



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 324
Tuesday, June 4, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 4, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 7(3) of the Auditor General Act, the spring 2024 reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), these documents are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petition e-4038, signed by over 3,000 Canadians and led by the efforts of Ayaan Virani. It notes that a majority of millennials lack an adequate work-life balance. It recognizes that research shows that more paid vacation is beneficial to the health, happiness and productivity of workers. It points to the fact that peer nations of Canada have long had more than two weeks of paid vacation, and in many cases, they have four to six weeks. They call on the Government of Canada to amend the Canada Labour Code to provide a basic entitlement of four weeks of paid vacation, up from the current two weeks, rising to six weeks of paid vacation after 10 consecutive years of employment.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—MEASURES TO LOWER FOOD PRICES

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP) moved:

That, given that the cost of food continues to increase while grocery giants such as Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys make record profits, the House call on the government to:

- (a) force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a price cap or other measures;
- (b) stop delaying long-needed reforms to the Nutrition North program; and
- (c) stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a), I would like to inform the House that the New Democratic Party speaking slots will all be divided in two.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor Madam Speaker, I am incredibly proud today to be leading the debate on the NDP opposition day motion. We propose measures to crack down on corporate greed and to lower prices for struggling Canadian families. Canadians need help. Canadians need relief from high food prices. Canadians need to see that the people they elect to the House of Commons are committed to taking action against the corporations that have enjoyed record profits at their expense.

Business of Supply

There have been 40 years of successive Conservative and Liberal governments that have pushed economic policy to widen the gap between rich and poor to a chasm. Along the way, we have seen support from both parties for tax cuts for wealthy corporations, for deregulation and for weak competition laws. It is no accident that we have arrived at this moment today because the Conservatives and the Liberals both paved that road to make it easy to get to.

We need a political party that is prepared to swing the pendulum back in favour of the working class and back in favour of those who are tired of seeing their hard-earned money gouged by corporations that are rolling in record profits and paying their CEOs ridiculous wages and bonuses. That brings me to today's motion, which I was very proud to sponsor and which was seconded by my colleague, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby. I will read it out for the benefit of Canadians who are watching. It states:

That, given that the cost of food continues to increase while grocery giants such as Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys make record profits, the House call on the government to:

- (a) force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a price cap or other measures;
- (b) stop delaying long-needed reforms to the Nutrition North program; and
- (c) stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers.

It is time for action. As I said, Canadians need relief. They are struggling, and we need only to look at the statistics to see that laid out in stark relief. Over the last three years, the cost of food has increased by over 20%. The use of food banks is at a 35-year high, and it is reported that one in five Canadians is skipping meals just to get by with their monthly budgets. In 2024, this year, the average family of four is expected to spend an additional \$700 on food, again continuing the trend that we have seen over the last couple of years.

All this while the grocery sector continues to rake it in. Last year alone, it raked in \$6 billion in profit. Loblaws has almost doubled its profit margin in the past five years, and Metro has the biggest profit margin of any grocery company. Canadians know the problem is corporate greed. They know it in their hearts. One party in the House is standing here not only to illuminate that greed, but also to take action on it.

We can see it on the streets. People are taking measures into their own hands by boycotting Loblaws and other grocery stores because, again, we have a 40-year track record of both the Liberals and the Conservatives failing to protect Canadian consumers from price gouging or holding these massive corporations accountable. Many corporate sectors have used the disruptions over the last four years, and the consumer desperation associated with it, to increase their prices well beyond what many would consider reasonable and well beyond what is required to cover their own input costs.

Despite months of promises, the Liberal government has not taken bold action to bring down the food prices that are hurting Canadian families. Much more is expected. We have a grocery task force that has not completed any tasks and that is not much of a force. The Liberals have committed to stabilizing food prices. That means very little to a Canadian family struggling with both the quality of the food and the quantity of the food they are putting on the table. They are not looking for stabilization; they are looking for prices to come down, and it has not happened. As I said, families are expect-

ed to pay more this year. Asking corporations nicely has not worked.

• (1010)

We know, from an Order Paper question I submitted, that the Liberals gave \$25.5 million to Loblaws and to Costco between 2019 and 2023, while they were making massive profits. The last thing this sector needs is more corporate welfare from the Liberals, and from the Conservatives who set the table before them.

We solve this by asking the government to force the big grocery chains and the suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or to put in measures to make them do it. We have been leading on this issue from the beginning. We had a unanimous vote in the House of Commons, which I sponsored. We had two unanimous votes at the House of Commons agriculture committee to study this issue to bring political and public pressure to bear. I was the one who moved a motion to summon the grocery CEOs before committee to make them answer, on the public record, for their abysmal track record on the way they have treated their consumers. We are the ones who have been consistently, over the last two years, calling out the corporate greed that is driving this cost of living crisis.

Before we get into too much criticism, I want to point out that there are well-trodden examples around the world. I want to single out France, Greece and South Korea, which have each taken steps within their respective jurisdictions to lower prices on essential food items. Price control measures are not a new thing. We see that our provincial governments have done it with rent increases. They have utility boards that monitor and regulate the cost increases associated with energy. It is not a new concept, and it is something that has to be used in a time of crisis.

France secured a deal with major companies to lower the price of groceries for 5,000 products, and the French government can hold those companies accountable to the public if they do not comply.

In Greece, the government announced gross profit caps for key consumer goods and services in the food and the health sectors. It has a policy that stipulates the gross profit per unit cannot exceed that of the profits made before December 31, 2021.

In South Korea, the president established a department-level task force to monitor and to implement food price control measures in key industries, especially when looking at food items such as milk, coffee, noodles and bread.

Business of Supply

On the part of our motion dealing with nutrition north, I really want to recognize my friend and colleague, the member for Nunavut. She has been doing an outstanding job on behalf of her constituents and has been calling out the companies that operate up there for taking that subsidy and using it to pad their bottom line, rather than serving the people in the north who need to have access to affordable food. That is why we have this as a key part of our motion.

In conclusion, I want to say that it is not just the grocery sector, even though today's motion has that as its focus. If we look at many of the top corporate sectors, especially their earnings compared to 2019, we will see massive increases, both in their net profits and in their margins. In 2023, the grocery sector made \$6 billion in profits. Some of those companies have employees who cannot even afford to shop where they work. Imagine that; a grocery company employee who has to use a food bank because their own employer is not paying them enough to get by on a full-time wage. That is shameful. There are 95% of Canadians who think that food prices are too high and 97% who do not think that food prices will go down in six months.

We know that grocery prices are increasing at their fastest rate in more than 40 years. We know that corporations are using costs as an excuse to increase their prices even higher, which has resulted in record profits. We need limited price controls to break this cycle. When there is a power imbalance in society, the elected government of the people is the great equalizer. Government is where we enforce fairness. It is time for the Liberal government to step up to the plate and to act in a manner that Canadians expect.

• (1015)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am totally on side with the motion, but it is a matter of the what and the how.

What we want to do is see food prices moderate or come down. With respect to how, though, I want to talk about the price cap and ask my hon. friend a question. The free market response to a price cap quite often ends up being rationing. What would the response be if big grocery decided that we were forcing them to sell milk, eggs, butter, etcetera at a low price, so they were not going to make a whole bunch of those things available to people? Are there thoughts, or could there be thoughts, on how to deal with that issue?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, as I outlined in my speech, we gave three concrete examples of countries, France, South Korea and Greece, that are tackling the issue head-on.

We put in the motion, yes, mention of a price cap, but also other measures because we wanted to give the government flexibility to look at other tools in the tool box. We have often called for an excess profits tax. That is something Canada used to great effect in the Second World War. There is a whole variety of measures, but the underlying point here is that the ongoing corporate deference of the Liberals and Conservatives needs to stop.

It is time to swing the pendulum back in favour of working Canadians, and the NDP is here to lead the way and force the Liberal government to finally act. That is what Canadians expect. That is what we, as members of Parliament, should be delivering.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague and friend's speech. I do agree that we do need to make sure we are not escalating costs in this country. Those costs are being felt most at the grocery level by the consumer. One of the major impacts, of course, is inflation, and what is causing inflation is the Liberal government's overspending.

Would my colleague join us in actually getting the government back to a balanced budget so we could take out the root cause of inflation that is driving up the cost of everything for Canadians?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives' only answer to the cost of living crisis is to roll back the very tool that Canadians have to enforce fairness. Imagine this: At a time of unparalleled corporate greed and concentration in the marketplace, the Conservatives' only answer is to roll back the power of government and let the free market go. What got us into this mess? It was corporate greed. It is not the carbon tax that is driving the increase in the cost of living, and it is not government spending. Corporate profits have been going up to record levels over the last three years.

Where does my hon. colleague think the profits are coming from in oil and gas, banking and consumer goods, which are all posting record profits? All of those profits have come right out of the pockets of the hard-working families that I represent in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, of the families he is supposed to represent in his riding and, indeed, of the families right across Canada from coast to coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I understand the motion's underlying intent. The rising cost of groceries is affecting everyone and causing a lot of headaches, but I wonder whether a price cap is feasible.

For example, how are we supposed to cap the price of bread when wheat prices are determined by the Chicago Board of Trade exchange? How can we cap the price of fresh vegetables when we know that soaring prices primarily reflect crop losses caused by floods and droughts resulting from climate change? I wonder how practical it is to force a produce farmer from California to sell his broccoli to Quebecers and Canadians at a lower cost than he would charge Americans.

Can my colleague tell me how this would be done in practical terms?

• (1020)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, what I would say to my hon. colleague is that on the whole spectrum of the food supply chain, there are the farmers at one end and the consumers at the other. I would argue that both groups are being screwed over by the people in the middle. That is what is happening.

Business of Supply

I am not talking about going after farmers; they need to make a living, and I know their margins are very tight. I am not talking about consumers. It is the actors in the middle, the middlemen, and particularly the grocery companies, which despite all of the costs associated with climate change and supply disruptions have still seen their net profits go up to unacceptable and unreasonable levels.

That is what we should be tackling. That is what Canadians expect. If we had an activist government actually doing that, we would actually see the results Canadians want and need at this very key moment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, these are tough times for people across the country. We can see it. We see that lineups at food banks have doubled since this government came to power. We remember that they also doubled under the Harper government. When the Conservatives were in power, it was bad news for Canadians. Since the Liberal government was elected, we see the same things: increased rents and lineups at food banks.

The NDP leader and member for Burnaby South and the entire NDP have been pressuring the government to change things. We saw that with dental care, which was enthusiastically welcomed by Quebecers. It is important to note that Quebec is the province with the highest rate of participation in the NDP's dental care program. We also have pharmacare, which was adopted yesterday in a historic vote. In this case too, a huge Quebec coalition of nearly two million people from all the major labour groups, unions and the Union des consommateurs, as well as health care professionals, asked the NDP for this measure, which will help six million Canadians, as well as nine million other Canadians—

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not see quorum, so I would ask that you see quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will double-check to see who is online as well. I will ask the clerk to count the members present.

And the count having been taken:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We do not have quorum, so we are going to have to ring the bells to call in the members. The bells shall not ring for more than 15 minutes.

And the bells having rung:

• (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We now have quorum.

There is a point of order from the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: For clarification, Madam Speaker, do I understand that even though there is not one Conservative in the Chamber, we still have quorum?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is quorum, and I do want to remind members that they are not to say

who may or may not be in the chamber nor how many are in the chamber from each party.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I am saddened that no Conservative or Bloc MPs are participating in the debate. That they would pull a trick like this on an opposition day shows their vulnerability. The reality is that I am going to be devoting most of my speech now to what Conservatives did when they were in power.

[*Translation*]

First, I just want to point out that the Bloc Québécois opposes everything the NDP has done. I was actually just talking about the fact that Quebec has the highest participation rate in the country for dental care. The Bloc Québécois tried to block dental care, but the NDP kept its promises.

The Bloc Québécois appears to be completely absent today. Bloc members oppose the notion that we should have pharmacare. However, a broad coalition of two million Quebecers has said that this bill should pass.

Obviously, the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois oppose today's NDP motion. I will read it:

That, given that the cost of food continues to increase while grocery giants such as Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys—

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

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I would just like you to confirm whether we can refer to the presence or absence of other members in the House. I do not think that is allowed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have already answered the question.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is clearly opposed to this motion, so I think it is important that I read it. It states, and I quote:

That, given that the cost of food continues to increase while grocery giants such as Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys make record profits, the House call on the government to: (a) force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a price cap or other measures; (b) stop delaying long-needed reforms to the Nutrition North program; and (c) stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers.

This is something that everyone should support. Members of the Bloc Québécois are opposing it, and I think that they are going to pay the price in the next election. I think they are also going to pay the price for opposing dental care, which is something that Quebecers really appreciate, and for opposing pharmacare, which is supported by the biggest coalition in the history of Quebec. This shows that the Bloc Québécois is off the mark when it comes to things that are in the best interests of Quebecers and everyone.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

I want to take some time to talk about the disgraceful Conservative record on this because as we know, the corporate Conservatives have been involved in some of the most egregious impacts on Canadian consumers. I need to talk about the bread-fixing scandal. Prices went up, and just a few months after the Harper government was elected, all the big grocery chain CEOs got together and decided they were going to fix the price of bread, because they knew the Harper government would do absolutely nothing to stop them. Just a few months after Harper was elected, that is what they chose to do, and they were right.

Over the course of almost a decade, money was stolen from Canadian families, on average \$400, with nary a peep from a single Conservative MP. Not a single one of them over the decade stood up to say that maybe price fixing is bad, that maybe consumers should not be gouged and that maybe the big grocery chains should stop ripping off Canadian consumers. Nothing happened for a decade. The Conservatives should hang their heads in shame. Every single Conservative member was simply an agent helping to facilitate the rip-off of \$400 from Canadian consumers. It was \$400 more than they should have paid if price fixing had not simply been allowed by the Harper government for nearly a decade.

Are the Conservatives different today under the member for Carleton? Sadly, they are not. Corporate lobbyists have been stepping up to every fundraiser the member for Carleton holds. The Conservatives' national campaign manager is a lobbyist and their deputy leader is a lobbyist. Half of their national executive are corporate lobbyists. The corporate Conservatives are simply the worst example of how corporate CEOs can rip off the public with impunity under Conservative governments.

Of course, one would say that Liberals have not been much better, but the reality is that in the current minority Parliament, because of the strength of the member for Burnaby South, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and the entire NDP caucus, we have managed to enforce new changes in the Competition Bureau legislation that actually finally allow the Competition Bureau to take action.

Under the Harper government, the bread-fixing scandal that ripped off hundreds of dollars from each Canadian family going to the grocery store and basically being robbed by bread price fixing, which was allowed under the Harper government in the most egregious way, is now going to be a memory because of the Competition Bureau fixes that the member for Burnaby South, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and the entire NDP caucus have brought to the most recent budget implementation act.

We have taken action to ensure that Canadians are protected. That is what we do in this corner of the House. We are not corporate Conservatives. We do not simply allow the corporate lobbyists to do whatever the hell they want, such as bread price fixing like we saw under nearly a decade of the most dismal record in Canadian history with the most corrupt government in Canadian history, the Harper government, and the most financially incompetent government with ten years of deficits throughout that period.

● (1030)

As I recall, it was a government that was willing to give anything to banks and corporate CEOs, \$116 billion in liquidity supports to Canada's big banks so they could pay bigger dividends and bigger executive bonuses.

