woman who has limited means and no insurance can go to a family planning clinic and get her birth control pills free of charge. Quebec is ahead in this area. It already has public servants working on pharmacare.

Why not simply agree to a transfer and avoid duplicating the work of public servants for Quebecers?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, it is very important to work with all of the provinces, including Quebec.

Quebec was the first province in Canada to implement the early learning and child care program.

[English]

That was a model used nationally in Canada. We have much to learn when working with the provinces and that is what we continue to do. In this case, as identified by the member, if the Province of Quebec has gone down this path, I wish to applaud it and we will continue to work with all the provinces in our country.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague across the way talks about working with Quebec. Alberta has quite an extensive plan for both diabetes and birth control, and other issues.

Will the member commit to working with the Province of Alberta to give it the funding it needs to increase its programs, rather than creating a second program altogether?

● (1700)

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, the ultimate goal of putting in place measures, like the Canadian dental care plan, and coverage for contraceptives for women and for individuals who have diabetes right now, is to improve their health care outcomes. Of course, Liberals will always work with all provinces and sit down with them, but the ultimate goal has to be to improve the health care system and health outcomes for Canadians. We will continue doing that.

Liberals will put in place the 10-year plan for \$200 billion. We have come to agreements with all the provinces, if I am not mistaken. I will double-check that, but I am pretty sure we have. That is what we will continue to do as a government: work collaboratively and effectively for the benefit of all Canadians in this blessed country that we live in.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, when I spoke to this bill, I talked about the importance of Jordan's principle. Unfortunately, the need for it arose because there were jurisdictional disputes about who was to pay the cost of health care for Jordan River Anderson.

I think what is trying to be done with the pharmacare act is to avoid similar scenarios, where people with diabetes, or women or gender-diverse people get the medication they need so their lives can improve.

Can the member talk about why having such parallels is so important, so we are not fighting over jurisdiction and people get the care they need as soon as they can?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, my residents, like the residents of the member for Nunavut, do not care about jurisdiction. They care about the delivery of services, and the outcomes of those services that are provided to them and their families. We need to ensure we maintain a high standard of living, or, in this case, health care system.

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When I speak to the residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge, they want to know the government is providing the services that are needed, which are accessible and affordable, much like the Canadian dental care plan that we are putting in place. That is what we need to work toward and work with all levels of government on.

In Ontario, there are actually four levels of government, including the regional government. We will continue to work with all levels in collaboration as mentioned by the member for Nunavut.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is such an honour to rise again to speak about the very important bill before us to put in place the beginnings of a pharmacare strategy, particularly as it relates to free contraception and diabetes medication.

As the critic for women and gender equality, I want to focus my comments more on contraception and the fact that this is long overdue if we want to talk about reproductive rights and if we want to talk about creating societies that really, truly uphold equality for women and gender-diverse people. What I found bizarre during the debate is that so many men in this place have fought with such fury against women's reproductive rights. It almost feels like I am back in the 1800s, with the great interest by men in this place fighting against the rights of women over our bodily autonomy and reproductive rights.

It is no surprise. The so-called freedom party, the Conservative Party, is certainly not free when it comes to people's bodily autonomy. I want to point to a couple of comments that were made quite recently. This was in the news today from when the Alberta Conservative member for Peace River—Westlock did an interview with a Liberal MP across the way. The Conservative member stressed that he supports Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's transgender policy that would vote to criminalize cannabis possession again if given the opportunity. Certainly with respect to bodily autonomy, he is supporting Danielle Smith. He also said, in regard to gay marriage, "I vote gay marriage down."

It is freedom for some and not for others. I have written articles about this, actually, about how Conservatives believe in freedom for some and not for others. I would say there is not much pride in that level of homophobia, when the Conservative member for Peace River—Westlock said, "I vote gay marriage down." Happy Pride from folks in the House, except for members from the Conservative Party, who have come out with petitions not supporting trans rights. Again, it is another attack on bodily autonomy.

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Here we are, talking about women's reproductive rights, and there are a whole bunch of men in the Conservative Party fighting with great enthusiasm against our reproductive rights, against trans rights and against the rights of folks to have same-sex marriage. It is not just the member for Peace River—Westlock. In fact, the member from Carleton, the leader of the Conservative Party, voted against same-sex marriage in the 2000s and against backdoor anti-abortion legislation, Bill C-311 just in the last session, unanimously with all the Conservatives.

When we are talking about freedom, we are not talking about freedom for women and gender-diverse persons to have control over their reproductive rights. When we talk about the transgender community, we are certainly not talking about freedom of bodily autonomy for the transgender community. In fact despite our saying “happy Pride” and raising the pride flag today, there are members of the Conservative Party saying, “I vote gay marriage down”, full stop.

It is one thing for the Conservative leader to say “love is love” and that people can support whom they want, but when it came to Jordan Peterson, known for his anti-trans rhetoric, his homophobia, and his very clear views that violate the reproductive rights of women and gender-diverse people, he came out in full support of Jordan Peterson's agenda. Is that freedom? It is freedom for some and not for others.

• (1705)

The NDP has fought really hard to put in place a pharmacare plan that would include a suite of contraceptives so women and diverse-gender folks can have control over their body, over their livelihood and over their life. I know there are some men in the Conservative Party who want us to go back to the rhythm method. Thank God we have gotten past that to where people can make choices about their body, certainly women, and have control by taking things like birth control. I do not know many men who are running down the street begging for a birth control pill, so the fact they have taken so much time to obstruct a feminist agenda and a woman's right to choose is really telling to me. We cannot go back to that time.

I hear more and more Conservative members tabling anti-trans petitions that have been put forward in the name of so-called protection of the bodily autonomy of women and girls. They table bills that include backdoor legislation in the name of being tough on crime for violent offenders, even though it is opposed by all women's organizations that actually deal with gender-based violence. They are now trying to vote against women and gender-diverse people's access to contraception.

I have to ask this: Why do Conservatives hate women and gender-diverse people so much? Why are they so nosy about going into people's bedrooms? Why is there a thought in their head about who somebody should sleep with or whether somebody is gay or LGBTQ? Why does the so-called freedom party care so much about looking into everybody's bedrooms and finding out what they are doing, figuring out what contraception they are taking, whom they love or whether they want to have an abortion or not? There is nothing free about the party. It feels, actually, like we are going back into the 1800s.

Then Conservatives make the excuse that it is “only” contraception or “only” diabetes medication, which is peculiar to me. It is not surprising that they would think that it is “only” contraception, because the only people I have actually heard talk about pharmacare are men. I could be wrong but I have been here for a lot of the debate. Why would they care about pharmacare? Why would they care about contraception when primarily it has been a women's responsibility historically to deal with contraception? If they want to run out at all hours of the night buying condoms, that is fine. Do they expect women and gender-diverse people to have no choice over their bodily autonomy or reproductive choices so that they can have the rhythm method? This is 2024.

The fact is that, in the midst of Pride, we have to get more security at Pride marches because of anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, and people in the Conservative caucus are cheering on *Roe v. Wade*, which is not the only one as there are quite a number of social Conservatives, so that we can go back to the era when women were having back-alley abortions with coat hangers and bleeding to death, or 10-year-olds in the United States were having to give birth. I do not want to listen to that hooley. It is just privileged, sexist, homophobic, transphobic hooley.

Women and gender-diverse people have fought hard for their rights. They continue to fight for their rights, and it will not be very easy to just roll over them so there can be the new dude paradise.

• (1710)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member has been listening, no doubt, to a number of the Conservatives speak to the legislation, in essence saying that we would not be providing drug X or drug Y, and asking why not this drug, and so forth. Just to pick up on her comments, there are going to be nine million people who would potentially benefit from the passage of the legislation. Could she provide her perspective not only on the degree to which it is being well received in all regions of the country but also on the number of people it would actually affect?

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Madam Speaker, absolutely it would have a really positive impact, but the Liberals are not off the hook here. They might talk about the right to access safe abortions and the right to a safe abortion, but they have failed in terms of providing access, and this does not include the number of Liberal MPs who are listed as anti-choice. I am glad that the Liberals are on board with the NDP pharmacare plan to put in place free contraception and diabetes medication, but they need to look at stuff in their own backyard, including ensuring that all women and gender-diverse people can access safe, trauma-informed abortion care.



*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Madam Speaker, before I ask a question, I want to talk about something that came to mind when I was listening to my colleague's speech. I am wondering how some men would react if, tomorrow morning, all of the women in this Parliament introduced a bill that forced men to get a vasectomy until they were ready to procreate. Perhaps that is extreme, but no more so than preventing a woman from making her own choice about whether to go forward with a pregnancy or not. In my opinion, preventing her from making that choice is just as extreme, and we should not go there.

That being said, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on how difficult it is to access services in remote areas, particularly any sort of gynecological care services. What does that involve in terms of time, travel and cost for women who need urgent gynecological care?

• (1715)

[English]

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Madam Speaker, quite frankly, most women, historically, have gotten their tubes tied, which is a very major surgery, when we know that vasectomies are much easier. We are not asking people to get vasectomies. We are just saying, if we want a birth control pill, can someone give it to us? There is not just the fact that it is still up to women, in terms of the primary responsibility to consume the contraception, but there is also the fact that people whom it will never affect are violently fighting against it when there are easy solutions.

Let us put all the solutions on the table. We are not even asking for that; we are just asking for free contraception. I think that is pretty reasonable. Ensuring that women can have a choice over their body is a lot cheaper than the emotional turmoil we have heard about with stories shared in the House because they did not have proper contraception to be able to make choices.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqagtittiji*, I do want to ask my hon. colleague a question regarding parental rights, because Conservatives use that as a guise, I think, to pretend to care about women's bodies or unborn babies. I think that the pharmacare act could help make a difference regarding contraceptives and how Canadians need to be better informed when Conservatives are pretending to care through words or slogans like “parental rights”.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Madam Speaker, in fact we are studying this in the status of women committee, and just how women's legal groups, particularly, want to actually get rid of claims about parental alienation because they have no scientific basis, which is what they are saying. It actually results, very often, in women and gender-diverse people who are experiencing violence being more victimized. This is well researched.

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Regina—Lewvan.

I would like to get back to the basics on the bill before us, which is on a national pharmacare program. Before we can even consider a program like this, I believe Canadians need to place all of this into context within the fiscal mess that has been created by the Liberal government going forward.

As members know, we are facing a fiscal wall. We are leaving behind, for future generations to pay back, a massive national debt. In fact, over the last nine years, this Prime Minister and his Liberal government have amassed more indebtedness than all previous Canadian governments combined since Confederation. That is one piece of the context.

What about the ongoing deficits being run by this Liberal government? There is no end to them. In fact, time and time again, the finance minister has been asked to at least give us a timeline when we will return to balance, when Canada will begin again to live within its means and not spend more money than is being brought in by taxes. Each time, the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister has said nothing. She will not respond to that question, because the answer is that there is no plan. How can we, as a nation, justify billion-dollar program after billion-dollar program without having a plan to bring our fiscal mess back into order? The only way to do that is to come back into balanced budgets, which has not happened.

There is also the challenge of increasing taxes on Canadians. Carbon taxes, which have been the subject of much debate in the House, keep going up and up. Fuel taxes are going up and up. In fact, it was not long ago when my colleague for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon was at committee, and they were grilling the Minister of Small Business. The minister had asserted that she had reduced taxes on small businesses. The simple question that my colleague asked was which tax the minister had reduced on small business. And the answer was, well, humming and hawing. Finally the minister turned to her officials and said that perhaps her officials could answer that question. The officials looked dumbfounded, because they did not have an answer either. The truth is, taxes have not been reduced on small businesses. Across the board, taxes have been raised on Canadians.

Now, within that context, this Liberal government wants to introduce another billion-dollar spending program. The Liberals could have come to us and said, “Listen, the recent budget shows that we will be returning to balance within the next, say, five years, and within that context we'd like to bring forward a program that is going to help those who have no pharmacare coverage.” However, that is not what they did. This government came forward and said that it was going to spend another \$40 billion, \$50 billion additional, that it would go into deficit by another \$40 billion, and that it would throw in this program that would put Canada in the hole for years to come. However, who has to pay all of that back? I heard some heckling over here in the corner because they do not like to hear the truth, but it will be future generations of Canadians, with interest thereon. So that is the context in which this whole pharmacare discussion needs to take place.

This is not a pharmacare plan. Like so many others, this is an empty promise that will leave Canadians deeply disappointed and angry.

*Government Orders*

• (1720)

Let us remember it was the current Prime Minister who promised affordable housing back when he was first elected in 2015. Instead, what we have is a doubling of housing prices, rents, down payments, interest rates and mortgage payments, and another broken promise. Oh yes, the carbon tax would not cost Canadians anything and we now know from the PBO that in fact that is not true. The Prime Minister promised taxes would go down. He promised safe streets and instead we have chaos, crime and drugs on our streets and social disorder. With so many broken promises, we could go on and on. We could spend hours talking about broken promises, but the pharmacare plan is destined to be just another one of those broken promises.

Now, there is another problem. By its own definition, the pharmacare plan is intended to be a single-payer plan. That means the Government of Canada pays and it is universal, so, of course, the fear is for the 97% of Canadians who already have some kind of coverage, typically through their union plan or company plan, or they may have bought coverage. They would now lose that coverage because the pharmacare plan that is being proposed by the current Liberal government is a very narrow one. It would cover a very small number of medicines when, in fact, most plans across Canada are expansive. Now, it looks like the government wants to insert itself and introduce a plan that would actually cannibalize many of the other plans across Canada. There has been no consultation with the insurance industry and there has been no consultation with the provinces.

Let us remember that health care is the purview of the provinces and yet we have the government starting to step into dental care and pharmacare. That is on top of all the billions and billions of dollars in health care transfers every single year. Somehow, the provinces have not been consulted adequately. We know that some provinces are already providing additional pharmacare support and some provincial leaders are saying, “Listen, instead, give us the cash because we are already providing these services.” Others are saying, “Listen, we have a long list of priorities for our health care system and that is not the top priority. We have a number of other priorities.” For example, how about that mental health funding that was supposed to come to the provinces? It has never happened. Oh, what about that palliative care funding that the Prime Minister promised to the provinces years ago? What happened to that? It is gone. Therefore, the lack of consultation with the provinces and repeated stepping into areas that are the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces is, I believe, leading us down this road where, without a fiscal plan that will lead us back to budget balance, we continue to heap more spending onto the taxpayer and that is unsustainable.

This pharmacare program is a big program, like so many other programs that the current government tries to introduce and implement. In fact, it was the member for Kingston and the Islands who said that this program is big and complex. Well, if it is big and complex, there is one guarantee: The current Liberal government will not be able to manage it effectively. We think of all the scandals, the spending scandals, GC Strategies, the ArriveCAN scandal and the TMX pipeline that went seven times over budget after the Liberal government purchased that pipeline.

This is the question that Canadians have to ask themselves: Do we trust the current Liberal government and the Prime Minister to manage a pharmacare program that is billions of dollars in the coming years? Do we trust them to manage this program efficiently and effectively? I believe the answer from Canadians would be a resounding no.

• (1725)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there is the contrast right there from the member. The Conservative Party does not see the national role with regard to health care, even though we have the Canada Health Act and even though the member cannot point out any Constitution that says the federal government does not play a role in health care.

The Conservatives oppose the dental plan. They oppose the pharmacare plan. They oppose the \$200 billion we have committed to the provinces over the next 10 years for future generations of health care delivery. Canadians will have a very clear choice to make whenever that next election is, which is going to be, in good part, based on the Conservatives' hidden agenda on health care. Some of that agenda was just unveiled by the member opposite, who made it very clear the Conservative Reform Party of Canada does not support the type of health care system Canadians expect from the national government in working with the provinces.

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Madam Speaker, that is simply preposterous. In fact, what I think I heard the member do just now is actually suggest there be constitutional reform to make health care the purview of the federal government instead of the provinces. Now that is a huge step. It is pretty clear and acknowledged across the country, and if one asks the provinces, they will acknowledge it, that health care is a provincial responsibility. Yes, there is a choice Canadians will have to make. In fact, we have asked the Liberal government time and time again to let Canadians make that choice now and to let us have a carbon tax election now. It refuses to do so. Why? Its members are afraid of losing. We, as Conservatives, can do much better on the health care front than these Liberals have done over the past failed nine years.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is wrong when he talks about the national government, because Quebecers' national government is in Quebec City. This is the federal government. We know that the reason the federal government is interfering in health is because of a loophole in the Constitution called the federal spending power. This is the only federation in the world that has not regulated that in one way or another, because the federal government is predatory and invasive toward the provinces.

*Government Orders*

The federal government's role is clear. It is to take Quebecers' money, write a cheque and transfer it to the Government of Quebec and to the provinces so that they can provide care, because the federal government is incapable of providing care. When it does so, particularly for the military, that care is inefficient, ineffective and very costly.

Here is my question for my Conservative colleague. If and when his party takes office, will it commit to respecting the federal government's constitutional role, meeting the demands of all of the provinces and territories and substantially increasing unconditional health transfers to the provinces?