Of course, we saw the massive handouts to oil and gas CEOs, another price-fixing scandal that has been well documented. We saw in British Columbia, just a few months ago, an unexplained 30¢ rise, because the oil and gas giants just love ripping off consumers, but nary a peep from Conservatives. As long as the corporations are benefiting, then they are happy. We saw, as well, the most egregious, infamous Harper tax haven treaties. The Parliamentary Budgetary Officer informed us that, sadly, over \$30 billion a year in taxpayer money was going offshore. Over 10 years, that is \$300 billion.

There is no doubt that Conservative times, Tory times, are tough, toxic times. That is illustrated most clearly by how the Conservatives allow corporate CEOs to rip off Canadians with impunity. The NDP is not going to stand for that. This is why we have brought forward this motion to ensure we stop the corporate handouts that we have seen under the Conservatives, and most recently, as my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford pointed out, under the Liberals, with the \$25 million given to Loblaws, as if it needs it.

Under the Conservatives and Liberals, seniors and low-income people tend to pay the price, except in minority governments where the NDP holds the Liberals to account and forces things such as the GST rebate, the grocery rebate, affordable housing, dental care, pharmacare and a range of other measures that actually help Canadians. We are also saying that we need to reform nutrition north. We hope all members will support it today.

● (1035)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we should do something pre-emptive here, because when it is time for the Conservative Party to speak on this, I anticipate an attack on supply management. We have seen that from some Conservatives. We have seen it from Conservative media commentators.

Does the NDP support supply management and will it rebuff any attempt to blame high food prices on this measure?

Business of Supply

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the NDP has been the strongest supporters of supply management for two very good reasons. It provides a higher quality of product, and we see this right across the country. The supply-managed sector is really an example to the rest of the world, which is why other countries are looking to adopt the same type of approach. It ensures a good quality of product and it ensures the stability of farms and farming communities across the country. In all of the supply-managed sectors, we see prosperous communities, because of the fact that there is stability in the price. Big agribusiness is not coming in and ripping everything away. We have seen the instability of prices that comes from that.

Canada has a system that works, that provides a good level of income for farming communities and for farmers right across the country, and a good quality of product. That is why so many people in the United States are looking to emulate the Canadian example, and in other countries as well. They look to Canada.

The NDP has been the strongest supporter of the supply-managed sector, and we will continue to be.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, in this latest version of the Conservative Party, a lot of working-class cosplay is going on. However, I like my hon. colleague to talk about this. During the years of the Harper government, one of the biggest wealth transfers happened from Canadian families to corporations, and I am talking about the corporate tax cuts.

Could my hon. colleague remind Canadians what the Conservative government did during the Harper years to the corporate tax rate and how that hobbled the revenues of today, which could have been used to support Canadian families in my riding, his riding and right across the country?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Harper government was a terrible financial manager. In fact, Conservative financial management is an oxymoron. The Conservatives are simply incapable of managing the public purse.

My colleague, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, is absolutely right. We saw massive loopholes open. We saw sweetheart deals, like the \$116-billion liquidity support gift to Canada's big banks, as if they needed it, and, of course, the infamous Harper tax haven treaties, \$30 billion a year, according to the Parliamentary Budgetary Officer.

What did the Conservatives do once they splurged and used a firehose to shower money on corporate CEOs? They cut money to seniors and forced them to work longer. They cut money in health care and slashed services to our nation's veterans, who put their lives on the line for their country and who were subject to the most immense disrespect from the Harper government. It was a toxic government, it was an incompetent government and it was a corrupt government. That is why the Conservatives were thrown out of office in 2015.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, when it comes to nutrition north, the Liberals always talk about the money they are spending, but they are putting money into a big broken bureaucratic system. It is not working. The more they spend, the more food insecurity rates rise across the north. This motion, of course, alludes to nutrition north and the badly needed reforms. I would

agree that reforms are needed. A number of key recommendations have been brought forward over the years at the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

However, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby also talks about having to force the government to do things. Those are his words. I am curious to hear his explanation as to why he has been unable to force the government to address these reforms and nutrition north to this point.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, we have the motion before the House. If the Conservatives, after trying to sabotage the debate this morning, are now saying that they are going to support it, then that provides the impetus, with a majority of members of Parliament voting in favour of it, to ensure this happens. However, I recall nothing happening on nutrition north during the Harper regime, even though it was flagged, and has been raised for years. The member for Nunavut has been very articulate and outspoken on the issue of reforming nutrition north.

I will mention a practice that was put in place by the Harper government, continued by the Liberal government, where they take a portion of the subsidy given to lower prices and put it right into their pockets. Nutrition north has been ripping off northerners. It is time that stopped.

● (1040)

Mr. Charles Sousa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in keeping with today's theme, I would like to focus my remarks on our efforts to tackle food insecurity to ensure real and lasting change. The solutions for food security rests on a strong policy. That is why, from day one, we committed to a food policy for Canada, the first for our nation.

The food policy for Canada launched in 2019 after lengthy and inclusive consultations, which brought everyone to the table to talk about different aspects of the food system and to address challenges. As well as our stakeholder clients, farmers and the value chain, we reached out to Canadians from across Canada's food systems, including consumers, health and nutrition experts, food security advocates, environmental groups, fishers, indigenous peoples and the academic community.

After consultations with over 45,000 Canadians, we arrived at a collective vision for the food policy. That vision is that all people of Canada are able to access a sufficient amount of safe, nutritious and culturally diverse foods and that Canada's food system is resilient and innovative, sustains our environment and supports our economy.

Business of Supply

Today, five years later, the Government of Canada continues to work with community-based organizations to strengthen Canada's food system, from sustainable food production and processing to strong local food infrastructure and lowering food waste. This includes our local food infrastructure fund that supports local and regional food systems sustainably. By encouraging the development of small-scale community-based food systems and the building of local processing capacity, including regional slaughter capacity, those requirements to support those producers are critical.

Over the past four years, the fund has supported over 1,000 food security projects across Canada to help food security organizations to reach more families that are struggling with high food prices. Projects include community gardens and kitchens, refrigerated trucks, storage units for donated food and greenhouses in remote and northern communities that face severe food security challenges.

Now, more than ever, we must support the work of organizations that help those who need it most. That is why earlier this year, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced a federal investment of up to nearly \$10 million for over 190 projects under the local food infrastructure fund. The most recent phase is to provide rapid response funding to help improve food security in communities through investments in equipment and infrastructure needs. Projects are targeted and immediate.

This funding will help communities, food banks and organizations across Canada invest in things like new equipment and infrastructure to get food where it is needed most. For example, this funding is helping a first nations community in Alberta with technology to grow fresh vegetables indoors. A food bank in Quebec will be able to invest in cold storage so that it can provide more food to families year-round.

Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$62.9 million over three years to renew and expand the local food infrastructure fund to support community organizations across Canada to invest in local food infrastructure, with priority to be given to indigenous and Black communities, along with other equity-deserving groups. Part of the expansion will support organizations to improve infrastructure for school food programs as a complement to the national school food program.

Canada is fortunate to have the very best farmers who work tirelessly to grow and deliver high-quality, nutritious food every day. Sadly, far too many children still go to school on an empty stomach. That is why budget 2024 commits \$1 billion over five years to a national food program to provide kids with healthy meals so that they can learn, grow and reach their full potential. This initiative will create new opportunities for local farmers, food processors, harvesters, and the under-represented and marginalized groups in the agriculture and food sector.

● (1045)

Canada's proposed national school food program would help ensure a bright future for schoolchildren across Canada and help us build a stronger economy for all Canadians. We all recognize the importance of supporting our youth, especially when they start their day. All too often, we consider the price of food as a hindrance, but this is what is necessary to ensure all those who need it most can be provided for.

To improve food security in Canada, we continue to work hard to make Canada's grocery sector stronger and more resilient. That includes our support of industry's effort to develop a grocery code of conduct. It is great to see that more grocers are now supporting the code. The goal is to make the relationship between retailers and suppliers more transparent and more predictable, for the good of the food supply chain. With key businesses participating, the code would be more effective; ultimately, this would benefit both the industry as a whole and consumers. The code needs to be implemented quickly so that it can increase the strength and resilience of Canada's food supply chain while building consumer confidence.

We fully recognize that rising food prices make things challenging for many Canadians and can worsen their food security status. Our government has made progress in addressing poverty as one of the main causes of food insecurity and is making life more affordable for Canadians via investments in child care and housing. We introduced a GST tax credit of \$2.5 billion for families living with lower incomes, who are likely to be disproportionately impacted by inflation affecting food products, shelter and transportation. We have introduced targeted measures to improve overall affordability for Canadians, including delivering on more affordable child care options and a national dental care program.

In budget 2024, we committed to supporting competitive prices for groceries and other essentials and giving Canadians more choices by monitoring grocers' work to help stabilize prices, as well as investigating other price inflation practices in the grocery sector through the grocery task force; by maintaining the food price data hub to give Canadians detailed information on food prices, which helps them make informed decisions about their grocery options; by tackling shrinkflation, including through the office of consumer affairs, which has launched research projects to investigate and reveal price inflation and harmful business practices that reduce the quantity and quality of groceries; and by enhancing competition through the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act, which amended the Competition Act to enhance competition, including in the grocery sector. This act gives more power to the Competition Bureau to crack down on unfair practices and empowers the Competition Bureau to block corporations from stifling competition.

Business of Supply

The government will continue to fight for fair prices and to work collaboratively with all members of the House in order to achieve fairness in the system.

To truly strengthen our local food infrastructure, we must also look to our actions to protect the environment. We are making a concerted effort to address the environment, or at least some of us are. Not everyone on the other side agrees, but it is essential to fight climate change to improve the opportunities for our farmers. We are making historic investments of \$1.5 billion to help Canadian farmers boost their climate resiliency through sustainable practices and technology.

Climate change ultimately affects and impacts all of us. We need to take real and concrete measures to help our producers provide food for Canada and around the world. However, they have to be competitive in a world market that does price carbon, and they have to be competitive in order to produce the product in a sustainable fashion.

We are not standing down. For example, over the past two years, our on-farm climate action fund has made available almost \$100 million in direct support to over 4,000 farmers across Canada. With this, they can take action on their farms to reduce their carbon footprint through cover cropping, nitrogen management and rotational grazing.

● (1050)

All indications point to a strong interest in this program among farmers. That is why we are investing over \$470 million to extend the program until 2028. Our agricultural clean-technology program has also provided over \$200 million in funding over the past three years to support more than 400 on-farm projects across Canada, from solar energy to precision agriculture and energy-efficient grain-dryers. Under our agriscience program, we are supporting research to help provide differences in the agricultural sectors to reduce their carbon footprint, to find innovation and innovative ways to produce effectively while reducing our carbon footprint. For example, the beef cattle research cluster, backed by the industry's government investments of almost \$22 million over the last five years, drives research to key industry priorities, including climate change and the environment.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has also launched the agricultural methane reduction challenge, which will offer prize money for up to \$12 million for innovators advancing low-cost solutions to reduce methane emissions from cattle. Let us not forget that climate resilience is at the heart of the new sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. This is a federal-provincial-territorial agreement on priorities and investments that will drive the Canadian agricultural and agri-food sector over the next five years. The new funding partnership will give producers and processors the tools they need to strengthen the sector's sustainability, competitiveness and resilience.

As part of this additional funding, the new \$250-million cost-shared resilient agricultural landscape program is helping to recognize ecological goods and services produced by farmers. This is important for improving on-farm resiliency and biodiversity, while also contributing to the reduction of emissions in the sector. We also have a network of 14 living labs across Canada, where researchers

work side by side with farmers to find environmental solutions that work on farms.

We are working beyond election cycles. This is long term in scope and in effect. We are working, then, to foster ways to support the industry for many years to come on the new sustainable agricultural strategy. Producers and other stakeholders are contributing to the development of this strategy, to ensure that Canada's agricultural sector is ready and able to recover quickly from extreme events, to thrive in changing climates, to meet our climate goals and to feed the world.

Taking action now is necessary to help reduce risks over the long term of extreme weather, new pests, flooding and drought. The impacts of a changing climate will continue to be felt by our farmers and ranchers and by all Canadians. It is our responsibility to act now, to ensure that Canadian food continues to be sustainably grown for our planet and for the generations to come.

Our government's investments are helping farmers harness cutting-edge technology to help feed Canadians and the world more sustainably. By taking action in all these key areas, we will not only drive sustainable food production for the future, but we will also improve food security in Canada and the world, as well as advancing towards meeting our United Nations sustainable development goal of zero hunger for 2030.

Food security is a concern, both globally and locally. The Government of Canada recognizes that, across Canada, food prices and food security concerns have been on the rise, putting pressure on household finances and making it more difficult for many families to afford nutritious foods. We continue working to strengthen Canada's food systems, from improving access to healthy and culturally diverse food to ensuring sustainable food production and processing, supporting strong local food infrastructure and reducing food waste.

● (1055)

Helping all people living in Canada to access healthy food is a priority. All Canadians, regardless of where they live, deserve access to affordable and nutritious food. We must work in concert with one another to achieve that goal.

Business of Supply

Aside from the partisan attacks, there is so much at stake, and that is the livelihood of Canadians. We will do everything necessary to support our farmers and our communities to foster that sustainability and diversity. Food prices are essentially at the heart of the matter, because affordability matters at this point. The supply chain across the system has been strained. The initiative that we are taking is with a holistic policy that captures and deals with all the elements that are around the agri-food business, and the economy and the environment and all are at stake. Therefore, we will do everything we can to support those most in need, to foster ways to reduce food prices and to ensure a sustainable, long-term, prosperous agri-food industry in Canada.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech very carefully. However, we have a motion before us, and I did not hear him say that he would be supporting the motion. The motion is to force big grocery chains to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a variety of tools, including a price cap; to stop delaying the reforms to the nutrition north program; and to stop the Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers that we have seen.

Can the member agree that those handouts should stop? Will he be supporting the NDP motion?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, the issue is much more than just the end-user or, in this case, the retailer. The supply chain must be addressed, and the farmers and the consumers must be protected. A more holistic policy throughout the system is necessary to achieve sustainable, long-term results. I am talking about beyond election-cycle politics here. I am talking about the sustainability of the industry.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member had mentioned supply chain input costs all along the way. One cost input is the carbon tax. I was talking to a friend who is a vegetable farmer in southern Ontario; he says that it is becoming increasingly difficult for him to compete with non-carbon tax regimes, such as California and even South America, which import vegetables into Canada. It is difficult for even a local producer to compete with them on account of the carbon tax. What does the member say about that?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the concerns, and we are all worried about the input costs in the supply chain. However, we are also recognizing government supports in the rebates and the return of that pricing to our suppliers. They are competing in the international market, which is pricing carbon; if we do not do it at home, they are going to be charged as they go forward. The Government of Canada is providing rebates and supports and, as I just mentioned in the speech, a tremendous amount of supports for our farmers to be competitive in the long term. We must do both: Protecting the environment is also protecting our economy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, contrary to what the opposition member just said, the State of California does have a price on pollution. However, that is not the question I have for the member.

At the end of the day, we take a look at the cost factors, inflation rates and the impact that these things have on society. We want to

see food prices stabilized. Ultimately, people need to have comfort in knowing that the government is acting on their behalf.

We brought in the Competition Act, which the member made reference to; this is one way in which we can ensure that we are having more stabilization of food prices. Could he just expand on why it was important to make changes to the Competition Act?

• (1100)

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, it is essential to have the Competition Act in place; the motion by the NDP talks about an oligopoly, in essence, in Canada's retail sector. Just as we have in banking, we have to take some measures to protect the consumers in those endeavours.

The Competition Act and the Competition Bureau enable us to assess some of the activities that are involved in regard to that system. While the supply chain is much more competitive because of its diverse nature and the many inputs that are engaged in providing food, the Competition Bureau is essential to ensure that there is fairness in the system throughout, especially when it goes to the consumer at the retail level.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, listening to my colleague's speech made me wonder about something.

They are talking about nutrition north Canada and the need for reform. We have actually known that for years. The program did not only just now stop working in the north and other remote regions. In my riding, the boat often fails to arrive, forcing us to transport food by plane. It is getting more and more expensive. Eight years ago in the north, I saw a jar of Maxwell House coffee priced at \$25.

What are the Liberals waiting for? They have been in government for eight years.

[English]

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, yes, there are regional disparities across Canada. We are a diverse country, and we have greater concerns in the far north and in remote communities. If we were not enabling some of the investments we are making, it would be even more difficult to achieve this in those remote communities.

However, part of the strategy is also to make those communities sustainable by providing investments and infrastructure to enable them to also provide for themselves as they go forward with less reliance on the delivery of systems from outside of the region. That is essential. There is an economic component and an environmental component to it, but the investments are necessary to promote the economy within those regions in the far north.

We will do everything that is necessary, and we have been. We have been a strong partner, more so than the opposition was in the past, in supporting indigenous communities. Part of our strategy is all around indigenous communities in the far north to ensure they succeed, survive and, frankly, lead in the agri-food system.

Business of Supply

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the comments made by my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove.

Supply chain costs are what is really impacting the price of food here. The government is maintaining a 34% tariff on Russian fertilizer. Do not get me wrong. I am in no way in favour of any measures that support Putin. However, the government is exempting Russian titanium for our aerospace industry. Why the hypocrisy?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, now we are talking about trade on a broad scale. We are talking about international trade. That is an important question because agri-food processing is an essential trade element for Canada, as is our trade in all of the mineral deposits and every other aspect. It is important to provide value-added trade for Canada in the processing sector. Therefore, we are looking at ways to provide greater competition and support for Canada in its trade activities in the value-added component.

I agree with you. I am no fan right now of the geopolitical situation we have outside. Canada needs to protect its sovereignty, and the best way to do that is to protect our agri-food business and those Canadian producers.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that he is to address all questions and comments through the Chair.

Continuing with questions and comments, we will go to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member was as surprised as I was to hear Conservatives raising competition with California and saying it has no carbon tax. It has a cap-and-trade system, so it has put a price on carbon. Therefore, I cannot understand their argument that somehow this makes it impossible for farmers to compete with California.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, the member opposite does bring forward something very interesting.

Canada and the province of Ontario, as an example, were part of the Western Climate Initiative throughout California and Quebec, along with other provinces and other states in the United States, to provide for industry-wide industrial pricing on carbon. It exempted that province, as well as Quebec, from the backstop, which is the federal program that all provinces are entitled to do, netting the province of Ontario \$1.5 billion a year because we had decarbonized our system through the elimination of coal. We were advancing.

It was a Conservative government that decided to eliminate the cap-and-trade system in Ontario, and the \$1.5 billion in revenue, to pick a fight on carbon pricing with the federal government, which it did not need to do because we were exempt. It was an incentive program. It provided an incentive to invest in changing consumer habits, to retrofit their homes and to provide agricultural sustainability. Every area of the program is priced internationally. The Conservative members opposite should be well aware of that.

• (1105)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when Canadians were finding it difficult, the government came out with a grocery rebate

to help support Canadians with groceries. I wonder if the member could provide a quick thought on that.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Madam Speaker, it is an important program to provide for consumers and those most in need to provide affordability, something the Conservative government feels is not necessary to do, and that is very unfortunate.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have to admit that I am a little tough on the NDP sometimes, not only here in the House, but also out on my travels and during the touring I do across the country on behalf of our party, our leader and the official opposition.

I consider myself a relatively nice guy, but I have to say that my patience is wearing thin when it comes to the credibility of the NDP. I have had the opportunity to visit northern Ontario several times, making the drive to North Bay, Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay and all points in between. The NDP's continued propping up of the tired Liberal government is a frustrating point in itself, but members can just imagine how unpopular the ever-increasing carbon tax is in northern Ontario.

If someone has to go from Timmins down to Sudbury, which is about a three and a half hour drive, the carbon tax is driving up the cost of gas to go to medical appointments. It is adding a cost to groceries when reefer trucks have to go up to northern Ontario to deliver food. The NDP is completely out of touch with the communities in northern Ontario it claims to represent well.

Let us talk about Vancouver Island. Out there, over the course of the last couple of years, so many people who cast a ballot for the NDP in the last election have buyer's remorse. They did not vote for the NDP to prop up the Liberals in a four-year coalition deal, to cover up their scandals or to go along with the Prime Minister and his out-of-touch agenda, which has driven up inflation, doubled housing prices and doubled our national debt. The increasingly frustrating point for those people is, if they had wanted to vote for the Prime Minister to remain in power, they would have voted Liberal. They voted NDP for something different, but instead, they got nothing but the same.

There is a hypocrisy here. There is a double standard that the NDP need to be called out on. I am happy to do so time and time again. I will remind Canadians of that, whether it be on Vancouver Island, in northern Ontario, or any other place where the NDP currently holds seats. The NDP props up the Liberals on every budget. There is a hypocrisy there because, in the budget speeches, NDP members complain that things are put in the budget but never followed through on.

Business of Supply

One thing the NDP does as well is that it covers up the constant scandals that the Conservatives try to get answers for at committee. The “cover-up coalition” is a term we have used several times over the course of the last couple of years, such as with the Winnipeg lab documents, foreign interference and ArriveCan. The number of times the NDP has voted to shut down meetings, shut down committee studies and investigations into the numerous examples of waste, is endless and frustrating those who have, perhaps, traditionally in the past, supported the NDP. Many traditional NDP supporters say that they do not recognize the party anymore, and rightfully so.

That is why I believe common-sense Conservatives are really getting some good momentum across the country. We are the contrast. After nine years, the government wants to quadruple the carbon tax from its current levels. We want to axe the carbon tax. When we say something to Canadians, we are the ones who will follow through and do it, unlike the NDP, and we are here in the House today on its opposition day motion. The NDP members claim they stand up against corporate greed and against corporate welfare handouts. To clarify, this is a non-binding motion that the NDP has presented here. This is the shell game and the charade that it plays. Canadians are calling it out, and rightfully so.

This motion, if it passes or not, will not force the Liberal government to make any change that it claims it wants to have. If only there were something the NDP members could do to get their way and maybe make a change in this country. They could stop propping up the tired, out-of-touch and corrupt Prime Minister and Liberal-NDP government. They could let Canadians decide. If they are so confident about their ideas, and if they are so confident that they are on the right track, they should have no problem in an election. It has been three years since the last election, so call the question. Let us have an election and let Canadians decide. There is a reason we are dealing with a non-binding motion here today.

I will split my time today with the member for Bay of Quinte, a great member from eastern Ontario. I just want to say I feel bad for the NDP because it is on full display today just how hypocritical it is with its messaging and its attempts to make Canadians believe it is different than the current Liberal government.

• (1110)

Today, we are debating an NDP opposition day motion. Just moments ago, during Routine Proceedings, the Speaker tabled the Auditor General's latest set of reports on spending by the Liberal-NDP government, spending that was not only approved by the Liberals, but also propped up fully, every single time, by the NDP.

A report came out regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada. That is the Liberal-NDP green slush fund that has been under scandal and under review for months. The report was just tabled. If the NDP wants to tackle corporate greed, corporate welfare, corporate handouts and Liberal insiders getting special privileges and giving contracts to taxpayer money, this is the real deal of what we are talking about.

Here are the Auditor General's words, hot off the press, just tabled here this morning, on this green slush fund scandal. The report states that they found that money was awarded to “funding to projects that were ineligible, that conflicts of interest existed in

some instances, and that certain requirements...were not met.” The report continues, “We found that the [group appointed by the Liberals] awarded funding to 10 ineligible projects...awarded \$59 million even though they did not meet key requirements set out in the contribution agreements”.

It goes on. Here is how bad the corruption is. This is supported and voted for by the NDP and, trust me, it is going to continue to prop the Liberals up. The report also states, “Also...we found 90 cases that were connected to approval decisions, representing nearly \$76 million in funding awarded to projects, where the foundation's conflict-of-interest policies were not followed.”

What does that mean? Let me simplify it. It means Liberal appointees gave money, in conflict of interest, to their Liberal friends and corporate insiders, approved by the NDP and propped up by the NDP. We talk about corporate greed, corporate welfare and waste of taxpayers' money in corruption. Right there from the Auditor General, the NDP is going to have a lot to answer for if it wants to keep propping the Liberals up, and not through a non-binding opposition day motion, but again, continued confidence in the Liberal government. The NDP has zero credibility.

If that was not enough, the Auditor General has been busy, and there was a second report today about the amount of money spent on outside contractors and consultants under the Liberal government. Professional Services Contract was the title of the report. Let me just say this: McKinsey, a Liberal insider firm, has received over \$200 million, \$209 million, over the course of the last several years. It found many examples of departments and agencies, and eight out of 10 Crown corporations failed to properly follow all aspects of their procurement policies and guidance on at least a contract they had with McKinsey.

The investigation needs to continue. We need to get to the bottom of this and stop these corporate handouts that are coming from the NDP-Liberal government. Let us remember, it is not just the Liberals tabling a budget. It is the NDP going along, carte blanche, approving all these, whether it be the budget, the estimates or the cover-ups at committees, as Conservatives try to get to the bottom, to root this out, to stop this corporate welfare handout to Liberal inside friends. It is the NDP that needs to answer for it.

At the end of the day, there are things we can do in this country that are not being done after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government. We have a competition problem in this country. The NDP, despite all its complaints and its tough questions in question period, props the status quo up of these Liberals each and every time.

Business of Supply

A key item that could provide immediate relief, controlled by the federal government, is to axe the carbon tax. It is now clear. It is driving up grocery prices, and they are just getting started. The Liberals want to quadruple the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre. It is out of touch. Canadians are out of money. Frankly, with this motion, they are tired of the NDP hypocrisy of always talking a tough game and then propping up the Liberals until at least next fall. I cannot wait for Canadians to have their say at the next election.

• (1115)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy the fantasies of my colleague. The reality is that half of the national executive of the corporate Conservatives are corporate lobbyists. We have seen their national campaign manager and their deputy leader as corporate lobbyists. The member stressed the fact that opposition days are non-binding. That is true. Every single Conservative opposition day is a non-binding opposition day as well, so that is kind of absurd. I know Conservatives are stretching.

My question is very simple. Just a few months after Harper was elected, the price-fixing started. The bread price-fixing scandal cost the average Canadian family hundreds and hundreds of dollars. It continued throughout the Harper regime. Conservatives never lifted a finger to stop that theft. Will the member rise today and solemnly apologize to Canadians for Harper and his government allowing that rip-off to continue for nearly a decade?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, that was a little bit of a political science lesson from the member from the NDP. He has been here a long time. He has been in office with the Prime Minister for the last nine years. For every grievance and complaint that the NDP members have, they have had an opportunity to address it and to fix it. For all the complaints that the NDP has in this motion today, NDP members could walk over to the Prime Minister today and tell him that unless he does A, B or C, they will pull the plug and call an election so that Canadians can decide. He talks tough all the time.

Conservatives are on the side of everyday Canadians. We want to lower grocery prices. The NDP has propped up the Liberal idea. Remember the grocery summit that happened last year? It was going to lower prices by Thanksgiving. Nothing happened from that. As to the NDP's plan on the carbon tax, the NDP knows that it is out of touch to want to quadruple the carbon tax from the pain already being caused. The NDP talks a big game. I will put our record, when we were in government, of lower grocery prices against the NDP record any day of the week.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been on the fisheries committee since 2015, and we have just witnessed a huge run of red herring. I think there should be a harvest, actually.

Is the member who just spoke comfortable with the fact that big grocery racked up \$6 billion in profits last year? Was it too much, not enough or just right? What does he think?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, all those numbers the member just cited are their record after nine years. This is a non-binding NDP motion. The NDP members sound tough about making changes, but they have not. Again, what the NDP wants to do, as

opposed to doing anything else, is to raise the taxes on everything by hiking up the carbon tax and quadrupling it. Canadians know that is out of touch, and it is only going to drive the gap in prices up even further.

I will just have Canadians reflect on a moment here after nine years. The government has increased taxes: the carbon tax, alcohol tax and payroll tax. The government had an unused housing tax that was supposed to solve a bunch of problems. I will ask Canadians to reflect on the government's record and credibility as to finances and taxation. Has climate change been resolved? Are forest fires not happening anymore? That is not true. Is the budget balanced? Not even close. Is life more affordable? Not even close. Are more houses getting built? Not even close.

Every time the government claims that it wants to hike taxes as a solution, it actually does the opposite. Canadians see that through and through. They are getting nailed with the carbon tax, while the rich, who the government claims to hike taxes on, seem to be doing just fine.

• (1120)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would just like to get my colleague's comments about the difference in inflation between now and the Harper years, when the former Harper government stimulated the economy and balanced it again in six years instead of seven, which it even had in its plan, versus what is happening today.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, Conservatives balanced the budget. We had lower taxes. Rent was half of what it is today. Housing prices were half of what they are today, and life was a heck of a lot more affordable than it is now, even after all the pitches and proposals by the NDP and Liberals. I will put a common-sense Conservative record any day of the week, on the table, versus what they have and the record they are going to have to answer for.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, \$1 billion is the excess profit RBC made over and above its last quarter in 2023 because the NDP did not stop the merger, approved by the finance minister, of RBC buying small, scrappy competitor HSBC. The NDP in this House of Commons is a walking contradiction. The New Democrats talk about corporate greed and about going after big, greedy corporations, but in not saying no to the merger of RBC and HSBC, RBC became richer and Canadians became poorer. At the end of the day, Canadians feel they have been sold out by the NDP, which is not holding government to account and not standing up for Canadians.

Business of Supply

There are three mega-mergers by the Liberal government that the NDP has not stopped. Rogers and Shaw merged only a year ago, which meant that cellphone prices went up, and we have WestJet and Sunwing, and it was just announced a couple weeks ago that Sunwing will be shutting down.

Competition means that we have more players fighting for our dollars to ensure we bring prices down and service up. In Canada, we have a major monopoly problem, where we have too many big players that have squeezed smaller players out, and the result of that is that Canadians are paying the highest prices in the world.

After nine years of the Liberal government, Canadians pay the highest cellphone bills in the world: three times as much as Australia and twice as much as the U.S. and Europe. When it comes to bank fees, Canadians pay among the highest bank fees in the world. Only six banks control 95% of mortgages. We look at cellphone bills and how they are affecting families unable to afford groceries at the grocery store and wanting to use cellphones for safety, education or the workplace. They are simply saying that they cannot afford those bills; they are too much. When we look at airlines, we have only two airlines that control 80% of all the air travel in Canada. We look at those fees, the junk fees, taxes and airport fees, and they are among the highest in the world.