• (1730)

[*English*]

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that a future Conservative government will respect the role of the provinces. However, I did hear him say one thing, and he is correct, which is that the Liberal Party and the member who just spoke want to do violence to the Constitution. That is how it was translated: violence to the Constitution. That will be the story in the next election. It is going to be the fact that the Liberal Party wants to trample on the rights of the provinces and usurp the role of the provinces. Shame on him for even suggesting that.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have a good deal of respect for the member for Abbotsford, so it is disappointing to hear he does not support some of the core tenets of universal health care in Canada. Of course health care is a shared jurisdiction. Health care delivery is the responsibility of the provinces, but setting national standards and providing funding for health care has always been the purview of the federal government.

One of the core pieces of this legislation we are debating is the fact that universal pharmacare would follow the principles of the Canada Health Act. Does he not accept one of the core tenets of the Canada Health Act and the way in which universal health care has been delivered in Canada since that act came into effect has been that the federal government has a responsibility to set standards and deliver funding, which is precisely what this legislation before us would accomplish?

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Madam Speaker, the delivery of health care is the purview of the provinces. That is indisputable. The provinces have affirmed that time and time again, and so has the Supreme Court of Canada.

However, I would suggest that the premise that somehow the universality of health care is at stake here is preposterous. It is ridiculous to suggest that. We in the Conservative Party believe in universal coverage of health care for every single Canadian.

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Mirabel on a point of order.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, we all like the member for Winnipeg North, but there are times when we need a modicum of decorum. I think the word “crazy” that was shouted here in the House at the member for Abbotsford was inappropriate.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** If I heard correctly, it was “that is crazy”.

[*Translation*]

It did not necessarily mean that someone was being called crazy.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan has the floor.

**Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-64 for a second time. I spoke at second reading of this bill on Thursday evening, and I am happy to speak to third reading of the pharmacare pamphlet.

I would like to repeat some of my remarks made during my speech at second reading. I have asked, time and time again, for any of the NDP-Liberal costly coalition members to tell me how many provincial ministers asked for a pharmacare bill at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting. Not one of the Liberal ministers, Liberal members or NDP members actually answered me. Quite frankly, they did not want to say out loud that the answer is zero. This was not at the top of a wish list for any of the provincial health ministers.

I have been talking with our health minister in Saskatchewan. He still has no details about what this pharmacare pamphlet would look like or how it would affect the people of Saskatchewan. The biggest fear at the provincial level is that coverage would lessen in Saskatchewan. They have done a good job of building health care back up in Saskatchewan after the nineties, when the NDP ruined health care in Saskatchewan, which I will get to later in my speech. The provincial health ministers are asking, “Where are the details?”

We have talked about how the federal Liberal government continues to bring in bills without any consultation. We have seen it in agriculture, in oil and gas, and even with the budget. At the agriculture committee on Thursday, I asked the agriculture minister about who he consulted in the ag sector when it came to increasing the capital gains tax exemption from a half to two-thirds. I have not gotten a straight answer from a lot of the Liberal ministers at committee, but to that minister's credit, he said that he did not even know that it was in the budget. A senior minister in the government did not know what was going to be in budget 2024.

I have had the honour of serving in the Government of Saskatchewan, and I know there is quite a process to get a budget approved. It goes through Treasury Board finalization, then through cabinet finalization, then through caucus finalization, and then back to cabinet for a final sign-off.

### *Government Orders*

My colleague, the member for Abbotsford, who gave a great speech, was in government, and I think he probably saw most of what was going to be in the budget before it came out. When a senior minister who has been here for a long time, some might say too long of a time, admitted that senior ranking Liberals did not see the budget before it came out, I was dumbfounded. It was unbelievable.

It does not surprise me, then, that this bill was brought forward with very little consultation with anyone. We all know this was signed off on, on the back of a napkin, to placate the junior NDP partners, so they would prop up the corrupt government for years, or at least until the member for Burnaby South gets his pension. We know what this is about, and it is to ensure that the NDP-Liberal costly coalition stays in power. This is the price Canadians are going to pay.

Right now, 27 million Canadians are anxious about losing some of the health coverage they have right now as they have health coverage that they want to keep. I will admit that 1.1 million Canadians are under-insured or do not have insurance. Why does the government not focus on that? We could have had something rolled out that supplemented the provincial government programs. Instead, the costly Liberal coalition government always wants to be the one that rides in on the white horse, saying, "We are going to save you. We have a national plan."

We have a national day care plan. A friend of mine is now number 300 on the wait-list in Regina, which is not that big of a city. The government has made day care spots less available in my city of Regina, Saskatchewan.

The federal government has a dental plan that no dentist wants to sign off on. I have a letter from the Saskatchewan Dental Hygienists' Association, where 99% of dental assistants and dental hygienists are female, and there was not one consultation with any of those stakeholder groups about what they should do or if they thought the dental care plan was a good idea. Once again, there was no consultation. This is a recurring theme.

• (1735)

We have a national lunch program for which the Liberals did not do any consultations with any school boards. In Regina, there are a lot of great corporate citizens who donate a lot of money to lunch programs. When we got together as a group and talked about this, I asked if anyone knew how many lunch programs were in our city. The Regina Food Bank covers some programs. Mosaic Market covers some programs. Nutrien covers some programs. If we put all those programs together, we could do a lot of good and almost get to where we need to so all kids could have food when they go to school.

There was no consultation on that either. The Liberals just come in on their white horses and think they are saviours. It is almost like someone over there has a God complex, one might say. They always want to be the one walking in and saving people, but they do not work with anyone else across the country.

Let us get to the pharmacare program. Once again, it is a pharmacare program, with no consultation, that no one asked for at a provincial level. My friend for Winnipeg North talked about how

health care is not within provincial jurisdiction, but it is. Health care delivery is within provincial jurisdiction. He knows that, as he is a former MLA. Money transfers come from the federal government, but the day-to-day operational delivery of health care is one hundred per cent a provincial jurisdiction. He knows that.

It is interesting for the Liberals to bring in a national program, or a pamphlet, really, that covers two things, and then act like they are the conquering heroes. Who asked for this at a provincial level? I hope my friend from Winnipeg North will ask me a couple questions about that.

There is one more thing when it comes to health care in our country. The biggest threat to health care in Canada is whenever there is a provincial NDP government. The NDP in Saskatchewan devastated health care. When it was in government, it closed 52 hospitals in my province. It closed 1,200 long-term care beds in Saskatchewan during the nineties. It fired 1,000 nurses, hundreds of doctors, and rural Saskatchewan was divided.

The NDP is the pioneer of our two-tiered health care systems. In Saskatchewan, there is much different health care if someone is in rural Saskatchewan compared to urban Saskatchewan. The NDP went so far as to close the Plains Health Centre hospital in Regina. It was one of the best hospitals in the city and was the newest hospital. The NDP closed it because it was servicing too many rural Saskatchewanians. It was unbelievable.

We now have a government in B.C., an NDP provincial government, that is pioneering a pharmacare program, but it has it backward. It is giving B.C. residents free drugs that are killing them, instead of having a plan in place to give residents affordable drugs that would be life-saving. That is what B.C. is doing right now.

Instead of putting money toward life-saving drugs, the Liberals want a safe supply, which I do not think exists. They continue to spend taxpayers' dollars in British Columbia to give drugs to people who are killing themselves with those drugs. That is so opposite to what a government should be doing. The Liberals want to come in like they are champions of pharmacare. They should talk to some of their B.C. cousins about what is going on in that province. They should take some of the money they are spending putting illicit hard drugs on the street, and maybe supplement that with some programs that would give drugs to people that would help save their lives instead of end their lives.

I would end with one more conversation about how consultation is so disregarded by the government. Obviously, the NDP are going to vote for this terrible piece of legislation. The Liberals will vote for it.

One thing I would say to members is to please consult with the health ministers of the provincial governments because Saskatchewan is doing a great job. It has diabetes coverage for everyone up to age 25. We have a \$25 cap on senior drugs, a program that helps seniors make sure they get the medication they need.

*Government Orders*

Provinces are in charge of the delivery of the health care system. Please let them keep that in their domain, and do the proper thing and consult with the health ministers in this country.

• (1740)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I can clearly say I have never, in my political career, ever said that the provinces do not play a role in health care. Just because one of the member's Conservative friends tells him I said that, does not necessarily mean I said it. I can assure the member I understand and appreciate the important, critical role provinces play in health care.

The member asked where the idea came from. Back in 2017, I was out getting signatures on petitions. People not only want the federal government to play a role in health care, but they also want the federal government to move forward with a national pharmacare program, ideally one where we could have a multitude of medications in the program, but that could take time. That would require provincial involvement.

Does the member not agree that the vast majority of Canadians want to see the federal government's presence in health care?

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Madam Speaker, I think he doth protest too much. He did say that the provinces do not have a role in health care. I believe the federal transfers are part of a responsibility the federal government has to make sure that it has the proper money to run the health care system in the provinces. The member never answered my question. I would love for him to table the information, the correspondence, regarding which health ministers, how many health ministers, wrote to this long, nine-year costly coalition, wrote to the federal health minister, to say that the first thing one should do after the 2020 election would be to try to bring in a pharmacare plan. The answer is zero.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his fascinating speech.

Obviously, health care is an exclusive provincial jurisdiction, but there is something called the fiscal imbalance. We know that the most important responsibilities of a welfare state are incumbent on the provinces but that the revenue largely goes to Ottawa. That means funds must unconditionally be transferred to the provinces. During the debate, the Conservatives said that they wanted to respect provincial jurisdictions and stop interfering.

There is an expression known as “starve the beast”. That suggests that is what they are going to do. They seem to be hinting that they are going to cut our funding if Quebec does its own thing when it comes to health care. If the Conservatives should take power one day, will they commit to significantly increasing unconditional health transfers to the provinces and Quebec, as the premiers of the 10 provinces and three territories are calling for?

[*English*]

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Madam Speaker, I had a colleague in Saskatchewan who always had a great saying, which is that the best indication of future behaviour is past behaviour. I believe, despite

Liberal rhetoric, that the health care transfers continued to increase under former prime minister Harper. They were maybe not as high as they would have liked, but there was an increase every year to the provinces when it came to health care transfers. That was our past performance, and I would expect that would stay the same.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Regina—Lewvan was quite adamant that health care delivery is the purview of the provinces. I think that when he reads the bill, Bill C-64, he will be delighted to find that, in the pharmacare proposal that we are debating today, the delivery of pharmacare is delivered by the provinces.

The other thing I think he will be quite delighted with is the fact that provinces will have the ability to sign on or not to sign on with the pharmacare plan that is being debated. I think the only challenge he is going to have is that, when the Province of Manitoba and the Province of British Columbia sign on and when their residents start receiving free contraception and free diabetes medication and devices, the residents of his province, his constituents, are going to start asking why they are not able to tap into the benefits of universal pharmacare.

I would just ask him what he is going to say to them in those situations.

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Madam Speaker, I do like the little cute condescension from the NDP: “when he reads the bill”. The bill, Bill C-64, is four pages. I did read the bill. It is really cute when they have that passive-aggressive tone. It is adorable.

If they sign on and if they do take the universal single-payer coverage, what are his constituents going to say when their coverage is less than what they had before?

What is he going to say to 27 million Canadians who are losing better coverage because they are going to add coverage that is not as good as what they have right now? They would have a lot of explaining to do to their constituents when they try to take away the coverage they have right now and give them less coverage.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Milton.

I want to address what I would suggest is the ultimate potential assault on health care by the Conservative-Reform Party of Canada. For the record, to be very clear, one needs to look at what the member for Abbotsford said today, which has been repeated in many different ways by different members. I have often talked about the hidden Conservative-Reform agenda.

*Government Orders*

I personally see health care as an important issue going into the next federal election, and my intention is to point out the contrast. When I say that the Conservative Party has crazy policies, we should think about them saying that the federal government has no constitutional role. One would think they were separatists, like the Bloc. They believe the federal government should just be an ATM machine, hand over the cash and say nothing about health care because the federal government has no role to play. Both the Conservatives and the Bloc believe that there is no role for the federal government to play in health care.

Then, they say that it is a constitutional God-given right that provinces are the only ones that have anything to do with health care. That is absolutely wrong. I would ask members to cite a Supreme Court of Canada decision that says that the Canada Health Act is in violation of the Constitution. I would like members to tell me which premier or which province took the government to the Supreme Court and had a favourable ruling on that issue. The simple answer is that it has not happened. That is why the Conservative spin of misinformation continues to flow, and that is most unfortunate.

Unlike the Conservative Party, Liberals understand and value the important role that the federal government in Ottawa plays. In terms of the pharmacare program, it is interesting to hear from different opposition members, the Conservatives and the Bloc, as they have that unholy alliance on Bill C-64 for different reasons. We have well over 100 policies on pharmacare, depending on what province people are in or which company they work for. There are many different types of policies facing the pharmacare issue.

The idea of a national pharmacare program is nothing new. The Prime Minister is moving the issue forward. That is what Bill C-64 is all about. It recognizes there is a need for the national government to work, where it can, with provinces, to develop a national pharmacare program that has similarities in all regions of the country. The way I see it, there are two areas where we are focusing a great deal of attention today. I see it as a step forward. I believe that provinces will continue to look at what is being proposed and will come on board.

The arguments I hear from the Conservative Party today are the types of arguments one would have heard generations ago regarding health care when public health was brought in. Those are the types of arguments of deniers. I suspect we will never hear the Conservative Party saying they are going to get rid of the Canada Health Act. Maybe a good opposition day motion would be what people have to say about the Canada Health Act and whether they support it or not.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** You could ask when you are in opposition.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the member across the way says that we cannot propose a motion of that nature because we are not in opposition. Maybe in 10 years, or whenever it might happen, we will have the opportunity.

• (1750)

I suspect that even Conservative reformers, the very far right, would recognize that Canadians treasure and value the health care

system we have today. They see it as a part of our Canadian identity. The federal government played a critical role in that. It was the Province of Saskatchewan that led the way in ensuring that the federal government here in Ottawa would be able to expand upon it so that all Canadians would be able to benefit by it. Bringing forward the idea that if someone has diabetes, no matter where they live in Canada, they would have public assistance in terms of those medications and have public support, I see that as a positive thing.

Today, the reality is that it depends on what province and what sort of private insurance that someone may have, maybe not as much of a deductible. It varies across the land. Many Canadians do not even have the opportunity to have virtually any subsidy, in terms of the medications required for diabetes.

It has been reported that just over 3.5 million Canadians are dealing with diabetes today. I heard that as many as 25% of those individuals reported that because of the cost, they are not taking all the medications they should be taking to deal with their diabetes. What is the consequence of not being able to take the medications? It could mean someone could prematurely lose their eyesight and become blind. It could mean having an amputation as a direct result. Again, affordability depends on the province where a person lives or on the company the person works for.

We have a national government saying that it believes this is a wonderful, positive step forward to see strong national leadership in providing this medication. This would profoundly change, in a positive way, the lives of many Canadians in every region of the country, including all provinces. This is factual. This would ultimately put us in a better light moving forward. This should come as no surprise.

We have had different social groups, such as unions, come to Parliament. They have been advocating for it. We have had a standing committee deal with it. We have had it incorporated into budgets. We have had statements from ministers of finance in regard to this, and the Prime Minister has been talking about it for a number of years. I have brought forward many petitions on the issue. There is no surprise here. If members actually consulted with their constituents, they would find that there is a wide spectrum, in terms of appetite, for the federal government not only to continue dealing with this, but also to consider other possibilities.

Why is it that the Conservative reformers feel that the federal government's role in health care should be diminished? They are not only against pharmacare but also against the dental plan. They are also against the commitment to provide \$200 billion for 10 years for future generations of health and to provide the cash resources to support provinces. That is what I hope to be talking a lot about in the next federal election in 16 to 18 months. I believe that a vast majority of Canadians are behind this policy.

*Government Orders*

• (1755)

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am always enlightened when I hear the member for Winnipeg North say those words on the floor of the House of Commons, because he must be the only member from his party who can actually address these things. We hear him many times over, and I thank him again for those comments.

There is something my party and I are united on as far as what we oppose is concerned. We oppose these ongoing deficits that are growing and getting to be more and more of an impact on Canadians, especially with inflation. Inflation is going to run this country into the ground and, frankly, make everything more expensive, including the drugs that the member is talking about. They are going to cost more and more, and we are going to be in a spiral as we go forward here. We are united against ongoing deficits and ongoing spending.

The member has not even looked at how much this is going to cost the treasury going forward; it is only a guess. Where is it going to stop? We cannot spend any more. We are just going to keep spending ourselves into eternity here. Can he tell us where the end is in sight?

• (1800)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. leader of the government in the House is rising on a point of order.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, while my colleague is preparing his excellent answer for the member, I would like to request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting and the sitting on Thursday of this week be 12 midnight, pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28.

*[English]*

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, February 28, the minister's request to extend said sittings is deemed adopted.

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*[Translation]***PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION ACT**

## BILL C-20—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading of Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stages of the bill.

*[English]***PHARMACARE ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I just spoke for about 10 minutes about how important health care is to Canadians, and how important it is that we, as a national government, step up to the plate on things such as a national pharmacare program and a national dental care program, to be there for our constituents, and what does the Reform-Conservative Party across the way say? “What about the billions of dollars? Instead of spending them on health, maybe we should be dealing with the debt or the impact it is going to have on inflation?”

Yes, we have inflation in Canada, but I will contrast our inflation rate to that of any other country in the world. We are doing reasonably well. However, I can say that we cannot trust the Conservatives. With their hidden agenda, health care is not safe.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limouilou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am certain my colleague is expecting my question.