The New Democrats have had an ample chance to say no. They have a supply agreement. They are the only party in this House that is propping up the government, and by not standing up to say no to RBC-*HSBC*, the result has been almost 1% higher mortgage rates, specifically in Vancouver and Toronto, where *HSBC* had 10% of Vancouver mortgage rates and 5% of Toronto mortgage rates. The NDP was not able to say no to Rogers and Shaw, and prices have gone up, even though the Prime Minister promised that he would halve prices for Canadians. The NDP was not able to say no to WestJet and Sunwing, and Sunwing is being obliterated and eliminated.

The NDP government is a walking contradiction by standing up for “corporate bad” and standing up for Canadians, who are the opposite of that. Canadians feel they have been completely sold out. There is even a limerick for it—

• (1125)

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

There seem to be some cross-conversations while the hon. member is trying to do his speech, so I ask members to please wait. They will have an opportunity to have five minutes of questions and comments.

The hon. member for Bay of Quinte has the floor.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, the New Democrats are applauding this record. Canadians right now are poorer than they have ever been and are paying more for services compared to the rest of the world. We have less competition. There was even a limerick on this:

The NDP let the Big Fish Swim
HSBC Shaw, they're all in
RBC and Rogers GREW
 Sunwing flew right out of view.

At the end of the day, the NDP was the only party and its leader to say no to these mergers to help Canadians. When we look at what is happening with grocery prices, it is the only party that could have said no to what is raising the prices of groceries the most across Canada, which is the carbon tax. When we tax the farmer who grows the food, the truckers who ship the food and the manufacturers who make the food, those taxes add costs all the way down the line and grocery prices have gone up.

More importantly, when we look at competition for groceries, even though we heard in this House of Commons *Loblaws* consistently and *Metro* hardly ever, not once have we heard about the manufacturers, the manufacturing size and scope of these big monopolies that exist not only across Canada but across North America: *Nestlé*, *PepsiCo*, *Tyson Foods*, *Kraft Heinz*, *Archer Daniels Midland* and *George Weston Limited*. Manufacturers are charging excessive amounts for their products because there is no competition.

When we talk about competition, I finally figured out why it is so wrong with the NDP and the Liberals. If one were to sit down on a three-legged stool, there is balance. There are three legs and that is really what we are missing in competition: one is regulation, one is competition and one is innovation. The common-sense Conservatives talk about these three things.

First, on the need for regulation, we do not believe in the big, powerful companies. We want to make sure there is regulation, companies are held in check and Competition Act changes are made. I have a bill that would eliminate the efficiencies defence. Second, looking at competition, we need small players to grow and compete. Third, we need to make sure we have innovation, new ways to bring innovation and bring more competition to Canadians. I finally figured it out with this three-legged stool. The NDP only has one leg. That is why, when people sit on it, they talk about regulation, regulation, regulation and not innovation or competition. People topple over, and they topple left. It is how it goes.

When we talk about what we need for competition, of course we need to talk about regulation, but we have to talk about competition in Canada. No aspect of this motion talks about taking on manufacturers and their large profits or looking at who can grow in Canada. Let us talk about *Save-On-Foods* with 183 locations in western Canada. Why are we not helping *Save-on-Foods* come east in Canada? *Freson Bros.* in Alberta has 16 stores throughout the province, a great, locally owned grocery store. Why are we not helping it grow, expand and get to the rest of Canada? We are looking at how locally owned grocers can play a part in competing in the Canadian economy.

Business of Supply

There are new innovations right now. People can order groceries on their phones and they are delivered to their doors. There is normally a four-dollar delivery fee, but what is being eliminated? It eliminates the warehousing and the retail store. The biggest advantage that Loblaws, Sobeys and Metro have, besides the leader of the NDP's brother working for one of those companies, Metro, is real estate. The biggest monopoly in some of that real estate is the real estate investment trusts. They own all the land. Of course those grocery stores are going to be tough to compete against because they own the land on which they reside. Grocery right now is a retail game. It is basically a real estate game. They own the land on the right side of Main Street, and people driving home from work, driving to work or on the weekend get groceries for their families. They have a complete and utter monopoly on how we get groceries to Canadians.

It has to be about distribution, which is part of innovation. It has to be competition, meaning we are bringing more competitors in. It has to be regulation, but regulation also means that we get rid of the burden of the carbon tax, which we know is increasing those prices. None of that is in this opposition day motion. When we talk about what could have happened for Canadians, there are motions and ideas, but we had ideas up front, we have put forward motions that the government could have made and that the NDP could have said no to, which was opposing the three mergers that are hurting Canadians today.

• (1130)

The fact is that Canada cannot even get cellphone prices down. We have the highest in the world. The answer, of course, is the same thing: competition and innovation to get those prices down. When we look at bank fees, open banking will revolutionize banking in Canada, if we can ever do it. It has taken six years to get regulation in place. When we look at airlines, airports and competition as a whole, the only party in the House that is even willing to look at this is the common-sense Conservative Party. A common-sense Conservative government understands there are three legs to a stool. We know we are going to create competition, and we know we are going to ensure there is innovation. We are going to axe the carbon tax. We are going to ensure there are regulations so the monopolies do not control this economy. We will bring back competition to Canadians, to their families and to their savings and their households.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, in Nunavut, aviation fuel is exempt from the carbon tax, so carbon tax cannot be used as an excuse for the high prices of groceries. Does the member agree that, in fact, it is corporate greed causing higher prices in Nunavut?

An example I have mentioned is the CEO of the North West Company, who earned \$3.91 million, while my constituents in one year earned \$3.91 million. Meanwhile, my constituents are suffering from food insecurity, and the costs of groceries are not being lowered. Knowing that the carbon tax is not applied to aviation fuel and that all the communities I represent are fly-in communities, how does the member respond to realizing that corporate greed is actually the cause of high prices in the Arctic?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, carbon tax is included in interprovincial travel, so the member might be surprised to learn

that carbon tax is added to those fuel bills. However, we agree on the fact that to tackle these monopolies and oligopolies we need more competition. Do I believe we should have big, massive corporations with big CEOs making massive dollars in groceries? Absolutely not.

We have been on the record consistently saying we want more competition, which means we have more companies and the wealth is spread out. How to do that is to have more companies. The problem with our remote areas in Canada is that it is going to take a lot more innovation and sometimes a bit of help to get that to happen, because we do have large companies that dominate the landscapes. The only way out of that is to make sure we are involved in rural areas to help those areas get better, as well as to make sure there is more competition in general in urban areas.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the CEOs of five big oil companies are coming to the environment committee on Thursday. We know these companies are keeping the prices high, earning excess profits and not reinvesting those profits. Does the member think those companies should be broken up into lots of little companies? Would he vote for something like that, or does he take his marching orders from the gas tax-hiking Premier of Alberta, Danielle Smith?

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, when it comes to competition, I do not think there is any industry we are really protecting and one that is really protected. Every part of the Canadian economy is a monopoly or an oligopoly. That is just simple fact, and that is after nine years of the Liberal government.

When we look at every single sector, whether that be telecommunications, banking or airlines, the government has done nothing to create competition in any of that. The result is that Canadians, and I do not know if the member's constituents should be happy, are all paying more than every other G7 nation, every one, because of the government's inability to create competition. Saying that we are protecting something when everything under the government is under a monopoly or an oligopoly is pretty rich.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague sits on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. I know that he is interested in the price of many goods and services in Quebecers' and Canadians' market basket.

In the last budget, the government proposed an open banking system. That will completely sideline Desjardins, the largest financial institution in Quebec. The federal government wants to impose an open banking system and force Desjardins either to isolate itself or to join the federal system, which would certainly go against the spirit of the Constitution.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts about this. Does he not think that, before once again imposing a last-minute policy on the provinces, the government should coordinate with Quebec to ensure that Quebeckers, most of whom bank with Desjardins, can receive the same treatment as all other Canadians?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague and I have a lot of fun in the industry committee together, and I enjoy serving with him.

Open banking is supposed to be giving less regulation and more competition to the banking sector. The federal government should only be introducing regulations that bring an API, or application programming interface, that forces the banks, on consumer consent, to give up their information. It should not be telling any company what to do, except for enforcing these regulations, which force the banks, on one's consent, to give one's banking information back.

The open banking industry fintechs have been fighting to get through this. They are doing it all illegally right now on the backs of only the provinces. The federal government needs to get out of the way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Today, we are talking about the price of groceries and the food we eat. First, as they start their season, I would like to take a few seconds in the House to thank all those in Quebec's agricultural and processing sectors who feed us. Many of my colleagues from all parties, especially those of the Bloc Québécois, are from Quebec agricultural ridings that feed our cities. In particular, I am thinking of the member from Montcalm and the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

I feel it is very important to acknowledge the work of people in the agricultural sector. They work hard under tough market conditions. Global warming and climate conditions do not help. Bad weather adds to all the economic hardship these people face. However, in the past year, the federal government has offered virtually no meaningful programs to help them. I therefore want to recognize their work.

Today, we are debating this NDP motion. I have mixed feelings about it because we know the NDP has something of talent for making accurate diagnoses but proposing solutions that, to put it politely, are inappropriate and ill-conceived. Maybe it is because of incompetence. I cannot say. Anyway, the NDP makes diagnoses.

For example, they said people need dental care. Their solution was to ask the government with the least competence and no jurisdiction in this area to implement a program that violates the Constitution by sending cheques to people, making them wait and not clearly outlining the parameters to them, not to mention that its management was turned over to the private sector.

A diagnosis with a bad solution is the hallmark of the NDP. It is the same thing with the pharmacare system. The New Democrats are good at stating the obvious: In their opinion, people need prescription drugs. I thank the NDP, because no one here had any idea.

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Here again, the NDP comes up with a solution, namely to call on the federal government to get involved and impose conditions on the provinces. Given that Quebec already has its own plan and is innovating, they are destabilizing that plan and slowing down the progress of Quebec's system, which is still a model in the federation. They are actually slowing down innovation, because a province that is innovating can inspire the other provinces.

That is the hallmark of the NDP. It makes an obvious diagnosis of an obvious problem. In this particular case, let us keep in mind that for 30 years the NDP was not interested in this problem, although it has easily existed for 30 or 40 years in our competition regime. However, after a period of 7%, 8% or 9% annual inflation, the NDP is suddenly interested and is proposing a strange solution. The NDP's solution is to control prices, in other words, cap them.

I am all for discussing the price of food, because it is true that prices have increased. How do we cap the price of groceries? We open a new tower here in Ottawa and fill it with public servants who will search through flyers all day long: Butter will be such and such a price, celery is too expensive in Val-d'Or, maybe beets should be cheaper in Rimouski, and a loaf of bread in Plateau Mont-Royal costs 25¢ too much.

This was already done in the United States during the Great Depression of the 1930s. They were exceptional measures. It was also done during the Second World War, when they had the Office of Price Administration. That place was filled with public servants who threw papers from one floor to another, as in "the place that sends you mad", in an *Asterix* film. At the time, in all the non-communist regimes where this was done, these were exceptional measures implemented in response to an exceptional situation. The problem with what the NDP is proposing is that it is seeking an exceptional measure to address a problem that has become permanent. That is the wrong way to approach the problem.

The same is true of bringing in a windfall profit tax. It might be a good tax. It may be that this tax will not distort markets. Tax specialists tell us that some taxes are better than others in that they are less harmful to the economy, which will come as a surprise to the Conservatives. In the Bloc Québécois, we once proposed a temporary windfall tax on certain profits. It was a surtax on the banks, because they had made excess profits during the pandemic, and those temporary measures could be considered appropriate.

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• (1140)

In this case, however, the situation is structural. In 1986, I was four years old. Revealing my age is not something I like doing, but someone put it on Wikipedia so what can I do. In 1986, there were 13 major grocery chains competing with each other. Over the years, some of them swallowed up others. Bigger chains emerged, to the point where today Canada has only three major chains—yes, three. I would remind everyone that geographically speaking, Canada is a very big country, and we have only three chains—five, if we count Costco and Walmart. Target tried but came up short. We started out with 13 large chains and now we are down to five. That is the problem. The problem lies in our competition system. What will we do? Will we let five players divvy up 80% of the market, fill an office tower with public servants and institute price controls? Therein lies the problem.

I will show how easy it is to diagnose the lack of competition here, as well as the obstacles to investment. The profit margin of Canada's major grocery chains is about 5%. People might say that is not a very big margin, but we are dealing here with a volume market where five players share 80% of the market. Five per cent is a fairly large margin, because in Europe the average margin is 3%. In the United States the average margin is 2%. Furthermore, since there is more competition in the U.S., there is more innovation. One of the leading competition law specialists testified in committee that, unlike here in Canada, there is a differentiated offer in the U.S., in that grocery stores are different from one another and there are different models. Here in Canada, however, when people walk into one grocery store or another, they can see they are all the same. They could change their name tomorrow and we would not even notice a difference.

I said profit margins are 5% in Canada and 2% in the United States. In a functional market, what should happen in this situation? Eventually, an American chain would decide it is no crazier than anybody else, and it would come open grocery stores in Canada and make 5%.

What is happening instead? We have a Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, whom I admire for his boundless energy, flying to the U.S. so he can chase down grocers and beg them to open stores here. Clearly, there is an investment issue. There is something wrong when Bloomberg says that Canada has become a top investment destination for some industries, yet American grocery retailers just kilometres away do not want to come here.

Why? Maybe it is because there is still anti-competitive behaviour going on, there are regulatory barriers, and the other players are too big. The NDP does not mention this, however. It did not do this analysis, and that is why we will continue to live in a market dominated by a handful of major players.

Yes, improvements have been made. The commissioner of competition has been given the power to subpoena witnesses and compel them to produce documents. He has been given the power to launch investigations. His powers have been enhanced, but this is like moving from the Stone Age to the Iron Age. Just a few months ago, Canada's competition regime was the same as it was in the 1980s, and it is changing at a snail's pace. However, all competing markets give their commissioners more powers. They give them

more freedom. There is always a presumption in favour of consumers, and the commissioner does not have to constantly go to court, only to lose the case in the end.

We need a major overhaul and regulatory reform. This would require a Parliament that cares about competition and innovation. It would also require stable and predictable supply chains, as well as local production. Free trade is great, but it requires reciprocity of standards, because we are importing products treated with pesticides that are banned in Canada. When the pandemic hit, obviously, supply chains broke down. This would be part of the solution.

Today's motion gives us an opportunity to talk about and debate food prices. Food is the second highest household expense item. Unfortunately, however, I have my doubts that filling office towers with public servants to control prices is an appropriate way to address a situation that deserves a considerable amount of our attention.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I know that the member did not talk about nutrition north in his intervention very much, but that has been the focus of my debate. There are constituents of members of the Bloc Party who can have access to the nutrition north program, and I am specifically talking about the Inuit communities in Nunavik. I wonder what he has to say about the nutrition north program's not having a positive impact on the Inuit communities in Nunavik.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleague for her relevant and important question.

Obviously, we agree on this aspect of the NDP's motion. We need to recognize the geographic uniqueness of communities, particularly in the Far North and in the territories. Indeed, increasing funding for these programs responds to a request from the communities. Obviously, the Bloc Québécois supports this request.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the initiatives that I think we have not talked much about is the food price data hub. I find it quite interesting that we can actually educate consumers through a data bank that ultimately shows the average price of food. It is personalized to an individual's province, and it is interesting to go through it. I am wondering whether the member could provide his thoughts in regards to having such data banks and how they could be of benefit, especially when competition is not where it should be.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, of course, giving customers more information means giving them a tool that allows them to do the best they can. However, given the state of competition in Canada, this information will let consumers see they are being gouged and paying too much.

We can go ahead and create all sorts of databases and give the price range for a grocery item on a portal, but if the lowest price on the portal is still too high, that means there is a competition problem. Adding a tool to diagnose the problem will not necessarily solve the problem. We have to address the lack of competition, make Canada attractive for investors and make it possible for the commissioner of competition to do his work freely and with fewer barriers.

I think that, after that, if the hon. member for Winnipeg-North develops his database, he will notice a drop in prices.

● (1150)

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, my Bloc colleague gave an excellent speech.

Certainly I agree with the member when he talked about the comparison of the solution being taxation or more competition. Obviously I would support more competition. However, would he not also agree that a percentage of a higher number results in a higher number? For example, the retailers claim that they have maintained their margins throughout the whole pandemic, yet of course with the rising costs, their profits have come to record levels on a nominal basis. Therefore, would not an additional solution, besides more competition, be the removal of costs in our supply chain, like the carbon tax, like other tariffs that impact farmers, and things of that nature?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, we have spent three minutes without talking about the carbon tax. I think that is a record. I thank my colleague for reminding us of his political position.

We can work on the production costs of groceries, but the Conservatives always lean toward the most polluting option. There are many ways to reduce the costs of groceries. There are many sources of taxation. There are zoning issues that are provincial. Most of these things are not provincial. However, let us be clear, all that interests the Conservatives is oil.

I think that impeding the fight against climate change is no way to increase competition in a market where the profit margin is more than double what it is in the United States. That is a false solution.

The Conservatives are trying to deceive the people by trying to make them believe that axing the carbon tax will solve all of humanity's problems. I think these people should start working on a serious political platform that is more complex and more adapted to the complex world we are living in now.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday evening we were debating a Conservative amendment to a Standing Committee on Finance re-

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port. This amendment sought to revive the proposal we had voted against just a few hours earlier, the miracle solution of the tax holiday that would last all summer. The taxes would resume once the House was back in session, just in time for us to collectively complain about their return.

Earlier yesterday, we were debating the simplistic solution to the fight against high grocery prices, because, as we know, in addition to solving all the world's ills, world hunger, the cancer and AIDS epidemics and all other problems, axing the tax on carbon will also guarantee more affordable food prices for all. In fact, if we abolish the carbon tax, food costs would go down to zero and everyone would eat for free.

A day after the Conservatives' simplistic motion, we are studying a simplistic motion moved by the NDP. We are shifting from a tax break to a price cap. I will read the NDP motion, as I will be talking about the three proposals it contains. There are some good ideas in there, but the Bloc Québécois cannot support it as a whole. It reads as follows:

That, given that the cost of food continues to increase while grocery giants such as Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys make record profits, the House call on the government to:

- (a) force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a price cap or other measures;
- (b) stop delaying long-needed reforms to the Nutrition North program; and
- (c) stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers.

The first thing is the basic wording, “That, given that the cost of food continues to increase while grocery giants make record profits”. We all agree on that. However, we run into the same problem that we saw with the Conservatives. They focus on the perfectly legitimate public anger, but then offer simplistic solutions instead of truly addressing the root of the problem.

Let us begin with point (a): “force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a price cap”. Say we support it. Now I would want to know how we are supposed to do this. Is there a how-to manual? How do we go about imposing a cap on the price of bread, for example, when wheat prices are negotiated at the Toronto Stock Exchange? How do we go about imposing a cap on the price of fresh vegetables, when prices are skyrocketing mainly because of crop losses due to drought or flooding, which are caused by climate change?

Unlike the Conservatives, the NDP does believe in climate change. However, the NDP continues to support the budgetary policies introduced by the Liberals, who are always giving handouts to oil companies, even though they contribute more to climate change than any other sector.

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How do we force farmers to lower their prices when the price of nitrogen fertilizer has quadrupled? The price per tonne jumped from \$250 to \$1,000 between 2020 and 2022. How do we force a Californian produce grower to sell their broccoli cheaper in Canada than in the United States? Does the NDP think it can wave a magic wand and cap prices without creating shortages?

Point (a) is impractical and unfeasible, which is already reason enough for the Bloc Québécois to vote against the motion, despite the good intentions behind it.

Now, let us look at the enhancement of the nutrition north program. I will start by saying that this is a good measure. Since 2011, nutrition north has subsidized grocers in the far north to compensate for the high cost of transportation and lower the price of groceries. However, the program does not fully compensate for the high costs, which are due not just to transportation costs but also to low volumes and higher operating costs. Considering that the average income in the Inuit community is around \$23,000 a year, which is shockingly low, it is clear that food insecurity must be a widespread problem.

• (1155)

Businesses offer workers from outside the community a golden bridge to encourage them to work in the north. The income of non-indigenous individuals is approximately \$95,000 a year, according to a study by Gérard Duhaime, a professor at Université Laval with whom I rubbed shoulders in a previous life.

We agree with that part of the motion. If that was all the motion contained, both my colleague from Mirabel and I would have given very short speeches, two minutes at most. We would merely have said that we supported the motion. Unfortunately, all the rest of it dilutes and undermines the proposal's credibility.

The third point calls on the government to “stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers”. The only thing we want to know is what that is referring to. The NDP often talks about a subsidy that Loblaw received a few years ago to replace its refrigerators with more energy-efficient models. That in itself is no scandal. I think we all aspire to that.

Besides that, the only handout I see the Liberals and Conservatives giving big grocers is their inaction. By doing nothing, by remaining silent and not taking action, they are giving them an indirect handout. In fact, there are no subsidy programs specifically for grocers, apart from nutrition north, for which the NDP is asking for more funding today. The NDP supports the only subsidy that exists. It is asking the government to enhance and improve the program, and that is what we are asking for as well.

As mentioned earlier, the companies that are really gorging on subsidies are the oil companies. In the past two years, the federal government has given them subsidy after subsidy. That was always the case, but it did not stop when the infamous coalition agreement with the NDP was signed. The tax breaks set out in all the budgets and economic statements will total \$83 billion by 2035. That is more than \$2,000 per capita, or almost \$4,000 per taxpayer. The NDP keeps supporting every budget, every economic statement and every appropriation, no questions asked, in the name of an agreement to further intrude on Quebec's jurisdictions.

This spring, Parliament has been seized with bills C-59 and C-69. Today, the Standing Committee on Finance is voting as part of the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-69. They could be at it until midnight tonight. It provides \$48 billion in tax breaks mostly for the oil companies. Does the NDP support that? The answer is yes.

Since I only have two minutes left, I will finish my speech quickly. I will try to talk as fast as an auctioneer at those events we all occasionally attend in our ridings.

That being said, there is a real problem. I must emphasize that. The grocery industry is dominated by a handful of moguls, namely Loblaw, Sobeys and Metro. In 2022 alone, these three companies, the most affluent companies in the sector, reported over \$100 billion in sales and drew in profits exceeding \$3.6 billion. Yes, there is a competition problem. Small entrepreneurs have a hard time breaking into the market, since the grocery giants control everything. With a mixture of astonishment and consternation, we are seeing the growing concentration in the sector make it harder and harder for new entrants to break into the market or expand, making competition almost non-existent.

According to a 2023 Competition Bureau report, a grocery sector strategy is urgently needed. If the Liberals and Conservatives are giving these giants any handouts, it is by not having a strategy. That is the handout.

Let us agree on the fact that there are several possible solutions. We need to make it easier for foreign investors to enter the market. We need to increase the number of independent grocers. We also need to have clearer and more harmonized requirements for unit pricing. We also need to take measures to discourage, or even prohibit, property controls in the grocery sector. These controls restrict competing grocers from leasing space in the same building. They make opening new grocery stores much more difficult, if not impossible, and this reduces competition in our communities.

Why is competition so important? It is the backbone of the economy. Simplistic solutions are not the answer. The answer is more competition in the grocery sector.

• (1200)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):
Madam Speaker, I am always happy to listen to my colleague.

The French government forced big companies to lower prices on approximately 5,000 grocery items. This approach was copied by South Korea and Greece for other tools and other measures.

Does my colleague agree with what the NDP is proposing today, namely the approach of using government measures and tools to lower the price of essential foods and forcing companies to lower their prices, like France, Greece and South Korea did?

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Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I do not wish to repeat everything I already said, but in my remarks, I highlighted several completely unrealistic aspects concerning prices that have nothing to do with public will, but rather result from all sorts of factors, including wheat prices, which are determined in Chicago, or vegetable prices, which are going up because of climate change. There are plenty of similar examples to show that, all in all, this proposal is unrealistic. The problem, unlike in South Korea or France, is the concentration in our grocery sector. That is the real issue. It is concentrated among a handful of grocery giants.

My colleague's proposal consists of putting in place an interim, temporary solution because the situation has reached alarming levels and something has to be done. All right, but if we do that without attacking the structural, central, permanent problem, which is the growing monopolies in this sector, there will always be a problem with prices, unless the proposed price cap is permanent, which no one seems to be suggesting today.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suspect the issue of caps has a lot to do with the supply end and with the end result. My question to the member is in regard to the idea of enhanced competition. We did have six large grocery companies. Shoppers was the last one that folded into Loblaw. In part, that sent a very strong message in itself, and it was one reason we had to change and to modernize the Competition Act.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on the important role that the Competition Act and the commission play in ensuring that there is stability in prices.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that this act is important and needs to be updated. Clearly, Houston, we have a problem.

If there are indeed only six large grocery companies, this strikes me as an indictment of the act in question. It goes without saying that this is part of the the issue. Sometimes I feel like the answer is already in the question, and this is one of those times.

When the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry tours the planet in hopes of wooing investors and gets no response, we know there is a problem. Competition is the key. Nevertheless, I think this is a pretty striking example that shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the status quo is not working.

● (1205)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to the other point in the motion my colleague talked about, which is to “stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers”. We saw this under the Harper government. They took a hands-off approach, and it cost the average Canadian family \$400 for groceries, which they should not have had to pay. As we saw with the Liberals, the total comes to \$25 million.

Does my colleague agree with the NDP that all these government subsidies and handouts to the big grocery chains should be terminated, whether the government is Conservative or Liberal?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, there was a subsidy a few years ago to upgrade refrigerators to more energy-efficient models. I do not think that that is a scandal. The idea itself is a good one. Honestly, I am not an expert in the exact subsidy that was given, but I think that the idea is good. We all agree that we should promote more energy-efficient practices.

That being said, there is no subsidy specifically for big grocers at this time. There are none. The only one that exists is nutrition north Canada, which the NDP wants to see increased, and we agree. The only subsidy that exists is aimed at helping Northern Canadians.

If there is a handout, it lies in the Liberals' and Conservatives' inaction.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, before I start my speech, I would like to send my best and happiest birthday wishes to my son, Robin. I love him so much, and I am excited to see him again sometime soon.

With respect to the nutrition north program, I thank the NDP for this opposition day motion to bring to light why we have been making efforts to have it overhauled. The inaction by the Liberals has compelled the NDP to make sure that during this debate we talk about the inadequacy of the program.

To give a bit of history, the nutrition north program replaced a food mail program, which at the time paid, directly to consumers, the cost of shipping nutritious perishable food and essential items by air to isolated and northern communities. It was originally a program that gave subsidies directly to consumers. This program was changed to the nutrition north program by the Conservative government. When Conservatives replaced the food mail program with the nutrition north program, they made it abundantly clear that they preferred to support corporate greed. The subsidy changed from helping regular people afford food to giving millions to corporations like The North West Company. The North West Company receives 51% of the subsidy. In total, about 125 of its stores use tax dollars to put profits into their pockets in communities where food insecurity is the highest.

After Conservatives changed the program, the Liberals have not done much better. They have allowed this Conservative-created program to keep supporting corporate greed. Since I was elected in 2021, I have stood in the House time and time again to ask the Liberal government to make changes to the nutrition north program. I have asked 17 times what it will do to help alleviate poverty by improving the program. I have asked about expired food arriving in communities. In effect, the Co-ops were paying cargo fees for nutritious food to arrive in their communities, only to have it taken directly from the airport to the dump.

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The response from the Minister of Northern Affairs was that the Liberal government increased its tax dollars going to corporate greed. It added \$163.5 million to address food insecurity in the north. A study showed that for every dollar in the subsidy, only a third was used; the rest went to corporate greed. The North West Company received about \$67 million from the nutrition north program. These tax dollars are supposed to help alleviate poverty.

In a written question to the Liberal government, I asked what quality assurance mechanisms were in place to ensure that perishable goods from all sources reach their final retail destination prior to their best before date.

The response states, “Nutrition North Canada does not implement or enforce quality assurance mechanisms on retailers and suppliers. Registered retailers and suppliers are responsible for managing the logistics of their respective supply chains, and Nutrition North Canada’s subsidy helps to reduce the selling price of food for customers by offsetting considerable operational costs. Any grocery retailers regardless of location will have product which cannot be sold related to dating, as its normal part of the operation.” It further states, “Nutrition North Canada does not implement or enforce quality assurance mechanisms on retailers and suppliers.”

● (1210)

Given the lack of informed responses from the Liberal Minister of Northern Affairs, I was compelled to call on the CEO of The North West Company, the CEOs of Northern Airways and the CEO of a local co-operative in Kimmirut, the Kimik Co-Op.

During that session at the indigenous and northern affairs committee, we revealed that The North West Company CEO made over a million dollars in bonuses in 2023, on top of the \$3 million and \$5 million bonuses he had received in 2022 and 2021. Meanwhile, salaries for workers in Iqaluit, like cashiers, are only at \$37,000 a year. This might sound like a lot to southern Canada, but this means that those workers are living below the poverty rate.

Amautit Nunavut Inuit Women’s Association recently released Nunavut’s first-ever report card on child poverty. In it, they urged immediate action. They reported that Nunavut families continue to grapple with food insecurity and continue to experience barriers to nutritious and culturally relevant food. In their report, they state that while there is no figure for Nunavut, Ontario’s threshold for poverty is \$45,324. The report showed that in 2021, Nunavut had the highest child poverty rate under 18 at 35.8%, compared to all other jurisdictions.

I have been told that the nutrition north program is not working, over and over again. It took me almost three years, due to the size of Nunavut, to reach all the 25 fly-in communities I represent. In each community, the biggest issue was always housing, but close to the biggest issue of housing, the cost of groceries was always at the top of a list of issues for Nunavummiut to be able to thrive.

All the time, they share the prices of food, and whenever I have been in the communities, I have checked the prices myself. In Kimmirut, at the Kimik Co-Op and at the Northern store, in that same day, I compared the prices of eggs that were offered. The price of a dozen eggs at the Co-op Kimik store was \$3.99. I think that is comparable to southern prices. In that same community, on that same

day, the price of a dozen eggs at The North West Company store was \$6.49. That is almost a \$3 difference.

When the Minister of Northern Affairs says that parts of the program are working, it is due to the local Co-ops taking advantage of the program the way they are supposed to, in order to reduce prices of nutritious food. It is the local Co-ops in Nunavut communities that are helping their communities to afford quality food. Corporations like The North West Company are not helping to alleviate the cost of food.