Health care is a jurisdiction of Quebec and the Canadian provinces. Quebec already has a pharmacare program. It is not perfect, but we can improve it.

Why is the government stubbornly trying to duplicate services in Quebec by offering its own separate insurance plan instead of letting Quebec manage it with the right to opt out with compensation?

*[English]*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, there will be people in the province of Quebec who will, in fact, benefit from this particular program. If we canvass the entire country, we will see, depending on the province or territory, different types of policies regarding the issue.

What we are looking at through this legislation is ultimately working with the provinces so that if a person has diabetes in Canada, they can anticipate medications at no cost, whether they live in Halifax, Montreal, Quebec City, Winnipeg, Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver or Whitehorse. That is the idea of having a national program. Different provinces have different programs, and private insurance companies have different deductibles, depending on the company, which is the reason why it is important that the federal government step up. Unfortunately, the Conservatives and the Bloc are voting against this.

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I know personally of people who, because they do not have the diabetes medication they need, are at risk of amputations. There are people, as well, who deserve better protections for contraceptives. For example, not all indigenous women can have access to contraceptives, especially when we know that, on this fifth anniversary of the publication of the MMIWG's calls for justice, this particular bill can make a difference in making sure that indigenous women get the protections they need.

I wonder if the member can share with us his response on why it is so important to provide diabetes medication, as well as contraceptives, why safe abortions are severely needed and why contraceptives are a particular need that was focused on in this bill.

• (1805)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I believe there is at least one province, possibly even more, that has acted on the issue of contraceptives. We will find, as I said, that there are different policies in different provinces, and so forth.

What is really important to recognize is that Bill C-64 would help an estimated nine million people in dealing with contraceptives. When we think about diabetes medications, we are talking about over 3.5 million people. That is a lot of good reasons to get behind this legislation and ensure there are some standards across the nation.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise this evening to discuss the bill before us, Bill C-64, an act respecting pharmacare. We can all agree, or I hope we can all agree, that Canadians should have access to the right medicines at an affordable price regardless of where they live in our country. That is precisely what Bill C-64 would do. It represents the first phase toward a national pharmacare plan, starting with the provision of universal single-payer coverage for 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 and for all Canadians who use it.

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. The single most important barrier to access to contraception in Canada is cost. For example, the typical cost for select contraceptives in our country for an uninsured Canadian woman is up to \$25 per unit, or \$300 per year, for oral birth control pills and up to \$500 per unit for a hormonal IUD, which is effective for five years.

It occurs to me that if oil and gas companies were going to start selling diabetes medications, insulin or contraceptives, the Conservatives might be all for it. It seems like they are the only group, the only organization, and the only affordability measures the Conservatives can come up with are supports for oil and gas.

However, Canadians have lots of expenses, and one of the main expenses associated with inequality and inequities in our society is their medications. We are here to help. Some populations are disproportionately affected by the lack of coverage. Women, people

with low incomes and young people, all of whom are more likely to work in part-time or contract positions and thereby not have access to a drug plan, often lack access to private coverage. One study found that women from lower-income households are more likely to use less effective contraceptive methods or no contraceptive method at all as a result of their lower-income situation.

Bill C-64 would ensure that Canadians have access to a comprehensive suite of options when it comes to contraceptive drugs and devices, because improved access to contraception improves equality. This means that every woman in Canada would have the ability to choose the contraceptive that is best for her, regardless of her ability to pay. This would contribute to her right to have bodily autonomy, which is what this government fully supports.

Sexual and reproductive health is a priority for this government. This is reflected in Bill C-64, as I have mentioned, but it goes beyond that in other significant federal initiatives. Our government is committed to improving the sexual and reproductive health outcomes for all Canadians, and this includes helping to ensure access to a comprehensive suite of contraceptive drugs and devices for everyone. By working with provinces and territories and guided by the principles within Bill C-64, we can make this a reality.

The proposed Bill C-64 lays the groundwork for that process, and through it, with collaboration with provinces and territories, we are helping to fight for affordability for all Canadians. By passing this legislation, collectively, we can all continue to build on the momentum we have already achieved.

I looked into this. Pharmacare in Canada is deeply popular with people who vote for all parties. It is almost 90%, in fact. This is something I expect all members of Parliament to get behind. It is something a lot of Canadians support, regardless of party.

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, there are a lot of reasons to heckle in this House. Perhaps the Conservatives disagree with me on some key issues, but I find it really remarkable that they want to heckle and tell me that we should not be fighting for Canadians to have access to the drugs they need in order to live healthy and fulfilling lives. It really is remarkable and just re-emphasizes that if oil and gas was selling insulin and IUDs, the Conservatives would be the first ones to line up and say that we need to support these companies. It does not seem like they are really in it for Canadians, particularly lower-income Canadians, who are struggling with their bills. It is clear to me that the Conservatives only care about the oil and gas lobby. In fact, I think they are trying to put the oil and gas lobby out of business.

With the time remaining, I would like to—



*Government Orders*

• (1810)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is rising on a point of order.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, our earpieces are not working, because I could not hear any of the heckling on this side of the floor to which the member opposite was referring.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I did not react to it, but yes, there was heckling.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There is not only heckling but also unnecessary interruption.

I will use my remaining time to talk about diabetes and those living with diabetes. Diabetes is a disease with no cure. There is a treatment, and it is thanks to Canadian science, which is something that our government supports. Canadian scientist Frederick Banting and his team came up with an interim solution, I suppose we could call it; it is a treatment for diabetes that allows diabetics to live. Without it, diabetics would not have the opportunity to live fulfilling lives, but we still need to fight for a cure. Before we get there, we should also ensure that we reduce inequality and inequities in the populations impacted by diabetes.

There is a really interesting infographic from the Public Health Agency of Canada. Anybody who is watching this debate might be interested in how diabetes and inequality intersect in Canada. I was actually very surprised to learn that diabetes and employment status are related; there is a positive correlation between them. When people are employed, they are less likely to suffer from diabetes and live with diabetes. When people are permanently unable to work, they are more likely to have diabetes, which means that they naturally have a lower income. It is the same for education level, surprisingly. Almost 10% of those individuals with less than a high school education will have diabetes or prediabetes throughout their life; for university graduates, that goes down to between 3.5% and 6.1%. There is also a positive relationship within income quintiles. All five income quintiles are associated with a positive relationship. As income goes up, people are less likely to have diabetes. Therefore, providing folks living with diabetes with free access to medication, to insulin and to supports for managing their illness is also an affordability measure that would make a difference for a lot of Canadians.

Diabetes also affects people disproportionately in different categories. There are complex social and environmental behavioural factors that result in inequalities in the burden of diabetes between certain populations in Canada. The prevalence of diabetes is 2.3% higher among South Asian Canadians, and it is 2.1% higher among Black adults.

For indigenous adults, the prevalence of diabetes is similarly staggering, at 1.9% higher for first nations Canadians living off reserve. Inequities experienced by first nations, Inuit and Métis populations are a direct result of colonial policies and practices that included massive forced relocation, loss of lands, creation of the reserve system, banning of indigenous languages and cultural practices, and the creation of the harmful residential school system. Unaddressed intergenerational trauma adds to the ongoing challenges

faced by indigenous peoples, and providing them with a reliable and affordable treatment for diabetes would support affordability.

This would also reduce the number of times people with diabetes have to access health care as a result of their illness. People with diabetes are more at risk of all sorts of life-changing health crises, such as a heart attack or stroke, kidney failure, blindness and amputation. At this very moment, there are about 3.7 million Canadians, or 9.4% of our population, who have been diagnosed and have to manage their condition for their entire life. If members can believe it, in 2015, 25% of Canadians with diabetes indicated that they followed their treatments to a T, but they were affected by cost; in some cases, those Canadians were rationing medications to save money. Therefore, a quarter of the people who are following their treatments are affected by cost. There are other Canadians who are undiagnosed, and there are Canadians who are not following their treatments. We need to make sure that they live a healthy and fulfilled life, and one way to do that is to ensure that they have access to this vital medication.

About one out of three people is living with diabetes or prediabetes today in Canada, and rates of diabetes are ever rising. It is estimated that, by 2028, over 13 million Canadians, or 32% of the population, will have diabetes or prediabetes. Through Bill C-64 and the work of the national framework for diabetes, we can improve aspects of preventative care as well. We can do this through information sharing and knowledge transfer, while also ensuring that those living with diabetes have access to insulin and other diabetes medications.

This is a cost-saving endeavour. The Conservatives have continually referred to this as a spending program, as if it would not be invested directly in the health of Canadians. Not only would it be invested in their long-term health outcomes, but it would also be invested directly in their affordability. It would support affordability, and, as I pointed out, that is something that is positively correlated with other risk factors.

• (1815)

We introduced the national framework for diabetes in 2022 to align multisectoral efforts to reduce the impact of diabetes in Canada. The framework comprises about six interdependent and interconnected components that represent the range of areas where opportunities to advance efforts on diabetes could and will be beneficial.

Bill C-64 would support people living with diabetes, whether through improving access to the medications they need or giving them the tools they need to have a better quality of life in Canada. We are here for Canadians. Our plan to provide universal coverage for contraception and diabetes medications would be transformative, and I still have faith that the Conservatives will see the light and recognize that this is a very popular and worthwhile endeavour.

We should all get behind national pharmacare for Canadians.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

*Government Orders*

I just want to raise to the attention of the House a really important matter that happened, and I am sure that I can have unanimous consent. We know the important role that pages play in the House of Commons to help support us. One of the annual traditions here in the House of Commons has been the actual ability to have a soccer game among pages and MPs, and last week—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I want to remind the hon. member that the question of props is an issue, so I would invite the member not to handle a prop.

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Madam Speaker, I will be very quick, but I just want to recognize that there is an annual game played among MPs and pages. It is a long-standing tradition, and the game took place last week. I am pleased to present the fact that the—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** That would be more in the nature of a member's statement than a point of order.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has the floor.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, a national drug program or pharmacare program would be a great idea if we were not a trillion dollars in the hole. As a consequence of being so in debt, taxes are going up and driving our doctors out of the country. How is a pharmacare program going to help people who do not even have a doctor to provide a prescription and have no way of getting a prescription? How is the government going to decide who gets the medicine when there is a drug shortage, as we have seen recently with diabetes? How are they going to decide who lives and dies?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, it is beyond the pale that Conservatives continue to refer to a national pharmacare plan as an expenditure that we just cannot afford. It is so unfortunate.

This is an affordability measure. It is a way to support Canadians who are vulnerable. It is a proven method to ensure that vulnerable, lower-income and disproportionately impacted Canadians will receive the financial support they need. There are Canadians living in period poverty, who cannot access contraception and who just simply do not have regular access to diabetes medications.

A government is required to be able to do many complicated things simultaneously. We need to address the doctor shortage. We need to meet Canadians where they are and ensure they have the medications that they deserve and that they need in order to live full and fulfilled lives.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He just responded to the Conservatives by saying that this money needs to be spent to provide a service. I agree with him. However, we have to be efficient. To be efficient, we should entrust this money to the people who are competent.

A system already exists in Quebec. My colleague is well aware of it. I am going to give him a mission to fulfill within his party, his government. He needs to convince his caucus and the people who run it to transfer the money to Quebec, unconditionally.

I can assure the House that the Quebec government will get the job done on health care because that falls within its jurisdiction.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, but it is always the same story with the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc members always say that in Canada, the provincial government, in this case Quebec, is wholly responsible for the health care system. In actual fact, that is the case until the bill arrives and it is time to pay for the health care system.

Canada's health care system is a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial governments. We need only think of the health care provided at the regional level in my riding. It is so important that we find solutions together.

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we hear from the Conservative caucus about the costs of pharmacare. The member spoke about how this is needed for an affordability measure, but we have not heard about how national single-payer pharmacare saves money. The Parliamentary Budget Officer tabled a report saying that \$1.4 billion would be saved because national single-payer pharmacare gives governments the negotiating and bargaining power to drive down drug costs. Therefore, it is not surprising to see Conservatives oppose it when their friends, the lobbyists, the CEOs and big pharma keep saying the same things that they do.

Can the member speak to how Conservatives are constantly looking out for the corporations at the very top instead of everyday Canadians who are struggling to pay for essential medications?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct. This is not only a cost-savings measure for the government, the health care system or people who live with diabetes or require contraception, but it is also a way to save money within the system. When Canadians stick to their regimen and take their diabetes medication, they will visit the hospital less often. We want to make sure not only that they live healthy and fulfilled lives but also that we save money in the health care system. However, it is the case again that Conservatives are really only here for the lobbyists and never for everyday people—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am aware that there will be about three minutes for my speech. I am not sure if the time carries forward or whether we are done debate, but if it does I will be splitting my time with the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

It is my pleasure to rise in this House. I want to put a little context around the pharmacare situation and, really, the economy in general. The future Liberal leader Mark Carney said that it is impossible to redistribute what one does not have. That is the very scenario that we find ourselves in.

Over the last nine years, we have experienced incredible fiscal and monetary, I might add, mismanagement of our economy. When the Liberals took the reins of power nine years ago, we had a balanced budget and we had a low GDP-to-debt ratio. Now, some nine years later, we have one of the worst debt-to-GDP ratios. We are looking at about 43%, in terms of debt-to-GDP ratio, which is shocking because the finance minister clearly said in 2022 that the government has a “fiscal anchor”, a line it shall not cross, and that the debt-to-GDP ratio would not increase.

Then what did it do? It went up. According to the PBO, who we heard from today, it is actually going to go up the next two years. Speaking of the PBO, I am not sure if anyone caught this because it was only audio, unfortunately, but members will not believe what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said. He was getting challenged by Liberals for the error he made with respect to the calculation of the carbon tax, and what he said is that he actually knows his numbers are right because he has the numbers in front of him, the same numbers that the Liberals would not release to the public.

It is incredible. The PBO came out and said that he has their analysis, but he just cannot share it because the Liberals will not share it. They have a carbon tax analysis that shows six out of 10 Canadians pay more in carbon tax than they get back in rebate.

That being said, I will just sum up my three minutes with this comment from the great Margaret Thatcher. She said, “The problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money.” We have hit that point. We are now paying more in interest than we are in health care transfers. Let us have a little common sense, the government cannot redistribute what it does not have. An obsession with redistribution to the extent that it is no longer focusing on growth will hurt everyone, most notably the most vulnerable.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It being 6:27 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, May 22, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

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

### *Government Orders*

participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:** Madam Speaker, we would request a recorded division.

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

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 794*)

### YEAS

#### Members

Alghabra	Ali
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Boissonnault
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse

*Orders of the Day*

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 McGuinty  
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
 McPherson  
 Miao  
 Morrice  
 Murray  
 Ng  
 O'Connell  
 O'Regan  
 Rodriguez  
 Romanado  
 Saks  
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 Schiefke  
 Sgro  
 Sheehan  
 Sidhu (Brampton South)  
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 Sahota  
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 Serré  
 Shanahan  
 Sidhu (Brampton East)  
 Singh  
 Sousa  
 Sudds  
 Taylor Roy  
 Trudeau  
 Valdez  
 van Koeverden  
 Vandenbeld  
 Weiler  
 Yip  
 Zarrillo

Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
 Lloyd  
 Maguire  
 Martel  
 McCauley (Edmonton West)  
 Melillo  
 Moore  
 Motz  
 Nater  
 Patzer  
 Perkins  
 Plamondon  
 Redekopp  
 Rempel Garner  
 Rood  
 Savard-Tremblay  
 Schmale  
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 Simard  
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 Shipley  
 Sinclair-Desgagné  
 Soroka  
 Ste-Marie  
 Strahl  
 Thériault  
 Thomas  
 Tolmie  
 Van Popta  
 Vidal  
 Viersen  
 Villemure  
 Vuong  
 Warkentin  
 Webber  
 Williamson

**NAYS**

## Members

Aboultaif  
 Albas  
 Arnold  
 Barlow  
 Barsalou-Duval  
 Bergeron  
 Bérubé  
 Blanchet  
 Block  
 Brassard  
 Brunelle-Duceppe  
 Caputo  
 Chabot  
 Champoux  
 Cooper  
 Dancho  
 Deltell  
 Desbiens  
 Dowdall  
 Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)  
 Epp  
 Falk (Provencher)  
 Ferreri  
 Fortin  
 Garon  
 Généreux  
 Gill  
 Godin  
 Gourde  
 Hallan  
 Jeneroux  
 Kelly  
 Kitchen  
 Kram  
 Kurek  
 Lake  
 Larouche  
 Lehoux  
 Leslie

Aitchison  
 Allison  
 Baldinelli  
 Barrett  
 Beaulieu  
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 Bezan  
 Blanchette-Joncas  
 Bragdon  
 Brock  
 Calkins  
 Carrie  
 Chambers  
 Chong  
 Dalton  
 DeBellefeuille  
 d'Entremont  
 Doherty  
 Dreeshen  
 Ellis  
 Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)  
 Fast  
 Findlay  
 Gallant  
 Gaudreau  
 Genuis  
 Gladu  
 Goodridge  
 Gray  
 Hoback  
 Jivani  
 Khanna  
 Kmiec  
 Kramp-Neuman  
 Kusie  
 Lantsman  
 Lawrence  
 Lemire  
 Lewis (Essex)

**PAIRED**

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 Petitpas Taylor  
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**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I declare the motion carried.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

[*Translation*]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## FINANCE

The House resumed from May 21 consideration of the motion to concur in the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in the name of the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, and of the amendment.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, would it be possible to ask members to be quiet?

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would ask hon. members who are chatting in the House to please take their conversations to the lobby. We are beginning debate.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

*Orders of the Day*

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, we are celebrating pharmaceutical care. It is—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We are beginning debate in the chamber, as the hon. member well knows.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Mirabel.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, I thank you for your diligence. I also wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with none other than the Voltaire of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, if ever there were one, and possibly the only person in the House who is so bright that we have to wear shades.

As we know, the NDP has been cozying up to the Liberals for the past two years. That is why it is no surprise that, today, the NDP wants to talk about groceries and grocery prices. We must admit that, for once, the NDP's diagnosis is correct. Yes, there is significant food inflation. Yes, the grocery retail market is becoming increasingly concentrated. In many communities, there are very few businesses supplying food to vulnerable and dependent customers.

While they are obviously not monopolies, they have what is known in economics as significant “market power”. Let me say straight out that there is a fundamental competition problem in the grocery retail market. If I am not mistaken, Canada had 11 or 12 major grocery store chains in the early 1980s, in a country stretching from coast to coast. Anyway, Quebec is still part of it. The future may be a different story. Back then, there were 11 or 12 players. Today, we have five major chains, all suspected of possible anti-competitive behaviour.

Obviously, they deny it. However, the recent case involving Glentel raises questions. It is jointly owned by Bell and Rogers, which struck a deal with Loblaw to secure a monopoly on cell phone plans sold in Loblaw's stores. Not only is their behaviour anti-competitive, but even when these companies create new business models, they manage to innovate in ways that raise prices for vulnerable customers who depend on their products and services, and their margins are high.

The grocers say that they have it hard here in Canada and that consolidation and mergers and acquisitions are necessary because the margins are low. The profit margins in question are about 5%. Maybe in sectors where the risk is high, these margins are low. Today at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, we welcomed—

• (1915)

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Madam Speaker, point of order.

It seems that several members did not listen to your reminder earlier. Even though my colleague is not far from me, I am having trouble hearing him.

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would ask those who are talking to please take their conversations outside the chamber.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, today at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, we welcomed Pierre Larouche, a world authority on competition law. He has been a professor at the Université de Montréal for seven years, but he had a long career in Europe and has trained other leading figures in competition law in Europe. He told us that, in Europe, the average profit margin in the grocery sector is about 3%.

Our neighbours to the south might want to set up shop here in Canada because the average profit margin in the U.S. is 2%. It is not surprising that they can survive with such low margins, because it is a volume market there. We have very few players, yet they feed an entire G7 country. Profit margins are high. That is a symptom of the lack of competition. There were a lot of companies 25, 30 or 40 years ago, whereas there are very few today, and they have higher profit margins than our neighbour to the south. This is reflected in prices and possibly results in higher prices for consumers.

The NDP got it right: Food and rent are the biggest household expenses. It is important, here at the federal level, that we study this issue within the context of federal jurisdiction. Competition falls under federal jurisdiction.

Now, it is worth noting that some progress has been made. Bills have been introduced. The Canadian competition regime was partially reformed this year and changes were made to the rules around competition. The commissioner of competition has been given the power to investigate for the first time, as well as the power to subpoena. In the future, the commissioner's office will be able to initiate its own investigations, particularly in the food market, and it will also be able to force companies to hand over documents. Canada's competition regime was extremely outdated. It still is in many respects, but we are moving from the Stone Age to the Iron Age, to some degree, in terms of competition statutes in Canada. In the past, the commissioner might tell a company that he wanted to see its numbers, but all the company had to do was not answer the phone, and that was the end of it.

The commissioner's investigative power was expanded. He was given the power to subpoena. The definitions of anti-competitive practices, including for commercial leasing, was changed. From now on, grocery stores will no longer be able to strike a deal with a shopping mall owner, where the grocer agrees to operate its store in the mall, provided the mall owner does not rent any space to another business that provides food or grocery services. These are anti-competitive practices. Canadian law had not been modernized, but these businesses, having failed to innovate on everything else in many ways, innovated when it comes to their anti-competitive practices. Which is why this change was made. The Bloc Québécois had long been asking for that change and we commend the efforts of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

*Orders of the Day*

Bloomberg recently said that Canada was a good place to invest. The government brags about it almost every question period. Despite that and despite the fact that profit margins at grocery stores are higher in Canada than they are in the United States, we were surprised to learn that the U.S. companies, foreign entrants, did not want to set up shop here and create competition. This raises a lot of questions, which, I think, should be studied in committee.

Are there regulatory barriers that prevent these companies from investing here? Are there barriers to investment that prevent these companies from investing here? What are the institutional data that explain the fact that Canada, despite its high profit margins, is unattractive to U.S. companies south of the border, whose profit margins are two to three percentage points lower? I think that we need to answer those questions.

I know that we are debating a committee report on a special tax, but we could debate at length the effect that a special tax would have on grocery stores' excess profits and whether it will be passed on to consumers. We could debate that at length, but one thing is certain: It will not resolve the competition issue. If we impose a special tax on these companies' excess profits tomorrow morning, it will not bring in new companies, it will not open new grocery stores and it will not increase competition. We will also still be obligated to implement the same temporary measure next year, in five years, 10 years or even 15 years. The diagnosis is clear. The state of competition has been in decline for the past 30 years, and it will continue to decline. We cannot just come up with a band-aid solution. We need to get to the root of the problem.

• (1920)

I think the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry needs to be asking himself these questions. He has been running all over the United States, meeting with grocers and asking them to come open stores here. That is not how investment is supposed to work. Investment is supposed to be attractive. We have yet to announce how we will be voting on this committee report. There are several hours of debate left. We will be listening. The Bloc Québécois still has a lot of thinking to do.

However, it should be noted that the Conservatives have tabled an amendment calling for this report to be referred back to committee, so that the committee can study alternative solutions to the food inflation problem, including axing the carbon tax. My grandfather had an expression that I liked a lot. He used to say that if the only tool you have is a hammer, you think everything is a nail. That is the problem with the Conservatives. The carbon tax is the only thing they have to talk about. It could be the solution to menopause, it could be the solution if your car breaks down. Axing the carbon tax is the solution to everything.

I encourage the Conservatives to think about their amendment. We cannot send a report back to committee and ask it to take more time, do more analyses and push for solutions because food is a major and vital expense for Quebeckers and Canadians. We cannot say that we need that done in a non-partisan, constructive way and then turn around and include the most partisan nonsense on earth in the motion, while telling the committee that instead of reflecting in earnest, it should take this trivial partisan line and make that the focus of its reflection.

This is actually a great initiative by the NDP. It still needs some fine tuning, but eventually, we will have to turn our attention to the state of competition. Guess what? Axing the carbon tax for three or four months will not reopen a single grocery store in Quebec.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my colleague, for whom I have a great deal respect, just said that the NDP's diagnosis is correct for once. I would like to point out that the NDP's dental care plan is a resounding success in Quebec. Proportionately, there are now more dentists registered in Quebec than in any other region in Canada to provide this dental care. There are also more seniors registered than in any other region in Canada.

Quebeckers are the ones who sought out this care and have already received these services. The NDP's diagnosis was correct. We just voted for a historic pharmacare program called for by a broad coalition in Quebec representing nearly two million Quebeckers who are calling on parliamentarians to vote in favour of pharmacare.

Does my colleague agree that the NDP and its diagnoses have been correct on a number of occasions over the past few weeks?

• (1925)

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, the diagnosis is correct. I said as much. It is their solutions that are unappealing and bad. Dentists in Quebec are against their program. They want to provide care. The federal government has no expertise. The system already exists in Quebec. We are saying that if they want there to be dental care, then the money needs to be sent to Quebec. Their diagnosis is good, but their solutions make no sense.

My colleague mentioned the vote we just had. There is a coalition of 125 members at the National Assembly who are calling for the money to be sent, who are saying that everyone in Quebec is insured, who are saying that we can improve the program and that we want to do so quickly and better. That is the problem with the NDP: their diagnoses may be correct, but as soon as respecting Quebec's jurisdictions crosses paths with their solutions, they trample all over Quebec and call that a success.

If the government of the Netherlands decided to write cheques to Quebec, the people would ask for it. That is not the question. The question is how to offer the services effectively while respecting the Constitution. Obviously, the NDP did not read the Constitution or it pretends not to have read it.

[English]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the issue of the report is one that I believe we will be debating again soon. The challenge of exorbitant food prices is truly an international challenge. I was reading that in France the finance minister managed to secure—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member's phone is vibrating and causing interference.

*Orders of the Day*

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Madam Speaker, it was my hand on the desk.

I was reading that in France the finance minister managed to secure an agreement from 75 of the top food companies to lower their prices significantly, but here in Canada, the Prime Minister has not even managed to get the big grocery retailers to sign on to a voluntary code of conduct that would not actually lower food prices.

Given the fact that the voluntary approach has failed so miserably, does the member not support more proactive measures to ensure that food prices come down? I hear his point around competition. Our leader has tabled Bill C-352, which is now making its way through committee. That process is going to take some time, and Canadians need relief, when it comes to food prices, now.

Would the member not support more proactive measures by the government?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be debating with the NDP today because they are once again proving my point.

The member says that in France, the finance minister gathered 75 people in a room to negotiate. There is so little competition here that there were five people in the room. They could have fit in a cubicle here in the back of the lobby. We clearly do not have the same market structure at all.

The profit margins are higher here. The land area is bigger and it is less densely populated. We have a fundamental issue with competition. What I was saying to the member earlier is that I think that it is a good idea to think about this, but until we find a way to ensure more competition, more innovation and more supply for consumers, we will go from one temporary measure to the next. There are other anti-competitive behaviours. The grocery stores here are all the same. The service offering is identical almost everywhere, and the supply of products is identical everywhere.

I think we need to think outside the box and spend a lot of time on this. The member can count on me to be part of that.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, what a curious land Canada is, where a handful of grocery moguls control all the food supply. In 2022, the three most affluent grocers in the land—Loblaws, Sobeys and Metro—reported over \$100 billion in sales and drew in profits exceeding \$3.6 billion.

Unfortunately, small operators and local shops find it very hard to get a foothold in this vast land. Financial and logistical constraints make it nearly impossible to open new businesses. In the meanwhile, the grocery store giants, firmly rooted in Canadian customs and traditions, thrive as they operate thousands of stores.

We watch with a mixture of amazement and dismay as the growing concentration of this sector makes it even more complicated for new players to enter the arena and grow, rendering competition almost non-existent. Food prices are going through the roof. Of course, fingers point at the rising cost of raw materials, the upheaval caused by the war in Ukraine and supply chain disruptions. That is true.

However, the profit margins of these grocery titans keep growing, and the phenomenon is nothing new. It is becoming critical for Canada to find ways to stem the tide of skyrocketing grocery prices. More competition seems essential to make this positive outcome a reality.

In June 2023, a Competition Bureau report on the retail grocery sector was made public, revealing the underbelly of the sector. Canada is at a turning point and needs to develop an innovative strategy to encourage the creation of new businesses in the grocery sector in order to diversify the supply for consumers. Some ambitious companies are looking to revolutionize the sector by offering online groceries. It is crucial that the different levels of government work together to encourage these bold initiatives, which are ready to shake up the established order.

Ottawa should support the grocery sector by encouraging the growth of independent retailers and welcoming international grocers to the Canadian market. While there are already several renowned independent grocers in Canada capable of standing up to the industry giants, their modest scale prevents them from competing on a national level. It is critically important that Ottawa embrace informed policies that encourage the growth of independent grocers and facilitate the entry of foreign grocers and discount stores. The addition of new competitors and the growth of existing independent retailers will bring in a healthy breath of fresh air, thereby strengthening consumer purchasing power. This healthy rivalry will encourage our retailers to lower their prices, improve the quality of their products and do more to innovate.

Ottawa should also consider introducing clear, harmonized requirements for the display of unit price. It is often time consuming to compare prices, even just for a few items at different grocery stores. People need tools to help them compare prices at the grocery store and make informed choices. This information is essential in helping people make wiser, smarter choices and in promoting competition in our industry.

To meet these noble objectives, our governments will have to work together to develop and implement accessible, harmonized standards for the display of unit price. When I say “work together”, I mean that we, of course, do not want Ottawa to interfere again. This work needs to be done with other levels of government. Measures must also be taken to limit or even ban property controls in the grocery sector. Such controls restrict the use of real estate by grocery competitors and make opening new grocery stores difficult, if not impossible. They also reduce competition in our communities.

Why is competition so important? Basically, competition is a critical economic lever.

*Orders of the Day*

● (1930)

When the economy becomes more competitive, both businesses and consumers—Canadians and Quebeckers in this case—benefit substantially. Competition encourages companies to innovate, to perfect the products and services they offer and to increase operational efficiency. As a result, consumers benefit from greater choice, higher quality goods and services and inevitably lower prices. Competition is crucial in all industries and sectors of our economy.

The reason it is so important here is that the Canadian grocery sector, as has been said before, is concentrated. This can make it much harder for small and medium-sized businesses to really compete with the Canadian grocery giants. It is difficult for new companies to successfully penetrate this market. Without a change in this competitive landscape, Canadians and Quebeckers will not be able to fully enjoy competitive prices and a wide range of products.

In its report, the Competition Bureau recommended more competition in Canada's grocery sector. That is the way forward. We need to adopt measures that are going to encourage and support more competition in this sector. Accordingly, we must also avoid simplistic solutions. Through its amendment, the Conservative Party of Canada is trying once again to replay its opposition day. It feels like Groundhog Day. The opposition day motion was defeated just a few hours ago. It does not hold water for all the reasons that were outlined last week during the debate on that ridiculous proposal.

On that, I would be pleased to engage with all of my colleagues.

● (1935)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to know something. Across Canada, we are seeing these grocery chains that often have a monopoly in some towns. The prices are higher. The reality is that people in Canada pay much more than people in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, for the same groceries.

Would my colleague not agree that the best way to combat this price gouging is to have a government that requires grocery chains to stop stealing money from people who are buying groceries just to put food on the table? The other option would be to tax excess profits.

Which of those two solutions does my colleague think is best?

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, I am the first to speak out against indecent profits at a time when many people are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. However, we need to be careful about using the word “stealing”. We are not talking about stealing. There are some people who willingly spend their savings. Let us be more careful about the words that we choose. That being said, this situation is indeed unacceptable and inappropriate in many regards.

I would say that the answer is in my colleague's question. He said that there are large grocery stores that have a monopoly. That is exactly the problem. That is why I want to go back to what I said. We need to support more small and medium-sized independent grocery stores. We also need to support more foreign grocery stores.

That is how we create competition. That is also how we get lower overall prices for everyone.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague mentioned that consumers will not be able to enjoy lower prices unless new competitors enter the market. I would like to know why he thinks new entrants are reluctant to invest in Canada.

Why is our industry minister always travelling, chasing grocers south of the border? Is that not proof, in and of itself, that there are significant barriers, primarily regulatory ones, that discourage people from investing in Canada?

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, once again, I think the answer was in the question.

Of course, as we know, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry is promoting it left, right and centre, but it is not working. The same few players in the sector continue to behave like a cartel.

I remember hearing the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry say at Thanksgiving that it was thanks to his plan that there were discounts, as if the flyers in the ad-bags did not exist before the plan was announced by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and as if inflation would magically disappear and go away because of it.

This initiative cannot and should not be promoted simply through some sort of global marketing operation, but rather through policy changes, of course. The government can kiss up to international companies as much as it wants, but if the market is not attractive, no one will ever want to come here.

● (1940)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague just said that we cannot use the word “stealing” but we can use the word “cartel”.

A cartel does things that are illegal. It steals money. Would it not be accurate to simply say that we are paying too much and that it amounts to stealing from us?

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful. Of course, the word “cartel” can be used to refer to drug dealers in Mexico, but it can also be used in other contexts. We often use the word “cartel” to describe groups of companies that join together to form a monopoly. It is a perfectly acceptable term used in sociology, economics, political science and other fields. Its use is not limited to criminal organizations.



*Orders of the Day**[English]*

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to a committee report that was instigated by the NDP. This is the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Finance. I want to read the conclusion of the report into the record because it is important that Canadians know what the NDP has been fighting for.

It states:

Given that the Canadian grocery sector made more than \$6 billion in profit in 2023 and that millions of Canadians have reported food insecurity in the last year, the Standing Committee on Finance call on the government to immediately take action by implementing an excess profit tax on large grocery companies that would put money back in the people's pocket with a GST rebate and establish a National School Food Program, and that this motion be reported to the House.

The reason the finance committee ultimately adopted that NDP motion and said that it be reported to the House is for the discussions we are having this evening. I would like to thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for bringing this forward.

The reality is that it is true that Canadians are living with more food insecurity. The last 20 years have been absolutely dismal. As members know, the dismal decade under the former Harper regime was a terrible time for Canadians. We saw Conservatives in an unbelievably bad government. It was a horrible government from a whole range of perspectives. The cost of housing doubled over the course of that dismal decade. The food bank lineups doubled as well.