One final comment I wanted to make is about the carbon tax. Nunavut is exempt from carbon tax on aviation fuel. As I said earlier, all 25 communities are fly-in communities. When groceries are being flown to communities, there is no carbon tax on the groceries that are being flown in, which can be attributed to the cost of shipping nutritious food to Nunavummiut.

I welcome the opportunity to answer questions.

● (1215)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did an analysis, following publicly available data from credible sources. It said that the impact of the carbon tax on a loaf of bread in a jurisdiction where the federal plan applies is 0.2¢ a loaf.

With that, I will ask the hon. member whether the Conservatives need to be called out on the narrative they continue to spin, which is that somehow the carbon tax is responsible for high food prices and maybe the corporate profits.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, the NDP has been calling out the Conservatives on their disinformation to Canadians. As I said, when it comes to the fly-in communities that this program is supposed to support, all flights going to Nunavut are exempt from carbon tax, so we cannot attribute the increased cost of food to the carbon tax.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as far as the cost of living in northern communities, while aviation fuel might be exempt from the carbon tax, what about the cost of fuel for transportation from the stores back to people’s homes? I imagine people in northern communities live further away from grocery stores.

How much does the carbon tax impact that cost? Does that increase the cost of living in northern Canada?

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, I can only speak to how things work in Nunavut. As I said, all the communities I represent are fly-in communities. It has taken me almost three years to get to all of them.

When I see the efforts of the nutrition north program being used properly by businesses like local co-ops, those kinds of programs can work if they are used the way they are intended to be used. The Liberal government is not doing its job, which is to make improvements to the Conservative-created program.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, *qujan-namiik* to my colleague from Nunavut, with whom I was pleased to work on the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

I am happy that we are talking a little about the north today. Rural and remote communities, in particular indigenous and Inuit communities, often face difficulties due to their geographical remoteness.

My colleague touched on the issue of housing. Obviously, we are talking about nutrition. This is nothing new. People in the north have been dealing with this issue for decades. Of course, when the entire population sees that there is a problem, our instinct is to tackle it head on. However, potential solutions have already been proposed for the north.

I would like to hear more from my colleague about this issue and what she has to say about nutrition north Canada. Concerning the question of food security, does my colleague have other solutions to propose for regions like hers and mine?

• (1220)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, I very much enjoyed working with the member when she was at the indigenous and northern affairs committee.

Great solutions have been provided from reports like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls for action, and the MMIWG's calls for justice. In the other report I mentioned, recommendations were made by Amautit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association.

Coming from the NDP, my colleague from Winnipeg Centre has a great bill, which proposes a universal basic income for people who struggle with reaching at least some threshold of income.

Great work is being done and part of what we could be doing is ensuring that Leah Gazan's bill is supported by all parties.

The Deputy Speaker: I will remind members not to use the proper names of members in the House. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre is what I think the hon. member meant.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need relief from high food prices. We know that across the country, Canadians are struggling. Over the past three years, the cost of food has gone up and up, with increases of over 20%. The use of food banks is at a 35-year high and one in five Canadians is skipping meals.

At the same time that Canadians are struggling, the biggest grocery store chains are making record profits. Loblaws has almost doubled its profit margin in the past five years. Metro has the

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biggest profit margin of any grocery company. Canadians know that they are struggling because of corporate greed, yet the Liberals and the Conservatives are presenting almost nothing when it comes to tackling the issue of price gouging, of corporate greed driving up costs. The Liberals and the Conservatives have failed to protect Canadians. Consumers, more and more, are recognizing that they want a government that has the courage and the conviction to take on these big grocery store giants.

Across Canada, people are boycotting Loblaws, and this is a reaction to government inaction. Despite months of promises, the government has not actually taken meaningful action. To have the Prime Minister ask grocery stores nicely if they would please sign on to a grocery store code of conduct is not how we tackle corporate greed. Instead of going after corporate greed, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are handing out money to these companies. They are feeding the greed of these massive corporations.

The Liberals gave out \$25 million of our taxpayer dollars to Loblaws and to Costco. This was while they were already making massive profits. Pierre Poilievre was in government when the Conservatives—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member knows that we cannot use proper names.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, this is on top of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition was in government when the Conservatives gave out massive corporate handouts, \$2.35 billion, to big grocers, which the Liberals have maintained. We can see very clearly that the Conservatives and the Liberals have been making life easier for the biggest corporations, which makes life harder for everyday Canadians.

It is government's responsibility to make life better for Canadians. It is why we, my NDP colleagues and I, are taking corporate greed head on. We are taking it on when it comes to grocery store chains, when it comes to oil and gas companies and when it comes to the big banks. We have been calling for an excess profit tax on all these sectors. We were able to force the Liberals to implement a one-time tax on the biggest banks, but they refused to extend that to big box stores, to the grocery store chains that are gouging Canadians, while Canadians are going to food banks in record numbers. They refused to put that excess profit tax on the oil and gas companies that are fuelling the climate crisis, while raking in record profits and scaling back their climate commitments.

We need to stop greedy corporations from ripping Canadians off on the food they need. We need a government that takes its responsibility seriously to protect Canadians, whether it is from the greed of grocery store chains, whether it is from the greed of oil and gas companies or the biggest banks that are funding and fuelling the oil and gas companies. These changes are long needed, and Canadians can see clearly that the government is failing.

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Food should be affordable for everyone. The Conservatives and the Liberals have a choice. Will they keep standing with the biggest corporations, with the grocery CEOs who are getting million-dollar bonuses, or are they going to stand with Canadians who need a government that has their back, that will take the action needed to lower food prices?

We are asking the government to force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower their prices of essential foods. If they do not, then the government has to put in place a price cap or use other measures and penalties. We have seen this around the world. France and Greece are taking bold action to ensure that on essential commodities, the things that people need to live, companies cannot drive up the price just to pad their pockets, just to give their CEOs millions of dollars in bonuses and their shareholders billions of dollars in profits.

We know that the biggest grocery store chains have control over some of their prices. They have announced price freezes on store name brands. We saw that with no name products. All of these grocery stores have their own brands. A cap on prices on these items is clearly within their control. However, the government cannot just ask nicely if those grocery stores might please, voluntarily, maybe freeze prices. The government needs to force them to make this change.

So far, the Liberals have promised Canadians that they will stabilize food prices, but they have failed to do it. The Prime Minister has asked the grocery store chains to come up with a plan to lower prices. When asked what would happen if they did not, the Prime Minister said, "If their plan doesn't provide real relief ... then we will—

• (1225)

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe we do not have quorum in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Let us have a quick count. We obviously do not have a quorum right now, so I will have to call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1230)

The Deputy Speaker: We now have quorum.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, it is really clear to me the Conservatives are so afraid to take on corporate greed that they feel they need to use partisan tactics to try to disrupt a clear call to tackle grocery greed and bring down prices for Canadians.

That said, the Liberals have also failed on this front. I was about to read a quote from the Prime Minister, who said, "If their plan doesn't provide real relief...then we will take further action, and we are not ruling anything out, including tax measures."

In the past three years, food prices have increased by more than 20%. We need government action to lower the price of essential food. We know it works. We have seen countries like France and Greece take steps to lower the prices of essential foods. In France, the government secured a deal with 75 major companies to lower the price of groceries for 5,000 products. In Greece, the govern-

ment announced a gross profit cap for key consumer goods and services in the food and health sectors.

In Canada, the government keeps thinking that if we ask nicely enough, big grocery store chains are just going to do it on their own. That is not how corporate greed works. It is not a wild idea; price control measures are being used right now in Canada. Many provincial governments impose limits on rent increases. Prices for most forms of energy, although not gas or refined petroleum products, are already regulated in Canada. The government also committed to forcing big telecom companies to reduce their prices by 25% a couple of years ago.

We can tackle grocery store prices for Canadians. Canadians deserve a government that tackles corporate greed. Unfortunately, what Canadians have is a government that has failed time and time again. It kept in place the corporate handouts the Conservatives put in place. Billions of dollars in taxpayer money has been handed to the biggest corporations.

Today, New Democrats want to lower grocery store prices for Canadians and hold corporations accountable. Will the Liberals and the Conservatives stand with Canadians instead of with the companies that are raking in record profits?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues is that the NDP tends to talk about corporate handouts. The only corporate handout I am aware of was a few years ago, where we provided an incentive, and I believe there were about 45 or 50 applicants, regarding refrigeration. Loblaw was one of the applicants, so we paid up to 25% for it to invest in technological advancements that would reduce emissions.

My question for the member is this: Is the NDP suggesting that when a government comes up with a policy to reduce emissions, the private sector should not be allowed to participate in that type of grant?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, when the companies are making record profits, yes, the government should be forcing them to make the changes to reduce their emissions without handing over taxpayer money. If we actually put in place strong regulations for the oil and gas sector and the grocery stores, we could change behaviour without needing to hand out big fossil fuel subsidies or big subsidies to grocery store chains.

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However, I do want to note that when the Conservatives were in power they cut the corporate tax rate from 22% to 15%, and the Liberals kept that cut in place. That cost Canadian taxpayers approximately \$60 billion in corporate handouts. The Biden administration has proposed increasing the U.S. corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%. Can the member see that a corporate tax rate that benefits the biggest grocery stores, that encourages them not to actually pay their fair share, is a handout to the big companies that are making record profits?

• (1235)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question. If all of the corporate profits were eliminated, set at zero voluntarily or by legislation, if the grocery CEOs received zero compensation and both of those factors were removed from the price of food, would the hon. member across the way deem food to be affordable and priced appropriately?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I feel as if this is the kind of stock definition of a “straw man” argument. No one has said the corporations would maybe be making zero profit. No one has said that the CEOs would be making zero dollars. We are saying that maybe at a time when the biggest corporations are making billions of dollars, when they are raking in record profits and Canadians are going to food banks, just maybe, we deserve a government that will take on corporate greed and lower the prices of everyday essentials for Canadians while they are struggling.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish Conservatives had not tried to disrupt my colleague's inspiring speech with all of their procedural tactics, as they have been doing all day.

The Conservatives, of course, have the most egregious record. We saw them, under the Harper regime, allow bread price fixing that cost the average family \$400. It started right after Harper got elected and continued throughout the Harper regime.

Could my colleague tell us why the Conservatives are so afraid of the drive by the NDP to actually end food price gouging? Why are they so concerned when there is a negative impact on the corporate lobbyists who control their party?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague is right. We have been seeing procedural tactics being used to try to avoid the conversation about tackling corporate greed. That is because the Conservative Party, its members and half of its national governing body, is made up of lobbyists. We have seen that with some of the people who are at the very top of the organization and who are trying to hide their lobbying efforts. Half of its governing body are very openly lobbyists for big pharma, big grocery stores and big oil and gas. This is who the Conservatives are. This is whose backs they have. They have the backs of the biggest corporations, and it is at the expense of everyday Canadians.

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 a privilege to speak on behalf of my constituents in Milton today on the very important issue of grocery prices and all of the affordability challenges that Canadians are facing these days.

I would like to start by stating that I will be splitting my time with the member for Surrey—Newton.

I am happy to respond to some comments made earlier by the hon. Mr. Singh regarding the actions that our government is taking to address food affordability challenges and ensure that all Canadians have access to food and other daily essential goods—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I need to remind members about referring to the proper names of members of the Parliament. This is the third time this has happened in a row and it gives an opportunity for the podium to be inserted into the hon. member's desk.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, I apologize; that was completely unintentional. If you will indulge me, I will start from the top and eliminate the name.

I want to thank the page for the podium here and say that I am very grateful for the opportunity to respond to comments made earlier by the leader of the New Democratic Party regarding the actions that our government is taking to address the very real food affordability challenges that Canadians are experiencing. That includes my neighbours, friends and family in Milton, Ontario.

We have an obligation to ensure that all Canadians have access to food and other daily essential goods. I said yesterday in the House of Commons that it is not as though Canadians can simply buy less food. Food is an essential item and needs to be affordable in our country.

Our government has been actively engaged and committed to improving affordability across the board with the view to alleviating the financial stress that is placed on Canadians. While we are doing that, we are addressing the growing costs of essential goods, including groceries. That requires a very strong consumer advocacy sector as well as timely and independent research on consumer issues. That is why our government is targeting enhanced support for Canadian consumers through additional investments in consumer advocacy work.

Yesterday I was talking about the value and the potential for more ombudspersons in the grocery sector to do research and conduct a bit of introspection with respect to why grocery prices are so high these days. Everybody seems to have a theory or some kind of an idea as to why grocery prices are inflated, but there are different reasons, and very complex reasons actually, because everything we shop for at the grocery store comes from somewhere else these days.

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We announced in October 2023 that our government would be tripling our investment in Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's contributions program for non-profit consumer and voluntary organizations. That program's funding was increased to \$5 million annually. The additional funds are allowing organizations which advocate directly for the rights of consumers to examine existing and emerging business practices that can be harmful to Canadians, while also recommending actions to improve affordability, increase grocery competition and build on existing government efforts to promote and protect the interests of Canadian consumers.

It is absolutely and abundantly clear that grocery chains in Canada have taken advantage of consumers at various times. The very fact that we have an uncompetitive, consumerist and capitalistic approach to selling food, an essential item in this country, raises eyebrows. As somebody who grew up in non-profit housing, I have to wonder whether there is not more space for non-profit groceries. That is not to suggest that we would not support the workers in those stores, and we would certainly continue to support agriculture workers, farmers and food producers. However, there is a lot of value in removing profit from the essentials.

As a co-op kid, I never hesitate to talk about the value of non-profits. There is one non-profit organization in my riding about whose incredible work I would like to speak: Food for Life, a local charity and organization, a community-serving group that rescues food. In fact, it purchased a couple of refrigerated trucks with support from the federal government. That means that people from the organization can arrive at a grocery store they have contracts with, and before food comes off the shelf and goes into the landfill, the Food for Life experts go in and remove food from the shelves.

Food for Life is supporting the affordability for Canadians on two levels. One, the disposal of food costs grocery stores a lot of money, so they can actually eliminate that cost, which would be passed on to the consumers who shop at the store. Also, the organization is removing high-quality food that will not be sold for one reason or another. I have a lot of feelings about best-before dates. My partner and I often argue about what food has gone bad. I am the type of person who cuts a bit of mould off cheese, grates up the cheese and puts it on my pasta. It does not bother me too much. Perhaps my partner feels a bit differently about cheese mould.

Food for Life and the experts there do an amazing job rescuing food, putting it on shelves, packaging it, storing it and freezing it, and they actually have two free grocery stores. It always raises eyebrows when I tell people that my riding, my region, has two free grocery stores. Anybody back home listening can google "Food for Life in Halton". People can drop by one of their grocery stores. They have excellent variety: fruit, vegetables, meat, bread and all the essentials.

All that the experts at Food for Life ask for is just a tiny bit of information, nothing terribly intrusive, just so they can continue to serve our community better. I am proud to say that I am a monthly donor to Food for Life. Anybody who is interested can examine the pathway of food waste and how we can redirect food waste toward people who really need it. I just want to stress that the invaluable, incredible work of Food for Life Canada in Halton is doing just that.

• (1240)

Let us go back to some of the projects that our government is funding to further explore barriers to grocery competition in the Canadian context. We have assisted in funding some studies that were completed by the Competition Bureau. It reported that existing barriers in the Canadian grocery sector context include "restrictive covenants" and "property controls", and retail contracts that limit our control on how real estate is used by competing players in the grocery industry.