Why did that happen? It happened not only because Conservatives were absolutely terrible administrators but also because they were concerned only with communication and not concerned in any way with actively governing in the interests of Canadians. The Harper regime was terrible in that respect. However, it also gave away the store with the infamous Stephen Harper tax haven treaties. At the end of this period, this dismal decade, the food bank lineups were increasing and the cost of housing doubling. The Parliamentary Budget Officer calculated that the net cost every year in taxpayer dollars of the infamous Harper tax haven treaties was \$30 billion. Members should think about that. We were giving away \$30 billion to the wealthiest of Canadians, to the largest and most-profitable corporations, so that they could simply take their money offshore to tax havens and never pay a cent in tax. That is tax they should have been paying that would have essentially taken care of all these other issues that I have been talking about, such as the doubling of the food bank lineups and the fact that housing costs doubled. The Harper government built no housing at all. It was just a horrible, terrible time.

Then 2015 came along and the Liberals said that they were going to change all that; however, they kept the Harper tax haven treaties and all the sweetheart deals that the Harper government put in place. Nevertheless, with the NDP pushing them, they have done a number of things that certainly make it a better government than what we had in the terrible, horrible 10 years under the Harper regime. Nevertheless, in reality, because they kept the infrastructure of what the Harper government put into place, we see the same results over the last decade. As we know, the food bank lineups have doubled again. They doubled under the Conservatives, and they have now doubled under the Liberals. The cost of housing has dou-

bled again. It doubled under the Conservatives and has doubled under the Liberals.

It is no surprise to members that the NDP takes a different approach. We would not be giving \$30 billion a year away to tax havens. We would not be saying to the billionaires and the wealthiest corporations that they could do whatever the hell they want, that there would be no issue there as long as they do not bother us, because some of us would get lobbying jobs and everybody will be happy. That is not how it turned out. As members know, housing is now in a crisis. Conservatives bear 50% of the responsibility and the Liberals the other 50%. For the food bank lineups, Conservatives bear 50% of the responsibility and the Liberals bear the other 50%.

● (1945)

What we have seen consistently over this terrible 20-year period, as well, is that the lobbyist revolving door has made things difficult for many Canadian families. We see this with the Conservatives, with their campaign manager being a Loblaw's lobbyist and the deputy leader being a lobbyist. We have seen this under the Liberals as well. The grocery giants that have been gouging Canadians over the course of this period have gotten off with impunity, with \$6 billion of profit in 2023.

I will come back, in a moment, to what Canadians' perceptions are of the grocery giants and the impunity that they were equally given by Conservatives and by Liberals. Both sides should take 50% of the burden. One could say that the NDP's initiatives on anti-scab legislation, pharmacare, dental care and housing have helped to address that but not nearly as much as an NDP government would, as we know.

If one thinks that 25 NDP MPs, the worker bees of Parliament, the adults in the room, can make such a difference, to actually start to fight for regular people, just imagine what we would do with 200 MPs. My goodness, we would not be giving tens of billions of dollars to billionaires and to wealthy corporations to take offshore. We would be making sure that seniors are living with an adequate income. We would be making sure that affordable housing is built in this country. We would be making sure that health care covers us from the tops of our heads to the soles of our feet. We would be investing in post-secondary education, job creation and clean energy. It would be a much better country.

For the moment, Canadians gave us 25 members in this Parliament. With that, we have achieved quite a bit, but there is much more to do. The fact that we are seeing these high profits from the grocery giants is one example of that.

*Orders of the Day*

The member for Burnaby South presented a bill to increase the abilities of the Competition Bureau to actually crack down on food price gouging. This is a substantial and important initiative. The NDP pushed, as well, to get provisions of those Competition Act changes into the fall economic statement. That is the bill that passed Parliament just a few days ago. Canadians can see the NDP making a difference; the Competition Bureau's enhanced abilities will start to push against the grocery giants, the three big chains, which are continuing to gouge Canadians.

The reality is that we have to do more. That is why this motion has been brought forward. We talk about implementing an excess profits tax on large grocery companies, as well as the national school food program. Let me start with the excess profits tax.

This is not something that is alien to Canada. In fact, during the Second World War, we had to mobilize the entire country to fight hard, to make sure that we were pushing back against Nazism and Fascism. At that time in our history, the government chose to put in place an excess profits tax. It was 75% of excess profits.

It made a big difference. It prevented food price gouging and the kinds of gouging we are seeing today. It was an accepted tool that reined in the biggest companies in Canada so that they would not gouge Canadians. We were successful, both in our fight in the Second World War and in using the benefits of the excess profits tax to ensure, coming out of the war, that we were doing what was important so that our quality of life in Canada grew.

Of course, as we know, for the history books, that meant the construction of highways and sewage treatment plants, education, educational facilities, hospitals and housing. Three million units of affordable housing were built across the country in just over three years, including our home, which is in New Westminster on Glover Avenue. Comfortable homes were built by Canadian craftsmen because the federal government said that we needed to build affordable housing now for our returning men and women in the service. Our home was built in 1948. The houses on the block were all built at the same time.

- (1950)

At that time, we had a government that understood the importance of building affordable housing. Therefore, an excess profits tax is not new or different. It is something that we have used in the past when we have been in crisis.

Surely members would agree with me that, when we have seen a doubling under the Conservatives and then a doubling under the Liberals of the price of housing and food bank lineups, it takes bold solutions. An excess profits tax is one way of achieving that and ensuring that the grocery barons are actually reined in.

Let us take the second part of the motion: establishing a national school food program. This is something the NDP has pushed for and is in the budget. I regret to say that the Conservatives offer pretensions in talking about affordability. The member from Carleton cries crocodile tears and says that, even though Conservatives are 50% responsible for the fact that housing prices and food bank lineups have doubled and doubled again, they truly feel that Canadians are facing an affordability crunch. He says that they are having difficulty putting food on the table and keeping a roof over their head.

The NDP pushed for the school food program to ensure that all students in this country have something to eat at school. Students need to have food to learn. What did the Conservatives do? After all the havoc that they have wreaked, being half responsible for the results for Canadians and the affordability crisis today, the member for Carleton voted against the school lunch program.

Back in December, we saw the Conservatives vote to gut everything, from school lunches to affordable housing; transportation safety; food inspection, so we would actually have food that is edible; health care; the RCMP; national defence; and so on. They voted for 120 cuts. Conservatives, with the member for Carleton leading the charge, wanted to axe and cut all services in this country. They wanted to cut back down to nothing, leaving a stump of a federal government. They would have all the money going to billionaires and big corporations, because that is the Conservative way.

Not only did Conservatives want to cut any attempt to deal with the national school food program back in December, but every Conservative member recently voted to gut the school food program. There is no dissent allowed in the Conservative caucus under the member for Carleton. Conservatives have to follow the line, whether that means gutting women's rights to reproductive freedom and abortion or whether it means voting against Ukraine, as we saw in the Ukraine trade deals.

We expect the member for Carleton to understand the importance of school lunches. However, no, the Conservatives voted unanimously to try to end school lunches for students who are hungry. That is unbelievable to me. They could redeem themselves in the next few days when we vote on this motion by actually voting for a national school food program, having voted against it so many times.

The big three chains are Loblaws, Sobeys and Metro. We have seen so many examples of how they have been trying to gouge Canadians. Most recently, we were involved in this. The NDP have been fighting back and pushing out. Many consumers across the country are speaking out as well. Loblaws wanted to increase the prices on expiring food. Members will recall there was a 50% discount when the food is expiring. It is barely edible, but it was subject to a 50% discount. Loblaws, with its massive profits and its massive executive bonuses, decided that they were going to raise the cost of that expiring food. There was a backlash such as we had never seen; finally, Loblaws backed off.

*Orders of the Day*

• (1955)

However, the reality is that when Canadians were polled, right across the country, just a few weeks ago, and were asked if inflationary pressure was an excuse to price gouge, 83% of Canadians said that, yes, the grocery giants are using inflation and are using the cover that is provided by the Conservative opposition and its closeness to all the lobbyists. We certainly see that, with the deputy leader and campaign manager all embroiled with lobbyists for the big grocery chains. The Conservatives have not said a single word, ever, about food price gouging by the big grocery giants. They have not said a single word in this House about it. Not a single Conservative has stood up to say that maybe the grocery giants should not be gouging the public.

Canadians were also polled with respect to what is the major impetus behind the rise in food prices. According to Canadians, the major impetus is food price gouging, and Canadians see it. They see that what is happening in the grocery chains is the lobbyists. The corporate Conservatives and the lobbyist Liberals are allowing the grocery giants to gouge Canadians with impunity. The fact that this was identified as the major factor for the rise in food prices should give everyone pause. Certainly, in the next election campaign, whenever that is, Conservative MPs and Liberal MPs will have to defend against why they did not take action to fight back against food price gouging. We know that grocery prices are higher in Canada than elsewhere. We know that the grocery chains and their concentration have led to abuses, and food price gouging is an abuse.

From the NDP's standpoint, we need to do start using the tools that have worked in the past. An excess profits tax would push the CEOs because then they actually have a business decision to make. There are actually consequences for food price gouging. They end up having to pay a price, and that price would be the excess profits tax that would be returned to Canadians in the form of the GST rebate. The member for Burnaby South and the NDP members in the House, including the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, have pushed the government to include increased GST rebates and the grocery rebates so that Canadians have more money to put food on the table and to keep a roof over their heads. That is vitally important. The excess profits tax would serve to ensure that there is an enhanced GST rebate for 11 million poor Canadians. At the same time, putting in place the national school lunch program would ensure that all kids in this country, regardless of their backgrounds, regardless of their family situation or regardless of how poor their family is, get food at school so that they can have the food they need to fuel their brains and to learn. That is a win-win-win.

It is a good-sense approach by the NDP. We take a different approach than the Conservatives and the Liberals. We have seen, over the last 20 years, what the Conservatives' approach did. It was terrible and lamentable. The Harper regime was the worst government in our entire history. It was mean-spirited, punching down on Canadians, forcing seniors to work longer, cutting veterans' benefits and services, and destroying affordable housing. It was a terrible, dismal government. The Harper government was just a terrible, horrible, no-good government. Unfortunately, the Liberals seem to have taken too much of their inspiration from the Harper government and have not done the things that need to happen, for example, cut-

ting back on the massive money that is poured into overseas tax havens, into oil and gas CEOs, into the banks and into TMX. We believe, in this corner of the House, that supports should go to regular Canadians, and that is why we are here fighting in the House for Canadians.

• (2000)

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech. He chose, in the debate, as an opposition member, or a purported opposition member, to spend virtually the entire speech criticizing a government in power from 2006 to 2015, and attacking the current Conservative leader and the current Conservative Party.

I remember, before the 2021 election, the member and I were the vice-chairs of the finance committee. We worked together, along with the Bloc vice-chair, and we held the government to account at that committee. We controlled the agenda, co-operated, aligned on some issues and found ways to hold the government to account, as a good opposition party should.

What happened to that guy?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of time for my colleague from Calgary Rocky Ridge, but it is obvious he only listened to half the speech. The other half of the speech, I was deploring the fact that the Liberals continued all the policies that the Harper government developed. That is what we should have been fighting over the years. This includes the massive amounts of overseas tax havens and tax loopholes that were put in place by the Harper government, which were continued by the Liberals.

I would return the question back to the member. If he understood the Harper policies were wrong, if he was willing to fight with me, as we did fight together, to try to change those policies put in place by the Harper government, which have been continued by the Liberals, why is he not still questioning today those bad decisions made by the Harper government?

It seems to me the member knows it was bad. There is \$30 billion a year that is still hemorrhaging from our resources, and it is going offshore each and every year. That has not changed. If anything, it has increased. The member understood that was the wrong thing to do when the Harper government brought it in. He was willing to fight with me to try to change the policies of the Liberal government.

Today, he seems to think what the Harper government did was okay. He knows, and I know what the Harper government did was wrong, and it is wrong for the Liberal government to copy what Harper did because the result is a negative impact on Canadians.

*Orders of the Day*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as it relates to grocery prices and the anti-competitive nature of what is going on in Canada, I specifically look to the largest grocery retailers we have here. There are only about three of them. The largest one, Loblaw, and its affiliate stores, control about 42% of the retail grocery market in Canada.

Loblaw controls 42%. In comparison, the largest grocery retailer in the United States controls about 11%. If we have so few companies that have so much of the control and power, I think it is just in the natural competitive nature to see those prices increase. Effectively, we have an oligopoly. Can the House leader of the NDP provide his insight into the best ways to try to discourage that?

I realize this has an excess profit tax. I have an issue with that. I am more than willing to talk about it and listen to ideas because I have spoken in favour of the concept before. How do we prevent that tax from just being passed on to the consumer?

If we are dealing with an oligopoly that only has three or four main competitors, and it has a tax imposed upon it, it would be really easy just to pass that tax along. I am not against it, but I am curious what the member's thoughts are on how we would deal with that.

• (2005)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point. We do have a massive concentration of grocery chains in this country, and the response from the Liberal government has been to just ask them politely to stop gouging Canadian consumers. That is absolutely unacceptable and one of the reasons why I am so critical of the Liberal government in this regard. The minister of industry asked them politely, and it did not change anything at all.

What it takes is action. Other countries have taken action by having an excess profits tax and by having an enhancement for competition, just as the member for Burnaby South, the leader of the NDP, has brought forward for the Competition Act, so that the Competition Bureau can actually take action against the rise in prices that are simultaneous and, obviously, in a very real sense, price-fixing. We saw this when it came to the great bread price-fixing saga. This happened under the Conservatives, and they did not take any action at all. The Liberals finally did. I will give them some credit for that, but the reality is that the cost of what was gouged, or stolen, was an average of \$400 from every Canadian family. My colleague from the Bloc said we cannot say “steal”, but the price-fixing majors, the grocery giants, stole an average of \$400 from every Canadian family. That was price-fixing. They raised the price of bread and they stole \$400 from every Canadian family over the course of a number of years. That is theft.

What it takes is a government that is willing to stand up to the grocery chains, willing to legislate against them and willing to implement those tools, including an excess profits tax and enhanced consumer protection legislation, and then basically telling the CEOs that unless they stop gouging people, the government will take action, as it has all these tools in place. We know that did not happen under the Conservatives. It has happened very rarely under the Liberals.

What it will take is an NDP government that actually stands up for working people. We are prepared to do just that.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was just reading that in France, the government was able to force the 75 largest food companies to substantially drop their prices in the face of an unaffordability crisis like the one that we are facing here in Canada. However, what we have seen here is the government really going, cap in hand, to the big grocery chains and asking them, not even to reduce their prices, but just to stabilize them, which, frankly, the CEOs of these big corporations have laughed at. They have not lowered their prices. They have not even stabilized them. We still see food price inflation going up, and we see the cumulative effect of the inflation from the past number of years really hurting Canadians in their pocketbook.

What does it say about the government that it is not able to force these companies to drop their prices?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I want to give a shout-out to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He is one of the strongest members of Parliament in this Parliament in speaking up for his constituents. Not a day goes by without him speaking very eloquently and effectively about his constituents in Skeena—Bulkley Valley on a whole range of issues, whether we are talking about transportation, affordability or health care. He is always front and centre in pushing for his constituents to get the service and respect they deserve. This is another example of that.

The member is absolutely right that asking politely the banks, the grocery giants or the oil and gas giants does not get them to stop gouging people, such as with gas price gouging. We saw a 30¢-a-litre rise over the last few months that has not been explained. It was not because there were any other changes; it was just because the oil and gas companies can do that as people drive around B.C. There has been food price gouging, as well as higher bank charges, all of those things.

We need a government that does not just ask politely, but actually takes action. An NDP government would do that. We would take action against those corporate giants that simply want to gouge consumers with impunity.

• (2010)

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, if the member thinks the answer is an NDP government, why does he not stop propping up the government and have an election? We could have it out.

*Orders of the Day*

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, we will have an election when the member's constituents are voting on whether or not to axe the dental care that thousands of his constituents are now accessing, the pharmacare for diabetes and contraception medications that thousands of his constituents would be getting or the affordable housing that is being built. We will have an election, but the election will be on what Conservatives want to axe and whether Canadians want to go down that road. I am quite confident his constituents will say no to axing all of those services and programs that are helping people.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time this evening with the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

It is always a true honour to stand in the House of Commons to represent the amazing people of Peterborough—Kawartha, as well as so many Canadians across the country who feel that their voices have been muffled after nine years of the Prime Minister.

What are we talking about in the House tonight? We are talking about the concurrence motion of an NDP report of the finance committee. The report reads:

Given that the Canadian grocery sector made more than \$6 billion in profit in 2023 and that millions of Canadians have reported food insecurity in the last year, the Standing Committee on Finance call on the government to immediately take action by implementing an excess profit tax on large grocery companies that would put money back in the people's pocket with a GST rebate and establish a National School Food Program, and that this motion be reported to the House.

That is the motion that was put forward by the NDP. We, Conservatives, put forward an amendment, which reads:

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

"the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Monday, May 6, 2024, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommended to the Standing Committee on Finance with instruction that it amend the same so as to recommend a more efficient alternative to address food insecurity among Canadians this summer by calling on the government to eliminate the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, and GST on gasoline and diesel between now and Labour Day."

Here, in its fundamental essence, is the difference in the choice that Canadians have between two ideologies. We have one Liberal-NDP approach, where they say, "Let us put a band-aid on this", and then we have the Conservatives who are saying, "Let us actually figure out what is causing the cost of food to rise so rapidly, and let us try to fix it. Let us try to make life more affordable for Canadians. Let us ensure that their paycheques actually work for them, and that they are able to have autonomy and freedom and be able to not have that stress of feeding their children."

I want to talk about Food Banks Canada's latest report card launch. I co-sponsored this event, and I have to tell members that it was shocking, abysmal and heartbreaking, to be honest. The stats that came out of this report card from Food Banks Canada were the worst ever. It was a morning event, and there was representation from the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the Bloc, but not one single NDP member of Parliament was there.

I want to tell members some of the things that came out of that, and this is from the Food Banks report, which states, "Canada has reached a critical turning point as poverty and food insecurity worsen in every corner of the country". We know that 61% of food bank users in Canada last year were first-time users, that there was a 50% increase in food bank visits, that one in four Canadians are ex-

periencing food insecurity, that 44% feel worse off financially compared to a year ago, and that two million people a month are accessing a food bank, which is a historical high, and one in three of those are children. The problem is, if we continue to tax and punish the people who grow the food, it will keep driving up the cost of food.

There is something I find so remarkable. I have even heard a member from the Liberals say this, and I heard it on the recent Power Play program of May 22, where there was a Liberal and an NDP member talking about this. They actually said that an excess profit tax would eventually be downloaded to the consumer. What do they think the carbon tax is? Who do they think pays for the carbon tax?

If it costs the farmer more to grow the food, he is going to have to download that to the trucker who comes and picks up the food. Now, the trucker has increased costs and that cost is then increased down to the grocery store owner who has to put it onto the shelf, and then guess who has to buy that? It is the people.

They actually say that, then they vote for it, and then we have this wild ideology, which has been said in the House, with them saying, "You know what? Why don't you just let the planet burn?" That is their go-to. They shame people. We saw this across the board with vaccinations. We saw this in so many things, and they will say, "If you don't do what we say, if you don't think like us, you're a bad person."

● (2015)

This is a message I got from David Jones:

Hello Michelle, thank you so much for all you do for our city, and for striking back against our current Prime Minister, and his completely out of touch and irresponsible leadership of our country.

My family and I, which consist of myself, my wife and our three young children are struggling to pay for gas now with the new tax that's been introduced. We want to voice our opinion, and hopefully give you more fuel to tell our Prime Minister that this tax makes no sense, and is harming the very people that it's supposed to help. I work for a nonprofit in town helping youth who are at risk, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to be able to afford to get to the places I need to be to support them in these increasingly challenging times, as they face record highs in fentanyl overdoses and completely unaffordable living conditions in our country, and in our province, and in our city.

This was from the Jones family. I thank them for writing and telling me this.

Brian Haass is a farmer in the Otonabee-South Monaghan township. Brian has been speaking out about the carbon tax and what it is doing to consumers and small businesses. Small businesses are shutting down at record rates. They cannot compete anymore. They are getting squeezed out. Then we have this record-high usage. This all comes down to making life affordable. The more we tax people, the less money they have in their paycheques and they cannot make ends meet. Everything goes up. If people spend more than they are making, it drives up inflation and we have this vicious cycle. Why not make life more affordable? It is literally the most compassionate thing to do.

*Orders of the Day*

Right now, the Liberals are spending more on servicing the debt than they are on health care. I do not need to tell people watching this about health care in this country. They already know what it is. They already know they have to wait in the waiting room. They already know there are people who have overdosed. Last week, at 7 p.m. on a Tuesday, in front of the Rideau Centre, a person overdosed in the middle of the sidewalk. That is the reality of this country under the Prime Minister.

I want to talk about what Brian Haass said. He is a farmer, one of the ones growing the food. Carbon tax has put 60% on Brian's drying costs in the last two years. I asked, "How does that impact [families] buying food at the grocery store?", and Brian said, "It's incredible because that's just one spot where we get nailed with the carbon tax. When you bring your wheat in for example and you dry the wheat...boom, carbon tax. Then, when we truck the wheat to the elevator, carbon tax. Then when the elevator trucks it to the mill there's another carbon tax to make the flour. Then when it goes to make the bread there's a carbon tax. Then the freaking loaf of bread has to be wrapped in something. There's carbon tax on that. Then it has to get to the warehouse. Another carbon tax on the fuel for example. And on and on till it gets to your grocery store shelf." Bread has gone up 75% under the Prime Minister.

Tanya Bailey sent me her gas bill today. Her customer charge is \$22, her delivery is \$39, her transportation to Enbridge is \$16 and the federal carbon charge is \$50.17. It is to the point that people have completely lost hope. They have lost everything. People are losing their homes on top of it. Building has been halted and builders cannot build. Builders testified at the HUMA committee, saying there is no chance they will meet their target because the carbon tax and all of these things add to the cost of building houses.

Conservatives put forward a common-sense motion today and said people need to be able to focus on something positive. When they are sinking, they need to know. Summer is coming. Families need each other more than ever. Kids need their parents and parents need their kids. They need connection. They are on their screens and are disconnected mentally and physically because they have to go to work to pay for this. Both parents are struggling so much. We put forward a common-sense motion that would save Ontarians, in particular, \$590 if the Liberals cut the carbon tax on fuel between now and Labour Day. We just want to give them a break. The message was, no, people should put their kids in a car and "let the planet burn". That is what the Minister of Health said.

I stand here today and say that Conservatives will fight for them. We are listening. We know life is challenging and we understand that the bigger picture is to make life more affordable. That is the goal.

• (2020)

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I wanted to correct the record. The Minister of Health did not say, "Let the planet burn." What the minister was talking about was climate change and the need for Canadians and everyone in this entire world to take climate change seriously. We do not want to see the temperatures increase, and we do not want to see the world burn. That was the intention of the comment.

What is the Conservatives' plan to stop climate change?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Speaker, it might not have been his intention, but it is actually verbatim what he said in the House. That is the reality of it, and I think there is this element of shame. As I said earlier in my speech, the Minister of Health went on a full-blown rage and said something to the effect of, "Let us be like the Conservatives and go on a road trip for 10 hours, where our kids do not get any bathroom breaks and we let the planet burn." That is what he said. I am not saying it; he said it. Whether he intended that or not is not the point.

I find her question about what the Conservatives would do fascinating. We say it repeatedly, and I will say it again. If one trusts Canadians, especially farmers, who are environmental stewards of this land; if one trusts businesses that are environmentally friendly, that care for the planet and want to do the right thing; and if one gets out of the way so they can afford to invest in their businesses and not have to shut down, then they will do the right thing. However, the Liberal government prevents businesses from doing anything. They are leaving this country. We have nobody coming in. They do not even want to do business with Canada. That is the first place to start.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Peterborough—Kawartha continues the Conservative thesis that the carbon tax is the primary driving factor behind the skyrocketing food prices we have seen. However, the numbers have actually been crunched, and it increases prices by a tiny amount.

Trevor Tombe at the University of Calgary found that the carbon tax increases food prices by 0.3%. Last January, food price inflation was 10.4%; therefore, the vast majority of food price inflation is driven by something other than the carbon tax. What is it driven by? It is driven by, first, corporate profit-taking; second, extreme climate events, somewhat ironically; and third, challenges in the supply chain. The member did not mention any of those other factors in her speech.

The other thing I will note is that, last month, the carbon tax went up and food price inflation went down. If the carbon price is the primary factor driving food price inflation, how could that be possible?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Speaker, there is a deep ideological clash here. The other thing he left out is that the Prime Minister has spent more money than he has brought in. That is just a fact. The Prime Minister says that the budget will balance itself and that he does not care about monetary policy. We have heard that over and over again.

*Orders of the Day*

I want to bring up some points. I will go back to Brian Haass, who owns Haass Acres, and my interview with him. I said to him that people did not really understand how significant the carbon tax is on their day-to-day life, and he said that he really believed people did not “grasp the gravity of this carbon tax” in how it affects their day-to-day lives. He said, “It affects absolutely every facet of your life. Everything you own, everything you buy, everything you do is carbon taxed, compounded on top of more tax.” Then one pays the tax on top of the tax.

This year, the Prime Minister's carbon tax will cost families \$2,943 in Alberta; \$2,618 in Saskatchewan; \$1,750 in Manitoba; \$1,674 in Ontario; \$1,500 in Nova Scotia, \$1,605 in Prince Edward Island, \$1,874 in Newfoundland and Labrador and \$1,963 Canada-wide. Canadians do not have this extra money.

● (2025)

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, could the member finish her thoughts on this bizarre attack on the family road trip that we have observed from this side?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Speaker, there has been an attack on families since the day the Prime Minister came into office. Canada has the lowest birth rate in history. He does not care about the family. He cares about power and control, and so does the NDP leader, because he sold out his soul to ensure that he keeps power. That is the reality of the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here we are tonight in a concurrence debate. There was a report from the finance committee on grocery stores and a recommendation to the House to create some kind of extra profit tax. It came out of the finance committee, but the Conservatives have a better solution that we have offered through an amendment to the report. We think that there is a more effective, more efficient, quicker and easier way for Parliament and for the government to improve the ability of Canadians to afford food than getting into the tax change they are proposing. In our motion, we “recommend a more efficient alternative to address food insecurity among Canadians this summer by calling on the government to eliminate the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax and GST on gasoline and diesel between now and Labour Day.” That is what we are debating tonight.

I share concerns that have been raised about the concentration of grocery retailing in Canada. I am very concerned, under the current government, about the extent to which competition has been reduced in a variety of sectors, including banking and telecoms. The Canadian consumer would be better served, I am certain, with better and more competition for retail of groceries, but the government could fix or at least address the growing number of Canadians who are food-insecure, though let us not mess around with labels here and say “food insecurity”. Let us just get real. People are hungry. People are skipping meals. People are compromising on the quality of ingredients they buy. We have seen it. There are countless studies that have come out showing that it is affecting millions of Canadians. There are people hungry in Canada in 2024.

The government could do something immediately that would improve the personal finances of Canadians and help consumers to afford more and better food, and that is to get rid of all the taxes. That would bring down their transportation costs, which would free

up more money for food, and it also would directly impact the price of food.

We have been calling for relief from the carbon tax in many ways from the government. In fact, the House of Commons has passed a bill that would have taken the carbon tax entirely off farmers so they would not have to pay the carbon tax to heat barns and buildings and to dry grain, and for all of these kinds of things. The other place amended the bill, gutted it and took out one of the most critical parts of it: the buildings and the barns. That is something that could be done too, but if the government would just listen and accept the advice in a motion that we voted on today and get rid of the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax, the GST on gasoline and diesel, we could bring down costs for consumers.

That would be so important for so many reasons. It would help both the producers and the consumers. A consumer has basic costs: shelter, food, clothing and transportation. The carbon tax directly impacts all of these things, but especially food and transportation. It does not matter whether someone owns a car or not; the carbon tax and the other federal taxes on fuel affect the ability of municipalities to run transit systems, so even if someone takes the bus, they would benefit from the proposal that the Conservatives have to send back to the finance committee.

● (2030)

If someone does have to drive their car to get to the grocery store or to take their children to activities or school, then reducing their budget for transportation is going to help make up what is available for food, shelter or other needs. A Canadian who is at least able to get by, and can actually, on a month-to-month basis, afford the home they live in and afford to keep a car on the road and food in the fridge, might want to just take a little vacation this summer. The proposal would help Canadians who are struggling and who just want to put the kids in the car, as the health minister talked about in question period the other day, and drive out to the mountains, the lake or the beach, depending on where they live and what kinds of things they have nearby for recreation.

This is Canadiana; it is what Canadians do. They get out and go to see the beautiful country that we live in. We live in such a beautiful land with so much to offer for summer recreation, or winter recreation for that matter, or any recreation at any time of year. Why not celebrate the outdoors and celebrate the people of this country? Why not be able to go visit a relative? I plan to go on a road trip this summer. I am not planning a major vacation or anything, but I hope to have a chance to visit relatives who live in other parts of the country and to maybe get out to the mountains west of Calgary. It is what Canadians do.

*Orders of the Day*

The least the government could do is not make the basics more expensive for Canadians. A Canadian who can save a little bit of money on their fuel to go on a trip this summer is just going to have more money in their bank account for other things. However, the approach of the government has been to tax and regulate the economy to the point where we are at the very bottom of the G7 for per capita GDP growth, because our per capita GDP growth is not growth at all; it is contraction. Per capita, we are going backwards. Per capita, Canadians are getting poorer. Canadians are going backwards while life gets more expensive. It is a spiral that we need to get out of.

The only way we are going to get out of it is with a change of government. It is the only way forward, so that we can fix the budget and be able to get serious about the basic core responsibilities of government, like national defence, public safety, and ensuring that health transfers will be there in the years ahead. We are spending more now on interest than on health transfers. We spend far more on interest than we do on national defence.

We are going to need a strong economy. We are going to need new investment. We are going to need regulatory relief and tax relief to make these things happen. The only way we are going to get out of the spiral and see Canadians' per capita income go up instead of down in the years ahead is with a new signal for strong economic leadership. We have to get rid of the gatekeepers who are destroying the ability for anyone to get projects approved in this country.

There has been capital flight. There has been the cancellation of projects, which has been ongoing for the last nine years. There is a carbon tax that continually goes up, is piled on Canadians and interferes with their ability to do basic things like afford groceries; get in their car, put some gas in the tank and go on a small trip; or even just get themselves to work and back on a day-to-day basis.

We need to get away from the continual regime of further and greater red tape, regulation and taxes, and get back to a country that can work and where people's work is rewarded, where people can afford to live and where people can afford their homes, groceries and transportation.

● (2035)

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's speech, and I kept hearing about the price on pollution going up.

The member is misleading Canadians by saying that there is this price on pollution but is leaving out the part about how this price is returned to Canadians through rebates, and the rebates also continue to go up. Eight out of 10 Canadians will receive more money than they spend on the price on pollution.

This is in order to incentivize people to make different decisions. This is exactly what we as a society are going to have to do. We are going to have to make extremely difficult decisions, and we are going to have to decrease our reliance on unsustainable energies.

Once again, could the member tell us what the Conservative plan on climate change is?

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to unpack there.

We will see who is misleading Canadians. In my speech, I was very clear. I talked about the carbon tax. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has debunked the member's assertion about what people get back versus what they pay. Take into account the economic cost of the carbon tax, and that is what it is: a tax. Canadians pay far more than they get back.

The member would have Canadians believe that somehow the government can put a tax on and then give more back to people than they pay, but Canadians are not buying this. It is not correct. It is misleading of the member to characterize it in those terms.

Let us take this to Canadians. Let us have the carbon tax election, and we will see what Canadians have to say.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I always like hearing from the member. I have worked with him over the years.

I am a little confused, though, by the Conservatives. They offered up the idea that there would be some money saved on gas, potentially, but the figures they used quoted driving about 44,000 kilometres. What they seem to be proposing is that there could be these savings if Canadians drove back and forth across Canada eight times over the course of the summer. That seems to me to be pretty excessive. I am not sure it would be a lot of fun for a family to be trapped in the car going right across Canada eight times, and that would be in a two-week period, to save a couple of hundred dollars.

That being said, the NDP is offering substantial savings, thousands of dollars, in terms of pharmacare and thousands of dollars in terms of dental care. Many people in the member's riding are taking advantage of that. Why are the Conservatives not supporting the NDP in all these things that would actually make a real difference in the lives of his constituents.

● (2040)

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, it is truly pathetic to see the House leader of the NDP literally reciting, verbatim, Liberal talking points. If the member would stop supporting the government, we could have a carbon tax election and could sort out where Canadians want to go.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am actually going to ask my colleague the same question that he asked me.

Why does he think that there seems to be this kind of attack toward families and not wanting to give them the opportunity to have a good time, basically to have fun?



*Orders of the Day*

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals reflexively blame Canadians for issues. They would literally say, as the Minister for Health said, that if a Canadian family wants to take their kids on a vacation, then it is all on them. It is their fault, and they are bad people for wanting to put the kids in the car to go on a road trip. They turn around and blame Canadians, using this inflammatory-type language about the planet being on fire. Conservatives just want parents to be able to take their kids on a road trip.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Milton.

Today, we are discussing a motion that was passed in committee and sent over to the House. It is a report specifically on excess profit tax on large grocery companies. It states:

Given that the Canadian grocery sector made more than \$6 billion in profit in 2023 and that millions of Canadians have reported food insecurity in the last year, the Standing Committee on Finance call on the government to immediately take action by implementing an excess profit tax on large grocery companies that would put money back in the people's pocket with a GST rebate and establish a National School Food Program, and that this motion be reported to the House.

My understanding, based on going back and looking at the committee minutes, is that this was supported by all the Liberal, Bloc and NDP members on the committee. I think it is a really good motion.

I certainly agree with the motion, especially with the part on the national school food program. This is a program that has organically come from communities and from Canadians. I know I heard NDP members say earlier that this was their initiative. I actually do not think that it was. I think that this was an initiative that was born out of need, but also born out of what was already taking place in so many communities.

In the city of Kingston, we have the Food Sharing Project, which has been around since the eighties. Basically, it is a volunteer organization led by Andy Mills in Kingston. Every day, its members pack up food and send it out to schools.

One of the most interesting things that I found, and one of the reasons I thought this was an incredible program, was this. When I toured the program, I brought my children with me, Frankie and Vivian, who are seven and five. Frankie suddenly realized where the food was coming from that he would see in school.

I really thought the program was unique. What made this program so incredibly successful, and why the government needed to fund this program, was because it helps to break down stigmas and stereotypes. According to my children, it is not just the "poor kids" who have access to this food. As a matter of fact, according to my daughter, who is in senior kindergarten, there are often discussions about which piece of food or which granola bar they are going to get from the special snack station.