Our government is committed to reiterating our commitments to enhancing affordability for Canadians, as demonstrated by our investment through budget 2024. We understand the cost pressures that Canadian families are facing, and they often start with the price of food. That is why budget 2024 launched a national school food program in Canada, the first of its kind, and it will help ensure that more than 400,000 children have access to healthy meals and snacks, so they can remain focused on learning and growing while in class.

I have visited a lot of amazing school food programs. They basically do boxes where they take snacks out of packaging and create little hampers that go to the classrooms. That is to ensure there is a healthy snack available to any kid who might be a little hungry.

There are a lot of reasons a student might be a little hungry, or having a snack attack. It might be because they forgot their lunch at home. It might be because their banana got squished in their bag and they did not want to eat it. It could be because of time poverty; some families just run out of time. Sometimes we forget our lunch. Sometimes it is an affordability challenge and sometimes it is a time poverty issue. Sometimes it is a convenience issue. However, none of those reasons should get in the way of making sure a young kid or student has access to a healthy snack.

I want to give Halton Food for Thought a shout-out and Food4Kids Halton, as they are amazing organizations. The volunteers, the teachers and the parents who show up, and everybody who purchases food for or donates food to these programs, are all saints and I just want to say I appreciate them.

A national school food program will nationalize that and ensure that it does not always just rely on goodwill, donations and volunteers. We are going to ensure that all schools have access to it. It is definitely the case that schools in higher-income neighbourhoods tend to have more volunteers, and they often have more services. We do not want schools in lower, more modest-income neighbourhoods or communities to not have access to these essential programs.

I am really glad that our government is taking the extraordinary step of starting a national school food program. I think 400,000 kids is a lot of kids, and that is a great program and a great way to ensure that young people and students are not going hungry while they are in class.

Our government also believes that a lack of competition in Canada's grocery sector means that Canadians will ultimately pay higher prices to feed themselves and their families. We have actually seen that. It was not that long ago that Loblaw Companies sent out, in Ontario at least, those little \$25 gift cards to anybody who went online and signed up. That was sort of its sorry for fixing the price of bread for over a decade. There was a big lawsuit and Loblaw basically said, "Sorry, we were fixing the price of bread. We will make amends by sending everybody 25 bucks."

As sort of an act of protest, I spent my \$25 at Loblaws. I remember doing that, but I think that did not really make up for the fact that it was working against customers. Where we shop is democratic: With our dollars, we want to support companies that have the best interests of their consumers in mind. I believe in customer service and I also believe that companies have a duty to respect their customers. It would be great to see more of that.

Let us go back to some of the significant efforts the Liberals have deployed to ensure that Canada's competition laws are fit for the modern economy. We have also brought forward important amendments to the Competition Act through Bill C-56, and that is the affordable housing and groceries act. These amendments would give further enforcement powers to the Competition Bureau to prevent anti-competitive mergers and to address competition-stifling practices in large dominant players.

It is clear when there is not enough competition in a market. If there is only one store in a community, then it can basically charge whatever it wants. Even when there is more than one store, we can see some of the unfair corporate practices that target more vulnerable communities. Oftentimes, there is a smaller store, like a Shoppers Drug Mart or a convenience store, that is within walking distance to affordable housing. However, with some of the bigger stores, the more discount grocery stores, people require a vehicle to get to them.

In some of those smaller stores, we will see a higher price for the exact same item. I have seen it myself. A can of tomato soup is \$2.49 at Shoppers Drug Mart, but if one goes to a No Frills, and it is on for \$1.29. Both stores happen to be owned by the same company, so that is an unfair practice. I am not going to be convinced that the shelf cost of an item in one store versus another is actually double.

• (1245)

Finally, our government has made it a priority to maintain something called the food price data hub to give Canadians up-to-date and detailed information on food prices to help them make informed decisions about their grocery options. I am happy to elaborate on the food price data hub in a question.

• (1250)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is still not clear to me whether Liberals are going to sup-

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port the motion. I will review that the motion is composed of three parts. One is to force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a price cap or other measures, for example, an excess profit tax. The second is to stop delaying the long-needed reforms to the nutrition north program. My colleague from Nunavut spoke very eloquently about how money is being poured into nutrition north, but much of that money is going to the CEO's pay and profits rather than reducing the cost of essential foods to northerners. The third is to stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers. This has happened a number of times.

Are the Liberals supporting the motion and will they bring an end to the corporate handouts that have been given to companies like Loblaws over the last few years in the amount of over \$25 million?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I support any and all measures to ensure affordability for Canadians, but I also want thoughtful debate in this House about how we should do it. Just saying the federal government should force a company to do something does not indicate how we might get there. We have heard the New Democratic Party say we should force a company to do this, force a company to do that a lot, but there are not a lot of tangible suggestions in terms of what types of incentives, disincentives or methods that our government could possibly use to force a company to do one thing or another.

We need to find sustainable, durable solutions, not a one-time tax. That is not a policy change, that is just retribution and punishment. I am frustrated, too. Food costs too much in Canada, but I want a solution that is going to feed into the future and make sure we always have affordable food in Canada. I brought forward ideas like non-profits, food rescue programs, more data and more research. These are all durable solutions to the food insecurity crisis that Canadians are experiencing. These one-time tax ideas of enforcing this and enforcing that are not really great policy.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague touched on data, as far as figuring out what Canadians need when it comes to carbon emissions, cost and affordability in Canada.

I am wondering why the member and his government are concealing the results of the \$8-billion net accelerator fund. I wonder why they are calling it cabinet confidence when all Conservatives are asking about is the target and how much emissions were reduced by that \$8-billion slush fund.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, once again, we are seeing an attempt by the Conservatives to conflate the affordability crisis with climate action and targets that we are using to lower emissions in Canada.

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The carbon emissions that are the responsibility of various sectors across the board have all been on the way down, whether it is in the transport sector, the agriculture sector, the grocery sector or the health care sector. These are all large emissions-producing industries, as is the steel industry in my riding. Yes, we invested in the steel industry to ensure that we get coal out of the mix with respect to how we produce steel in this country.

We need to build Canada, we need to help the world build up, and that is going to require Canadian ingenuity and innovation.

Mr. Dan Mazier: How many emissions does that reduce?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I find it difficult to answer the question when my colleague opposite will not let me finish.

The truth is we have to invest in Canada to make it cleaner and greener and assist some of the big sectors with those innovations. In the case of Dofasco in Hamilton, when I went to McMaster, I saw the billowing smoke from those coal-fired stacks. In a couple of years, they will be a thing of the past because of our government's investments and interventions. Some of that innovation we should celebrate, not fight over.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to participate in this debate on the NDP motion submitted by the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford in relation to the price of essential foods and the conduct of grocery giants, such as Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys.

The proposed motion is timely, because by voting in favour of Bill C-59 last week, this House approved the latest initiative in the government's comprehensive modernization of the Competition Act. The relevant clauses were approved unanimously, showing the strong consensus here in this chamber on these issues.

The truth of the matter is that the government has been extremely active in promoting competition in all sectors of the economy, including in the grocery retail industry. It begins with resourcing. In budget 2021, the government increased the Competition Bureau's budget by \$96 million over five years and \$27.5 million ongoing thereafter. The increase in resources was a much needed boost to the bureau's capacity, and in its own words, "These funds enhance our ability to enforce the law and advocate for more competition. They help ensure we have the right tools to deal with Canada's competition challenges now and in the future."

Needless to say, law enforcement will not be effective if the enforcers are not able to carry out their tasks, and that is why this extraordinary increase was crucial to the bureau's functioning. The next step had to do with the legal framework under which the bureau operates, the Competition Act, which was aging and falling short compared to our international partners.

Through the 2022 budget bill, Bill C-19, we took the first step in remedying this, correcting some of the obvious issues. This included criminalizing wage-fixing agreements, allowing private parties to seek an order for abuse of a dominant position and raising maximum penalty amounts to be based on the benefits of anti-competitive conduct. This ensures that sanctions would no longer be a mere slap on the wrist for today's largest economic actors.

The government knew, however, that much more remained to be done. Where the solutions were less readily obvious, the minister turned to the public process, launching a comprehensive public consultation on the future of Canada's competition policy. The process ran from November 2022 through March 2023.

In response to a consultation paper released by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, over 500 responses were received. This consisted of over 130 from identified stakeholders like academics, businesses, practitioners and non-government organizations.

While this feedback was being received, government officials also met with stakeholders in round table groups, allowing them to voice their views and to interact with each other as well. Stakeholders were not shy about sharing their opinions with us. They knew what sorts of outcomes they wanted to be delivered.

There was no shortage of proposals made, some highly concrete and detailed, others more directional in nature. What we heard, however, is that Canadians wanted more competition. Across many domains, the desire to strengthen the law, to enable the bureau to act and to align with international counterparts was evident.

Of course, many also expressed reservations about ensuring we get the details right and warned about overcorrection. The government took those to heart as well, taking inspiration from examples in other jurisdictions and recognizing the careful balancing that must be done when developing new legislation.

● (1255)

All told, the results of the consultation can be seen in two pieces of government legislation.

First, Bill C-56, the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act, was adopted in December 2023. It took some of the largest issues off the table. It eliminated the "efficiency exception", which allowed anti-competition mergers to withstand challenge. It revised the law on abuse of dominant position to open up new avenues for a remedial order. It broadened the types of collaboration the bureau can examine, including those that are not formed between direct competitors. It established a framework for the bureau to conduct marketing studies, including the possibility of production orders to compel information. Work on this last amendment is already under way, as the bureau has announced an intention to launch a study into the passenger air travel industry.

Business of Supply

Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act, 2023, is the second legislative effort following the consultation. As we know, it is currently before the Senate, and the government looks forward to its quick adoption. The amendments to the Competition Act that it contains are incredibly comprehensive. I will provide some of the highlights.

The bill makes critical amendments to merger notification and review to ensure that the bureau is aware of the most important deals and would be able to take action before it is too late. It significantly revamps the enforcement framework to strengthen provisions dealing with anti-competitive agreements, and it broadens the private enforcement framework so that more people could bring their own cases before the Competition Tribunal for a wider variety of reasons; in some cases, they could even be eligible for a financial award.

Bill C-59 also helps address important government priorities by making it harder to engage in “greenwashing”, which is the questionable or false representation of a product or a business’s environmental benefits. It facilitates useful environmental collaboration that might otherwise have been unlawful. It helps to make repair options more available for consumers by ensuring that refusals to provide the necessary means can be reviewed and remedied as needed.

Finally, overall, Bill C-59 makes a number of critical but often technical updates throughout the law to remove enforcement obstacles and make sure that the entire system runs smoothly.

I cannot overstate how important these measures are. The competition commissioner has referred to this as a “generational” transformation. It is by far the most significant update to the law since the amendments in 2009, following the recommendations of the competition policy review panel; arguably, it is the most comprehensive rewrite of the Competition Act since it first came into effect in 1986. Our world has changed since then, and it became clear that the law needed to keep pace to enable institutions that can oversee fast-changing markets and landscapes.

After the passage of Bill C-59, we can guarantee that our competition law will work for Canadians in markets such as the one under scrutiny here, as well as the many other markets throughout our economy.

I am thankful for having been given the opportunity to share a few words.

• (1300)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I realize that the member did not talk about it in his intervention, but I will ask him about the nutrition north program.

Amautiit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association, which I mentioned earlier, reported that the child poverty rate for Nunavut is 35.8%. That is a startling poverty rate in Canada.

Another statistic is that the North West Company CEO's salary was \$3.91 million. The nutrition north program gave \$64 million in tax dollars to the North West Company to alleviate poverty in the north.

It is obvious that nutrition north is not working. Does the member agree that the Liberal government needs to stop delaying the reform of nutrition north and that it must act now to help alleviate poverty in Nunavut?

• (1305)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, our government has invested and increased the budget by over \$150 million to help northerners. Our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that 100% of the retail subsidy is directly passed on to northerners.

Prices are too high in the north. We have worked, and will continue to work, with territorial governments, indigenous partners and people who live in the north and the Arctic to make more progress.

Progress has been made, but there is a lot more work to be done. We are committed to doing it.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member was just talking about some \$100 million that was put into a fund.

This morning the Auditor General, in a report, talked about the misuse of funds in the Sustainable Development Technology Canada fund, saying that it is almost a slush fund. This is given that \$123 million worth of contracts were found to have been given inappropriately, with \$59 million of those being given to projects that never should have been awarded any money in the first place.

The member is talking about the appropriation of those funds for a good purpose, but could he comment on how he thinks the funds in the technology process, which the Auditor General just announced today, should have been used?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member, who has been a good friend for many years.

In terms of the bills I already mentioned, whether it is Bill C-56 or Bill C-59, we are going to make sure that they bring in legislative measures and give more powers to the bureau and the controllers. In that way, they will be able to control those subsidies, including the one that the hon. member is talking about.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in its motion, the NDP calls on the government to “stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers”. I wonder whether the member knows what the NDP is referring to, because to my knowledge, there are no subsidy programs specifically for grocers. Obviously, there is the nutrition north program, but the NDP is proposing to boost that program's funding, for valid reasons.

In my opinion, the true fat cats pocketing federal handouts are the oil companies. Big oil makes billions of dollars in profits a year and still receives taxpayer money in the form of government handouts.

Business of Supply

That is why I am wondering which subsidy program the NDP is referring to. Can the government member tell me if he knows what the NDP is talking about?

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, we can talk about subsidies; particularly, the hon. member mentioned the north. When it comes to northern communities, we all know that the prices are high. To help, our government has invested the \$150 million I mentioned. Those are the monies that will go to charities, food banks and other northern organizations so that people will be able to benefit; the people of the north will be able to benefit through those subsidies.

• (1310)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise in support of our NDP motion, which reads:

That, given that the cost of food continues to increase while grocery giants such as Loblaws, Metro and Sobeyes make record profits, the House call on the government to:

- (a) force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a price cap or other measures;
- (b) stop delaying long-needed reforms to the Nutrition North program; and
- (c) stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers.

I am in support of this motion, because what Canadians are experiencing across the country, and in particular in my riding of Edmonton Griesbach, is truly heartbreaking. In my time in my community, I often speak to seniors, young people and those who are doing everything right, but they find that they are continuing to fall further behind. We know that the Liberals' consistent delay in action is truly costing Canadians, not just in their ability to feed themselves, but in so many ways, such as their dignity. On the Conservative side, they like to deflect from the point that corporations are gouging Canadians by reducing all of their fears, their woes and the reality of our economy down to slogans.

However, this is an immensely serious issue that is facing Canadians, and we must have the courage to call out corporations that continue to put this immense greed ahead of the very basic dignity of all Canadians. One in five Canadians is now skipping a meal. Food banks have never been used at the rate they are being used, in the last 35 years. As a matter of fact, the price of food has now reached over 20% of the cost in the last three years. We must be able to control the immense appetite of these corporations that have largely used the postpandemic period, this crisis that Canadians are facing, for their own particular benefit.