My point is that this is something that all kids look at and think is normal. It is not associated to or creating stereotypes that some kids need this food and others do not. I think that is incredibly powerful. At such an early age, children should be taught not to judge others based on their needs. That is why I supported this.

That is why when people from my community came to see me to really push the federal government to put this program into this par-

ticular budget, it was something that I worked with them on. I barely did anything, but my constituents went to all the schools, collected petitions and garnered support. They gave those petitions to me so I could present them to the House.

I imagine that similar things happened in communities throughout Canada. I really look at the national school food program as a grassroots program that has taken hold based on need, based on a desire to break down stereotypes, and based on treating all kids equally at such a young age. That is what we have.

The other part of this motion speaks specifically to an excess profit tax. I have been asked many times by my NDP colleagues how I feel about an excess profit tax. On the surface level, I have nothing against it. In particular, when we are dealing with an industry that has very few players, effectively we have a joint monopoly or an oligopoly, and they are basically setting prices. The grocery industry has been found guilty in the past of fixing prices. We remember the bread-fixing scheme that went on a number of years ago. Whether it is out of malice and is intended, or whether it just grows out of the lack of competition, it still happens.

● (2045)

Therefore, when we talk about an excess profit tax, and I know we talk about it from the oil industry perspective too, I am really intrigued by having the discussion, because I think it is one that is important to have, but I have a question and a concern. I tried to ask the House leader for the NDP a question, but he did not answer, about what happens when and if the oligopoly partners end up just transferring that tax over to consumers. If we have so few players in the industry, let us say there are three major players, Loblaws being one of them, and we add this tax on, what is to stop them from just marginally increasing everything again to cover the tax? Then we have not accomplished what we set out to do; we have not met the objective.

Maybe there is an easy answer to this. Maybe the NDP would say that if we do a particular thing then it will prevent that from happening. That is what I was trying to understand earlier when I was asking the question. Maybe my concern can be put to rest very easily by addressing that point. Therefore, I want to have conversations about this excess profit tax on these large industries like the grocery and oil industries, but I want to do it in a responsible way. I want to do it in a way that ensures that whatever comes out of it actually produces the intended result, which is to return some of these excess profits created out of the monopolistic environment back to the consumers who are being taken advantage of in the practice of the monopoly or oligopoly. That is my main concern with respect to this. I would love to have a conversation about how the NDP would ensure that does not happen.

*Orders of the Day*

On the surface, I certainly appreciate this. I understand that the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc members all voted in favour of this. I think on a surface level it makes a lot of sense. There are some details that I would like to understand a little more clearly before I vote on this, but I will say that the national school food program is an incredible program that I know already works because I see a volunteer version of it at our local level and I know of the success it can create. I think it would help with food insecurity and with breaking down stereotypes. It will also give young children who are growing up the best shot at life and their educational experience if they are not going to school hungry.

I find it very concerning that Conservatives, who will likely vote against this because of their connection to large companies, tend to raise the alarm bells on food bank usage, but then literally in the next action will not do anything to actually help people who are faced with food insecurity. With respect to the national school food program, before any money was even put behind it, when it was just a concept, they voted against it. They have indicated that they will vote against this budget, which includes money for that. It would be easy for them to separate out the items of the budget they do support and vote in favour of those, but they do not because it just seems that they are insistent on not doing anything that possibly could give this government a win.

I will leave it at that. I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate on this and coming to a conclusion as to how I will vote when we are asked to vote on this, I presume tomorrow.

● (2050)

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I did answer my colleague's question. The reality is that if companies try to gouge again and pass those costs on to consumers, the excess profit tax kicks in. That is why, during the Second World War, the excess profit tax that was put into place as a tool at that time did not ignite or engender any passing on of those costs to consumers. It is the same principle, so I did answer his question.

My question for the member is this. Given Conservatives are refusing even to participate, as they are not in the House, and are refusing to talk about the issue of school lunches—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member is an experienced member and knows that we should not make reference to the presence, or otherwise, of members in the House. Of course, they have many things to do.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I am so sorry. I should not mention that there is not a single Conservative here. That is true—

**The Speaker:** Very well done. That reminds me of a great old political joke that I will not repeat here.

I would ask the hon. member to move on to his question.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not seem to have an interest in national school lunches or in an excess profits tax, and I want to ask my colleague whether that is because the corporate Conservatives are so entrenched with lobbyists. The national director, or the campaign manager, for the member for Carleton and the Conservative Party is a lobbyist for Loblaw and has been very much involved in promoting a company that is food price gouging. The deputy leader of the Conservative Party is, again, a corporate

Conservative and engaged in the lobbying that has led to food price gouging.

Is that why the Conservatives are so uninterested in the debate and not wanting to intervene in any way? Is it because the corporate Conservatives are just lobbyists right up to their chin?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, the member certainly knows how to set up a question for me. My understanding is that the leader of the NDP's brother is also a lobbyist for Loblaw. However, I digress. I will not take it—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, that is simply not true.

**The Speaker:** That would not be considered a point of order.

The hon. member from Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I do want to go back to the serious part of this. I did hear the member talking about the excess profit tax after World War II. I do not necessarily disagree with it, but I did not understand correctly whether that was in an industry that had monopoly-type practices like the one we are talking about right now, the grocery sector. Implementing a tax like that on a sector that does not have any kind of monopolistic practices associated with it and is operating in a more free market would not necessarily produce the same results. That, I guess, would be my concern.

I do think that we would have to be careful. It is easy to say that if they increase the prices, we will just increase the tax more, but where does that end? It could turn into a revolving cycle of just continually seeing prices going up, taxes going up and prices going up again. At the end of the day, there needs to be enough competition. I do not even hold it against the individual CEOs. They are doing what our capitalist market is intending them to do. When government needs to step in is when there is not free supply and demand, depending on how the prices are being met. That is when the government needs to be there, and I think that is a very important consideration.

● (2055)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in all of the debate about excess profits for large grocery stores, I am really puzzled by this one fundamental question. That is, in the supply chain, there are costs added everywhere, with input costs added at every stage. Everybody along the supply chain is making money somewhere along the line. Why pick on the very last person in the supply chain? Why not look at all the others as well?

*Orders of the Day*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, I do not think that the vast majority of the profits are being made lower down on the supply chain. I think that what we are seeing, which is indicative of a market that has only a few players in it, is that it is the few players that are going to jack up their prices, because they can. If, farther down the supply chain there is a supplier of something, or there are 10 suppliers of something, because there are so many of them, they are going to be incentivized to ensure that they are being competitive. It is not the same scenario when there are only a few grocery retailers, which is what we have.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to join the debate this evening on an issue that is affecting so many Canadians, I would say every Canadian, because everybody needs to eat. Our groceries just cost too much these days. Everybody is frustrated, and I understand why.

Food is an essential item. It is not as though people can just decide to take a couple of weeks off. Groceries are probably the third or fourth-most expensive thing that a household has to purchase every month, after paying rent or a mortgage and after paying for a vehicle. Food is expensive, and there are a lot of reasons for the fact that food is expensive. This evening, I was hoping I could unpack a few of those root causes a little and could get to some questions. With some colleagues, the art of thoughtful conversation and a little debate sometimes feels like it has lost its touch around here.

What can we do as a government? People ask us all the time. We knock on their doors or we answer the phone at the office, and people say, "Lettuce is \$3.50 again. What the heck?" I do not blame people for being frustrated. I am frustrated too. One of the chief complaints I hear is that people are frustrated because they hear that grocery executives are being paid millions of dollars and that the people who work in those stores are still earning minimum wage. It does not seem fair, and it is not, quite frankly.

However, it is clear to me that regardless of who works for lobbying firms, and I will not argue about who works where; everybody deserves honest work. The reality is that these big companies can afford lobbyists and that they can afford lobbyists because they make a lot of money. Whether we are talking about private utility companies, oil and gas companies, grocery chains or big banks, for that matter, those companies can afford to spend a lot of that money on government relations and on PR.

Those who cannot are Food Banks Canada, teachers, nurses, parents and people who are struggling to pay their bills. There is no public lobbyist who says that their neighbours are really struggling. In fact, that is us. We need to have our ears to the ground. We need to be there for our neighbours. We need to listen to their issues, and then do a little bit of research.

I often talk, probably not enough in this place, about the Library of Parliament, which is such a wonderful resource that we all have access to. They do great work. They do excellent research. It is completely non-partisan, and it is extraordinary. The people who work over there, the researchers, the clerks and the librarians, are amazing.

I am going to commit to work with the Library of Parliament for the remainder of this session to try to dive into precisely why some grocery prices are so high. I have done a little research, which was very preliminary. I will say it is not research because when we Google something, that is not research. Research is actually meant to have some rigour, and a Google search does not. It is just a little reading.

I have done some light reading on why grocery prices are expensive. Climate change is the number one reason. Disruptions, extreme weather, floods and droughts, all of those things are costing food production and farmers a lot of money. That needs to be addressed, and we know that we cannot just switch climate change on or off like a light switch, despite the Conservatives talking about carbon pricing. They ask if we pay a carbon price, will it stop a hurricane or will it stop a wildfire? It is absurd.

It is an absolutely absurd question or statement, but it does not stop the Conservatives from making that sort of comparison; if we pay the price on pollution, then it will just stop the crazy weather. That is not the way it works. The crazy weather that we are experiencing is a result of an excessive amount of greenhouse gases in our environment and in our atmosphere. Just like a greenhouse that has a lot of CO<sub>2</sub> inside because there are a lot of plants in there, it heats up. Our planet has been heating up, not in a uniform way, but one that contributes to a lot of extreme weather, and it disrupts agriculture.

Another significant cause of disruption of the agriculture sector is conflict. We know that around the world, there is a lot of fighting. Some of those countries that are fighting produce a heck of a lot of food. When they are at war, they are not able to ship their raw goods, and that increases the cost of food.

Then there are some more localized issues here at home. I remember, probably a decade ago, getting a weird little \$25 gift card in the mail, which was unmarked. It was because the price of bread was fixed by some of the largest grocery chains. They were colluding with each other. It was due to unfair practices and really bad corporate behaviour. They settled out of court, and asked if they sent \$25 to everybody who asked for it, would that be enough? Somebody, in their infinite wisdom, said that it ought to do.

I do not think any laws were changed. An ombudsman was not put in place to make sure that grocery prices did not just fly off the shelf, literally. That continues to happen. There has to be a way, with a little more scrutiny.

*Orders of the Day*

## ● (2100)

My community members, over the month of May, decided not to shop at Loblaws stores, and there was a big boycott. I do not know if it was across Ontario or Canada, but I saw a lot of people online talking about how they were not shopping at Loblaws. One does not need to do research, but just a cursory Google search on all the stores that the Loblaws company owns, to see that it is a lot of places. It is actually hard in many communities to avoid shopping at Loblaws.

Something I have noticed is that Loblaws owns Shoppers Drug Mart and, not that recently, Shoppers Drug Mart started to sell more and more produce and fresh food in addition to shelved items, like cereal and canned soups. My example is about canned soup, because when I go to that aisle in Shoppers Drug Mart, I can find a can of tomato soup priced at \$2.49, \$2.69, \$2.79, but if I go to No Frills, which is owned by the exact same company, I will see exactly the same soup in a can for 99¢ or \$1.29. The issue I have with that is not so much that we can say that Shoppers is maybe a little more of a convenience store, but that people who live close to a Shoppers oftentimes do not have a car. The stores are in strip malls, and the one on Main Street in Milton is right next to a bunch of apartment buildings where people do not all have vehicles, which means they cannot drive to No Frills. It means that there is an environmental barrier to shopping at lower prices.

That is an unfair practice that I strongly believe an excess profits tax on grocery stores would penalize, but not necessarily fix. I will say that I am in favour of an excess profits tax on groceries, because I think the behaviour is bad. We are seeing inflated grocery prices between stores where there ought not to be. However, I also think that there needs to be some scrutiny, and an ombudsperson in the grocery sector could achieve that. I would like to address the issue of excess profits, not just tax the people who are applying them on customers.

The other thing that I think could achieve that is a grocery code of conduct. We have seen it spoken about a lot since last September. I will not say that it was a coincidence, but the same month that Loblaws was being boycotted by so many members of my community, Loblaws said it was willing to sign the grocery code of conduct, as long as some of its competition did, and I think they said Metro and Walmart.

The other issue is that there are only five or six big grocery companies in Canada, just like there are only four or five big oil and gas companies, and there are also only four or five banks in Canada, which means that the market is kind of closed. There is a little bit of an oligopoly, not quite a monopoly but something similar to that, and it is also clear that a lot of these companies kind of keep an eye on each other's prices, whether it is a service fee or a can of tomato soup. They like making money and, hey, we live in a capitalist environment, where everybody wants to make money, whether one is a lobbyist for a grocery store or the CEO of a big multinational company. Their job is to make money.

However, in this House, our job is to promote fairness, and I believe that budget 2024 does find fairness in the market, and it does demand better from big grocery and big oil and gas. It does ask those companies to find a way to have fairer practices so that they

do not get caught up in a situation like they did 10 years ago when they had to mail hundreds of thousands of Canadian households a funny little blank \$25 gift card to make up for the fact that they cheated them.

I will say it again: Food is an essential item. It is not as though Canadians can just choose not to go to the grocery store. Certainly, they can choose to go to a less expensive one, or they can choose to shop local or at the farmers' market, but that does not fix the problem. Fixing the problem is going to take a combination of solutions.

I am in support of an excess profit tax on grocery stores, and also oil and gas, I would add, but that does not necessarily address the issue that they are allowed to get away with it. I would like to see fairness built into the system and an ombudsperson who oversees a lot of these prices so that we can see more fairness, and I know that competition will also achieve that.

## ● (2105)

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, the debate tonight is on excess profits. Would my colleague from Milton be able to define what exactly would be an excess profit? For example, what would be an appropriate margin of profit for a grocery company that he has referred to this evening?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Mr. Speaker, I will be totally frank: I am no expert on what thresholds of corporate profit should be deemed reasonable. I would leave that up to experts to determine. I would like some public input on that. I think everybody would agree that companies ought to be able to earn a profit.

I grew up in non-profit housing, so nobody made any money when my mom paid the rent. I would like to see that same system applied more broadly across our economy, because with essentials, whether it is shelter, medicine or food, there should be a way to pay a farmer directly for their work and not be facilitating the enormous profits of billionaire grocery execs. However, that is tough to find. There are stores called co-ops out there, a chain of stores, which I am not sure who owns, but I do not think they are actually co-operatives and non-profits. I would love to see more non-profit-style shopping in the grocery space.

While I am on this topic, I also know that a lot of seniors, particularly single seniors, shop for previously prepared items. They might get spaghetti and meatballs or a soup, which is not in a can and might be in a jar or a takeaway container, and HST is applied to that food. That is something that is not in our control, but I would consider looking at taking off the HST on prepared food at grocery stores. This would not be at a convenience store or for a sandwich at Subway or something like that. I am not suggesting there should not be HST on that food, but finding ways to meet Canadians where they are and lower their food costs would be a priority for me. Any good idea that somebody comes forward with is worthy of consideration and debate.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Milton mentioned some of the very real drivers of food price inflation, such as crop failures because of extreme weather, supply chain disruptions and international conflict. However, what we have seen is that, after some of those issues have resolved, after the supply chain starts moving again or the extreme weather subsides and the crops start growing again, the prices do not go down. They are quick to rise and very slow to fall. In fact, they do not fall at all.

Does he agree that we need to see grocery chains lower their prices rather than what his leader, the Prime Minister, has called for, which is simply for them to stabilize? Does he agree we are at a place where Canadians cannot bear the current prices? We understand food price inflation has slowed, and that is certainly a positive trend, but Canadians are feeling the result of months of extreme inflation that has resulted in high prices that are not subsiding.

• (2110)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with my hon. colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley. I tend to agree with him whether we are on committee or just going for a walk down Wellington. We are both very pressed with the issue of trying to find solutions to affordability in Canada. I have noticed the same thing. For months now, a head of lettuce has been \$3.49 where I shop, and I do not think it is as a result of a drought. It is because the price went up, people became used to it and the prices just kind of sat there; stores said that people were now used to paying \$3.50 for lettuce. That is too expensive, and there needs to be a little more accountability.

If a price shock occurs because of any number of factors, then we understand that people need to be made whole. We can choose something else in many cases. I feel the same way about shopping seasonally. There was a big thing on Facebook a couple of weeks ago about watermelon, and everybody was freaking out about the price of watermelon, but watermelon was wildly out of season at the time. It is also appropriate that we consider the time of year when we are shopping for certain items. I enjoy the convenience of having watermelon all year, but it is also true that we can shop seasonally to save a bit of money.

The other thing I wanted to discuss is something I am not sure will come up. Most people in the House are my age, a little older or close to it. I am 42 years old. In my first job, I was working for about eight dollars an hour. These days, that is absolutely not okay, and nobody works for eight dollars an hour in Canada; however,

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one of the reasons things have become more expensive is that we are starting to pay people closer to a minimum livable income.

I am not saying we are there just yet. People who are working in grocery stores now are not being paid enough, but perhaps they are being paid \$16 or \$17 an hour; that is almost nine dollars more than we were paid 15 years or 20 years back. This is another concern that we need to feed into the system. I believe in a living wage being paid to the people who are ringing our groceries through and stocking the shelves. If that could normalize a little and balance out against the billion-dollar CEO profits and bonuses we are seeing, that would also be fair.

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** It being 9:13 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded.

Pursuant to Standing Order 66, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 5, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on May 9, I rose in this chamber to ask the Minister of Finance when the Liberal government would stop sitting on the \$2.5 billion in promised carbon tax rebates while business insolvencies skyrocket and small businesses suffer under higher taxes and inflation. Indeed, this promise was originally made in 2019.

In the budget, I will admit, the government did announce that carbon tax rebates would be forthcoming. However, it did take five years and this is a tax that 80% of small businesses want eliminated. This spring, however, the Liberals announced that they will reduce the amount of financial relief businesses will receive from carbon tax revenue in 2024 from 9% to 5%. Small businesses, as a result of the government's economic failure and incompetence, are drowning in debt and are struggling to stay afloat. Skyrocketing commercial rent, payroll and carbon tax increases, and Liberal red tape have created an impossible economic situation for many businesses across Canada. The latest report from the superintendent of bankruptcy revealed a 58.6% increase, year-over-year, in business insolvencies across Canada for the period ending April 30, 2024.

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Statistics Canada reported that in February, more businesses closed their doors than opened. The largest declines were seen in transportation and warehousing, construction, so we think of home building, accommodation and food services. The labour force survey each month continues to highlight the massive gap in public sector job growth and private sector job growth. The growth in size of the public service is greatly outpacing private sector job growth. Quality of life is also continuing to decline in our country and our economy is underperforming the American economy by the widest margin since 1965. Among our G7 peers, only Italy has seen a greater decline in labour productivity compared to the United States.

In 1984, Canada produced 88% of the value generated by the U.S. economy per hour. By 2022, that figure had fallen to 71%. Again, only Italy performed worse over the same period. If the government truly had the back of small businesses, as I have heard in this House during QP, the situation would, in fact, look very different.

Rather than taxing Canadians into oblivion and offering a woefully insufficient rebate, far less than was originally promised, the government could start controlling its spending and stop driving up inflation and create a competitive economy for our small businesses to thrive. Indeed, the statistics I outlined do not lie.

If this government truly “urgently” wants to return the proceeds from the carbon tax, then I will ask: why did it take five years for this government to make an announcement? On what day will small businesses start receiving this rebate?

Secondly, why did the government reduce the amount given to small businesses from 9% to 5%?

• (2115)

**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, it is always nice to be in the House in the evening with my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. I thank him for the opportunity for an adjournment debate on this important issue.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy, and over the last four or five years, business owners have had a really challenging environment to operate in. Depending on what sector and where they are located, the pandemic has had an outsized impact on a lot of small businesses. However, throughout that tumultuous period, our government was there for small business owners. We paid much of their salaries, and we paid a lot of that rent. We kicked in wherever we could. We provided CEBA loans, and we kept the Canadian economy afloat.

We took on some debt so that the business owners would not have to and the result is that, over the last two years, the recession that so many economists, pundits and op-ed writers indicated was on the horizon in Canada has been avoided. It is really worth pointing out that, despite all the gloomy talk of the Conservative Party of Canada, Canada's economy is doing very well compared to our colleagues in the G7 or our partner countries. It is always easy to find a statistic to point out that it is bad here or it is bad there, but overall, Canada's wage growth has caught up to inflation, which is ex-

cellent news for workers. We have seen more than one million, the last figure being 1.3 million, new jobs compared to before the pandemic.

The member was talking about inflation and accusing this government of contributing to that inflation. He does not really give our government or the institution across the road, the Bank of Canada, too much credit for that inflation coming down. In the last 20 months consecutively, it has come down to a more reasonable rate of somewhere between 2.3% and 2.7%, which is getting really close to the Bank of Canada's target rate of 2%. We are getting there as a country.

I am not taking credit, as a member of this side. I want to give credit to Canadian workers, to Canadian innovators, to Canadian small business owners and to people who worked so hard during the pandemic and who took advantage of some of those government programs, which they were entitled to. They have continued to fight through the headwinds. The reason we are not in a recession now, in June 2024, is because of their hard work and ingenuity. As the member rightly pointed out, budget 2024 proposes to invest \$2.5 billion to support 600,000 businesses across Canada. For context, the CEBA loans supported Canadian businesses with upward of \$45 billion or \$50 billion.

Our government has been there for small and medium-sized businesses. As we fight climate change and innovate to lower our emissions together, we will continue to serve Canadians, employ Canadians and make sure that Canadians have all of the opportunities they deserve. In the future, we will be there. We will have their backs, and we know that they will continue to do their great work in driving our economy forward to a green future.

• (2120)

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, I will point out that, in respect to the carbon tax rebate, that money was collected from small business owners and redistributed back to small business owners. It is, in fact, not an investment. It is a wealth-distribution scheme put forward by the government.

It is not the Conservative Party of Canada, the loyal opposition, but Bank of Canada officials who outlined that we have a productivity crisis in Canada. It is the Bank of Canada that is outlining that the GDP per worker in this country is falling precipitously. That means workers are getting less on average than they did in the past. In other words, people are working harder and taking home less every month. That is what Conservatives want to fix, and that is why we continually say, “more powerful paycheques”. We want Canadians to be able to keep more for their hard work. We also want to see policies from government that give Canadian business a foundation of success moving forward.

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**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like we have the same goal. We both want to help Canadian business owners. However, we put forth ideas and actual policies, not just three-word slogans and rhyming couplets that look good on bumper stickers and hoodies. It requires some intellect to come to this place with policies and recommendations that would actually support the economy, support Canadians and, at the same time, lower our emissions and drive innovation forward.

Unfortunately, what we have seen from the Conservative Party is just constant sloganeering. “Powerful paycheques” sounds really good. However, what does that mean? They need to put forth a policy that suggests that paycheques would actually grow as a result of it.

Carbon pricing has been in place in that member's province for well over a decade. In fact, some of his colleagues on the Conservative side contributed to that policy, and it has been a great success. Emissions per capita have come down in British Columbia, and they continue to do so. We will continue to support evidence-based policies just like that one.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on May 3 in question period, I asked a question about the failed drug legalization pilot project in British Columbia. I say it was a failed project because we were about one year into a three-year pilot project. The evidence was clear that it was failing, with 2,500 toxic drug deaths in the first year of the project, a 7% increase over the previous year.

There was crime and chaos on the streets, and there were many reports from many different communities, including mine, about abuse on the streets. British Columbians were not happy with all of the negativity, and the provincial government was feeling the heat. It knew it had to do something, and in fact, it did. It introduced provincial legislation, the restricting consumption of illegal substances act, to put some restrictions in place on the open use of drugs in parks, playgrounds, hospitals, transit etc., and to give the police some extra authority.

An organization called the Harm Reduction Nurses Association challenged the legislation in the B.C. Supreme Court and convinced the judge to impose a temporary injunction preventing the B.C. government from actually bringing the new law into effect. According to the judge, prohibiting people from using drugs in public places was an infringement of their constitutional right under section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, “the right to life, liberty and security of the person”. I was stunned by that, as I am sure many Canadians were. Is that what section 7 is all about? Is it about a constitutionally protected right to use drugs in public places?

When there were no exemptions at all to the federal legislation, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, no decriminalization of drugs for personal use, and no public experiments with hard drugs, as had been the case for all of Canadian history up until a year ago, there were never any arguments about whether people had a constitutional right to use drugs in public places. Once the federal government opened that door just a bit, it also opened the door to new and novel arguments to expand charter rights to include open drug use in public places.

I have to ask myself some questions. What happened to the big vision of a just society that inspired the original drafters of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? What happened to giving people hope for a better life? What happened to health and treatment?

I know that the Liberals claim to be the party of the charter, and they often demonize the Conservative Party by suggesting we are going to gut the charter, but I do not think we have any lessons to learn from the Liberal Party on this. What we have seen with the Liberal government's ill-conceived ideas is that they are far removed from what the original drafters of the charter thought about a just society for all Canadians.

Will the Liberal government put a complete end to the disastrous, failed drug-use experiment altogether and instead give people hope for a better future?

• (2125)

[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, from the outset, I would like to assure everyone that we are deeply concerned about the overdose crisis and its consequences on the lives of so many people in the country. Every loss of life is tragic and we must do everything in our power to help people and save lives.

[English]

Substance use and addictions are health issues first and foremost and should be treated as such. People need health care, not jail. The war on drugs did not work decades ago, and it still does not work today.

[Translation]

This crisis is constantly evolving, so we need to change our course of action, take innovative action, monitor those actions closely and track the data to figure out what is working. Our approach is responsive and adaptable. We owe it to Canadians to do everything in our power to keep them alive and help them.

[English]

Liberals are committed to continuing to work with and support provinces and territories to find solutions to meet their specific needs in order for them to offer timely services to their population. That is why we are continuing to work closely with the Province of British Columbia and to support its comprehensive response to the overdose crisis.

[Translation]

Let us talk about what this exemption does and does not do.

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This exemption does not legalize drugs and never has. Under B.C.'s exemption, the sale, production and distribution of regulated substances remains illegal. What the exemption actually does is enable the province to focus on a health-based response, where people are encouraged to seek out health and social services, rather than being arrested and charged with personal possession of small amounts of illegal substances.

The stigma associated with criminal prosecution is still a barrier to care.

[*English*]

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to this crisis. A complex health and social issue requires a multi-faceted response.

[*Translation*]

That is why we continue to support the provinces and territories in strengthening health care services so that they are available when and where people need them.

In the 2024 budget, we announced \$150 million over three years for an emergency treatment fund to help municipalities and indigenous communities quickly access funds so they can mobilize efforts and meet their urgent needs in order to save lives now.

[*English*]

Our actions are comprehensive, equitable, collaborative and compassionate, and are guided by our federal Canadian drugs and substances strategy. This all-of-government approach includes access to a full range of strategies to help people access prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services, and the supports they need when and where they need them.

[*Translation*]

We will continue to work closely with our partners on a range of actions to prevent substance use, reduce harm, support people in their treatment journey and keep communities safe.

• (2130)

[*English*]

What we have been hearing from the Conservatives' side is dehumanizing. They are basically saying that we need to clean up the streets because these people are a bother.

[*Translation*]

On this side of the House, we are here to help people who use drugs. Becoming addicted was not their choice. They did not wake up one morning and decide 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 resolve their problem, which is not a criminal justice issue, but a mental health issue.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her thoughtful comments, although I do have to take exception to them.

She said that Conservatives just want to criminalize all sorts of behaviour and get the streets cleaned up and that the very saintly Liberals want to help people. Their programs are failing. That is the

whole point of this. They have taken one step down a very risky path, experimenting with hard drug usage, even in public places, which has proven to be a disaster. Now they are backpedalling on that, and rightly so, because it was a failed program.

The deep failure, and this is what I was getting to on what has happened to the big picture of justice in this nation, is that what people really need is help beyond that. The member said that the Liberals are doing this and that, and making announcements about it, but they are not getting very much done.

I am reading from The Globe and Mail today a headline that reads, "Detox beds in B.C. routinely sit empty because of staff shortages". That is the problem. Why is the help not there that is really needed?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Mr. Speaker, clearly, we have to do everything in our power to save lives and reduce risks, while keeping communities safe and fighting drug trafficking and organized crime.

[*English*]

Our government is focused on supporting a full range of services and supports to address the diverse needs of people who use drugs, as well as enforcement efforts to protect our communities.

We are in the midst of a crisis where people are dying. This is not the time to be putting harm reduction against treatment.

[*Translation*]

We need both at the same time, and the evidence clearly demonstrates that. People who need and are ready for treatment must have access to it when and where they need it. Those who are not ready or cannot access treatment need harm reduction options to stay alive. Without harm reduction services, more people will die.

[*English*]

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last year's summer was the hottest on record and the most devastating for wildfires. Smoke from wildfires forced kids to spend their days indoors, and Canadians across the country were evacuated from their homes because of the wildfires.



Our kids are breathing in harmful toxins, and when I think about the summer to come, it is only going to get worse with this year's wildfire season. However, we have the Liberals, who keep acting like it is business as usual. They are breaking their climate promises, handing out billions of dollars to Canada's biggest polluters and watering down key climate policies, like the emissions cap. The Conservatives, though, cannot even agree that climate change is real. Canadians should not have to choose between deny and delay, but it is not only wildfire smoke that is contributing to air pollution and making people sick.

This past year, we saw increased deaths due to air pollution because of the wildfires, but on average, in Canada, 15,000 Canadians die each year because of air pollution. We also know that petrochemical plants are making people sick. In Ontario, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation issued a state of emergency declaration last month due to excessive discharge of benzene from an industry factory. Several people had fallen ill with headaches, nausea and dizziness, and it is all too common that these impacts disproportionately affect indigenous communities.

This is unacceptable, and the government must do more to regulate industry pollution. It also needs to do more to tackle the greenhouse gas emissions that are driving up emissions, that are threatening the future for our children and our grandchildren and that are polluting our air, so much so that a child in Edmonton said that it felt like an elephant was standing on their chest. This is in Canada.

I continue to be disappointed by the Liberal government's refusal to address environmental dangers, to address environmental racism and to protect Canadians. Will the Liberals stop putting the interests of the biggest polluters over the health and safety of Canadians?

• (2135)

**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 my colleague from Victoria for her consistent advocacy in the House, in committee and anywhere she goes to fight climate change. She is a true advocate and a true champion for the environment; I am proud to be her colleague. We work together on the environment committee; there, we have to endure a lot of misinformation and disinformation, not just from the Conservatives, but from a lot of witnesses who have a vested interest in taking us back to a time when our country did not adequately fight climate change.

However, that is not where we are today. In fact, we are lowering our emissions. We have turned the tide from 2015, when the government was elected by Canadians. We were elected on a promise to fight climate change and lower our emissions. At the time, Canada's emissions were going up fast, and we turned the tide. We have lowered emissions, and we are on target to meet our 2026 interim target toward an ambition to reach net zero by 2050. I am proud that the NDP, the Bloc, the Greens and the Liberals all agree on this. Only the Conservatives stand against it.

My NDP colleague from Victoria referenced the benzene concerns, and I have to presume that this is from the ongoing issue with the Aamjiwnaang First Nation around Sarnia, Ontario. I followed that issue very closely. It was with respect to the petrochemical industry. I was very heartened when the Minister of the Envi-

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

ronment imposed strict benzene pollution controls in response to those concerns. It happened quickly, and we received the response and the feedback from environmental non-governmental organizations that we did the right thing and acted correctly.

With respect to the tailings pond leaks in the Athabasca River, this issue is having a negative and really devastating impact in the Kearl oil spill that we have all heard about. I had the opportunity to hold the CEO of Imperial Oil, Brad Corson, to account at committee. We must demand better from these companies. Sadly, much of the jurisdiction for oil and gas extraction, mining and forestry is provincial. A challenge we must face is that one level of government cares deeply about saving the environment and protecting our planet from degradation, excessive emissions and pollution from big industry, namely, from oil and gas extraction. I will say primarily from the oil sands, the only industry in Canada where the emissions continue to go up.

There is a bit of an elephant in the room. It requires us to be persistent, to be dogged and to stand up for what we believe in, what is right and what evidence tells us we must do every time we are faced with a bit of a challenge. In the House, we have been faced with challenges by the Conservatives, from the sloganeering to the misinformation and bringing forward ideas in the House that really do not have any basis in reality or fact. When the going gets tough, we have to keep going, but when the Conservatives put forward a motion to, as they say, axe the tax, it would hurt the lowest-income Canadians. It would also axe the Canada carbon rebate, which, I will remind Canadians, goes out on July 15. They will receive more than usual. A lot of Canadians do not do their taxes early; I did not do my taxes early. The Canada carbon rebate will be larger on July 15.

We need the New Democrats to be strong in their position as well. Sometimes, when the going gets tough, they vote with the Conservatives, and that is really disappointing for Canadian environmentalists and voters.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (2140)

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member wants bold climate action. Unfortunately, his party continues to water down key climate policies at the request of the biggest polluters. The Liberals even went so far as to invite the CEOs of oil and gas companies to help them craft their climate plan. It is not surprising that we see huge loopholes in the proposed draft on the emissions cap. This is one of the key policies that we need to drive down emissions, yet the Liberals are listening to the oil and gas industry once again.

The finance minister decided not to implement a windfall tax on oil and gas. We could have invested this money in climate solutions. Why was this? It was because oil and gas lobbyists asked her not to.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, once again, I find myself agreeing with most of what my colleague says. I do desperately want bold climate action, and we are finding with the current government, that we also have to be reasonable. Canadians still need oil and gas. They still create a lot of jobs in Canada. Most Canadians still use natural gas to heat their homes and still use gasoline in their vehicles. A just transition is under way. We need to work with

the industry that is most responsible for those emissions. We cannot just ignore it. We cannot pretend it does not exist. There is not an on or off switch. There is no on or off switch for the oil and gas sector in a way that we could just say that we do not need that product anymore, when we definitely do.

It is a matter of finding innovations and finding solutions. The oil and gas sector is one of those parties that is going to find innovations and solutions for their polluting ways. If that sector does not, then who will? It definitely needs to transition to find other sources of energy and to find cleaner ways to extract the resources that they have.

I will not shy away from tough conversations with groups like Pathways Alliance.

**The Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:42 p.m.)

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