We do not have to look all that far in Canada's own history to see that private megacorporations always do the same thing when crisis hits. They jack up the prices. They force those who need those supports most, and they hurt them. They do that because their shareholders are not necessarily concerned about the outcome for regular Canadians. They do not have to ever feel the pain of people who have to look their child in the eye and know that they will not get a meal because they have given it to the child. They will not ever feel the pain of people who have to understand that they have to work an extra four hours and maybe miss the concert that their kids are putting on at school because they need that money to make ends meet. These stakeholders are completely absent of the realities facing so many Canadians, so they continue to jack up the prices,

which go higher and higher, so much so that Canadians across the country have now galvanized together to boycott a megacorporation like Loblaws in order to seek their own justice. This is the kind of justice that government should be seeking. This is the kind of justice that these corporations should be subjected to.

Not that long ago, there was a terrible instance that found some of these megacorporations guilty of fixing the price of bread. It is shameful that corporations would fix the price of bread in order to make hand-over-fist profits. We need to have a level of accountability for these corporations.

In addition to this corporate greed, not only should these companies be held to account, but we also see that consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments continue to allow it, and also reward that level of greed. For example, when the Conservatives were in power, they gave \$2.35 billion in corporate handouts to big grocery chains, which is shameful.

It gets even worse, because Canadians were promised, in 2015, a systemic change, that justice was going to come to Canada, but what we have seen is more of the same, as the Liberals kept that corporate handout. We do not have to look all that far in our own history. In 2019, for example, we saw a terrible instance where Loblaws needed refrigerators, and guess who paid for it: Canadian taxpayers had to pay for Loblaws' refrigerators. It is shameful. If Canadians had their refrigerators paid for them, imagine that. Imagine that cost alleviated in the household. No, Loblaws got access to a free refrigerator program costing millions of dollars.

• (1315)

These corporate handouts continue and continue, and the Conservatives spend all day trying to convince Canadians that they were never part of the problem, that they have not governed the country for half its existence and that for some reason the problems that we see from the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and today were somehow avoidant of their legislation, avoidant of their priorities, avoidant of holding corporations responsible.

We often hear from the Conservatives that these nine years have been tough. Yes, they have been tough on Canadians. My God, they have been hard, but it did not just come from nine years. It came from generations of critically underfunding the social safety net that Canadians rely on.

The member of Parliament for Nunavut speaks, for example, about the nutrition north program. The nutrition north program is so critical and important, so that we can get a basic level of dignity to those living in the north, but what we see is this complete, abject failure by the government to recognize the humanity of these people: relatives, family members, children, babies. There comes a time when we have to question whether systemic racism and the issues that plague the north are present in this issue, and I would suggest that they are, that Canada's own history of deep colonization has played a role in the direct underfunding of areas that are predominantly indigenous. We know that from the history of the Prairies, and we see that in the nutrition north program.

Business of Supply

Canadians know that the problem is corporate greed. They know it. I will give an example, and I know the Conservatives will love this one, because I will talk about the carbon tax, their favourite thing to talk about. It is all they talk about all day. In my riding, we have a lot of hard-working individuals, people who own trucks. It takes a lot of money to run a truck. On April 1 of last year, the Prime Minister increased the carbon tax by 3¢. Conservatives say this is bad, but Danielle Smith increased it by 4¢ and that is not even with a rebate. As for the 13¢, though, who is getting the 13¢?

I tell those workers that they are getting gouged. They are getting gouged at the pump by those corporations that are making hand-over-fist profits, because, again, their shareholders demand it. They have never filled up their gas tank in their life. They would not even know the number, but Canadians do, because they are pinching every single dollar they have in order to make ends meet.

What we have is a government that is so out of touch that it is failing to recognize that corporate greed plays a role in this. Then it has its buddies, the Conservatives, to back it up on that and continue to deflect from the truth. That is why we have not heard whether there will be support for this motion. That is why no one wants to talk about corporate greed in this place. When New Democrats force a discussion, as we are today, it is imperative that we are honest with Canadians about the real cost of living and the crisis that contributes to it. When corporations are allowed to continue and continue to gouge, when they are allowed to just go unfettered by raising prices, like three apples for seven dollars, my God, that is unfair. When they are allowed to do that, with no penalty, they will continue.

That is why the bread-fixing scandal of the three major grocery companies is so important for us to focus on as a case study. When they collude together and set the price of bread so that they make maximum profits, and then no one on the Conservative bench mentions that crime and no one on the Liberal side mentions that crime, when is there going to be justice for Canadians?

I am proud to vote in favour of this motion, and I hope my colleagues do too.

• (1320)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, we heard our Conservative friends talk about the carbon tax, manufacturers making obscene profits on the backs of Canadians, and the big grocery chains. If that was the case, if that was the true cause of high food prices, would the grocery chain profits not have been much lower, if in fact their input costs had been jacked up so high?

How does the member assess the Conservative message to Canadians on this issue?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, that question from my hon. colleague just speaks to the divide-and-distract position of the Conservatives. They always want to say that it is someone else's problem, that it is always the government that stands as the reason why things are so hard for Canadians, and that the only way to solve it is by electing them. What a convenient solution that is: just elect Conservatives. The truth is, we have done that many times. Canadians have done that so many times, yet we are still in this predicament. Worse yet, we have programs that have largely failed Canadians

and cost us billions. We do not have to look too far to remember the Phoenix pay system, one of the most expensive scandals of the Conservative government, which is still impacting regular workers today.

When Conservatives tell me the cost of living crisis is just about the carbon tax and could not possibly be about Loblaws, who are they really working for? They are probably working for those corporations that would benefit from the deflection.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about government policies and how these policies are not serving the average Canadians. In the meantime, he and his party keep supporting the same government. Canadians are listening and wondering what is going on here. Why would the NDP members blame the government and complain about the government while they keep supporting the same government?

The Deputy Speaker: I just hope they get along and talk about the Edmonton Oilers at some point.

The hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, I will start with two things: Go, Oilers, go. I am so proud of our hometown, and we are going to win the Stanley Cup.

I will address the member's question in just a moment, but I want to challenge him on his position on Palestine. I know he avoided the vote on a free Palestine. He avoided the vote there, and I hope that he has the courage to stand in support of the constituents, whom we both share, who are calling for justice and a ceasefire.

As to the second point, about why we support the confidence and supply agreement with the government, we have set some priorities and we have supplied some confidence. We do not set the implementation, but it is like the old saying about the devil one knows versus the devil one does not know. We know what the government is going to do, and it is going to do it badly, but at least we are there to make sure that it does not go so off track that it hurts Canadians more than it already has. Worse yet, if we do not do this, then guess who is next: the Conservatives, and life is going to get even harder.

The hardest choice for New Democrats in this place is to have to do what we always have to do, which is to ensure that good policies come out of this place. To be frank, good policies only ever come out of minority governments that New Democrats stand vanguard to.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to hear the eloquence of the member for Edmonton Griesbach. He fights very strongly on behalf of his constituents.

Business of Supply

I am wondering why he believes Conservatives have never apologized for the 10-year, decade-long bread price-fixing scandal that started right after Harper was elected and continued right through until after the Harper government was thrown out. That took, on average, \$400 out of the pockets of Canadian families, with each family paying \$400 more than they should have because the Harper government refused to call the corporations that fixed the price of bread to account.

Can the member tell me why Conservatives have never apologized, never said they are sorry to Canadians for allowing that egregious theft from so many Canadian families?

• (1325)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives never apologize for their mistakes. Their consistent message is to say it is someone else's problem. It is at the core of Conservatives to never take accountability for what they have done. Conservatives never take accountability for the fact that they failed Canadians so many times. They never take into account that they have played a role in the economy that so many Canadians are now falling behind in. It always has to be someone else's problem. However, when we catch them red-handed, when we see that during their time in government they allowed big corporations to fix the price of bread, we have to demand accountability. Worse yet, they also paid \$2.35 billion in handouts to those same companies, so they are working for them.

That is why the Conservatives never apologized. They are the same ones who made the problem.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak to our NDP opposition day motion, calling on all parties in the House to stand with Canadians, to stand with us in the NDP, and push for measures to go after greedy grocery CEOs, lower food prices and reform nutrition north. Canadians are struggling. Costs are going up across the board. Nowhere is that more obvious than when it comes to grocery prices.

Grocery stores are out of control, and it is Canadians who are getting screwed. On top of it, wealthy CEOs like Galen Weston are raking it in, while Liberals ask them to meekly stop and Conservatives cheer them on. All the while, a couple of CEOs thrive as they live off public money, while northerners, indigenous peoples and all Canadians get screwed.

Over the last three years, the cost of food has increased by over 20%. Food bank usage is at a 35-year high. One in five Canadians is skipping meals. At the same time, the grocery sector made record profits in 2023, raking in \$6 billion. It is an unfair system, and Canadians are paying the price.

Nowhere is this clearer than in communities across our north, especially ones that depend on the nutrition north program. Grocery prices in our north are routinely two to three times higher the cost compared to more southern communities. The profits of the largest grocery chain in the north, The North West Company, have gone up 10% since 2022. Its CEO earned just about \$4 million in compensation in a single year, which is 98 times what his employees earned. With all those profits, it receives \$67 million in subsidies through nutrition north. Are those savings being passed on to northerners? Of course not.

In fact, in larger communities with more than one store, corporate grocers pass only about 67¢ of every subsidy dollar on to consumers. In smaller communities with a single grocery store, greedy grocery CEOs are keeping 67¢ out of every dollar they should be passing on to consumers. The more isolated a community is and the less people have to spend the more they get gouged. It is unacceptable, and that is why we in the NDP have called for a public inquiry. However, we know that the Liberals and the Conservatives do not want to do that, preferring to keep northerners and Canadians in the dark.

This reality did not just happen. The corporate greed that we are seeing has been aided and abetted by successive Liberal and Conservative governments and their policies. It goes beyond food prices in our north. Canada is forcing first nations like Garden Hill, St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack, Red Sucker Lake, Oxford House, Gods River, God's Lake Narrows and others to live in forced isolation. Instead of working with Wasagamack to build a desperately needed airport, instead of funding all-weather road infrastructure for the first nations that need it, they are forced to rely on winter roads to ship everything in, including food. With catastrophic climate change shortening the window for these ice roads, a period in which things can be shipped in, things are only getting more expensive and only getting worse.

Northern and indigenous communities already have to deal with greedy CEOs' price gouging. Adding the collaboration of successive Liberal and Conservative governments, which refuse to fight to make their lives better, only increases people's struggles. The sad reality is that not one politician would tolerate these prices if he or she were the one who had to pay them.

We can be sure that if the Prime Minister lived in Norway House, a cereal box would not cost \$17.99. If the leader of the official opposition lived in Wasagamack, a can of soup would not cost four times what it costs in Ottawa. If anyone here paid over \$35 for a six-pack of canned salmon like people in Garden Hill do, he or she certainly would not be rushing to hand out \$25.5 million to Loblaws and Costco over four years, like the Liberals did. We would not see the type of corporate coalition support that these successive Liberal and Conservative governments gave out, \$2.35 billion in subsidies, to grocery giants if the deputy leaders of the Liberals or the Conservatives were paying \$25 for a four-pack of Ritz crackers. No, it would be outrageous, and they would be helping people.

Business of Supply

This is Canada, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, where we are seeing this kind of unacceptable exploitation, deprivation and inequality grow. Indigenous and northern communities deserve better. Canadians deserve better. That is why this NDP motion is so important. It reflects what we in the NDP have been calling to happen for a number of years, which is much-needed reforms to nutrition north so indigenous and northern communities can afford healthy foods, lower the prices of essential food at corporate grocery stores and end the Liberal and Conservative handouts to big corporations.

• (1330)

Speaking of oligopolies and the unbreakable bond between successive Liberal and Conservative governments and the CEOs they cater to, I would be remiss if I did not bring up another corporation, Bell. We will find few Canadian companies that better exemplify this corporate arrogance than Bell Canada.

I have heard from the VP of Bell, Robert Malcolmson, a number of times since we in the NDP summoned the Bell CEO to come to committee on April 11 to explain why Bell cut 6,000 jobs and slashed programming in eight months. We held the CEO to account on behalf of Bell workers, on behalf of Bell customers and on behalf of Canadians.

Curiously, instead of getting to work to make amends with Canadians, Bell Media has been spending its time monitoring my social media and has chosen to send me a number of unsolicited letters that show just how much it does not get it. Let us be clear: It is a company that is an industry setter when it comes to tax avoidance. According to a report from Canadians for Tax Fairness, Bell used a series of loopholes and schemes to avoid paying over a billion dollars in taxes over a four-year period, ranking it as one of the 20 worst companies in the country in that regard.

In terms of corporate salaries, Mirko Bibic, Bell Canada's CEO, in 2023, earned \$2.96 million in compensation, despite falling short of Bell's 2023 financial goals. Dividends to shareholders increased by 3.1% during this time. As always, it is workers who pay the price while wealthy CEOs profit.

When the CEO of Bell was at our committee, I confronted him about the reality in my constituency, where most people have little to no choice and have to look to Bell MTS for service. I pointed out how Bell bought out our once proudly publicly owned telecom provider, privatized by the Conservatives in the 1990s, Manitoba's MTS, and promised cheaper rates and better service. Instead, Bell shrunk the workforce and jacked up the rates, leaving many communities still waiting for that better service.

I raised two particular issues. One was the landlines in Dallas, Manitoba, that were not working reliably, forcing Susann Sinclair to communicate with her 89-year-old veteran father by walkie-talkie; landlines not working in 2024. I know for a fact that, following this exchange with the CEO, Bell MTS kicked it into high gear. It contacted Susann Sinclair repeatedly and, most important, it replaced the obsolete equipment servicing landlines in the Dallas area. It replaced it with new equipment that was sitting in storage. Finally, Susann's landlines have been working as they should.

Sadly, the VP of Bell refused to refer to any of that and has, in his two recent letters, incorrectly confused service issues in Bloodvein and Dallas. Bloodvein and Dallas are two different communities. They are not even close geographically. It is time for Bell executives to look at a map of our province and understand where their customers live.

Let us be clear that the service issue in Dallas was resolved, but not in Bloodvein. What is most surprising with my communications with Bell is its continuing refusal to take responsibility. When Bloodvein First Nation needed cellphone service during a wildfire for evacuation purposes, it was told by Bell that it would need to pay \$652,000 to turn on a tower that was on its land.

In their letters to me, Bell disputed this even happened and referred to a temporary tower it put up. I was aware of that temporary tower, but the Bell executives got it wrong. It was not in Bloodvein; it was in Loon Straits to service natural resources fighting the fires. The signal did not reach Bloodvein at all. Three years later, and even after our April 11 hearings, Bloodvein still does not have cell service.

I make no apologies for fighting for my constituents. I make no apologies for holding to account greedy CEOs and executives who are making profits on the backs of first nations, rural communities, Manitobans, consumers across the country and workers who have been laid off.

I hope the grocery store CEOs, big oil and telecom giants at Bell Media and the rest are paying attention. Rest assured, we will be working hard to go after them, to go after the profits they make on the backs of Canadians. We will continue to bring the fight for an excess profit tax so they can finally pay their fair share.

While billionaires and CEOs know they can count on the Liberals and Conservatives, northerners, first nations people, people on fixed incomes and Canadians know they can count on us in the NDP to fight for them.

• (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts with respect to instituting a price cap and how that would help the constituents who she represents or northern residents of Canada, generally speaking. Could she give some sort of an indication on whether she believes there would be any consequence to having a price cap?

Business of Supply

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's concern about what measures would benefit northerners. Let me cut to the chase. He is part of the Liberal government that has refused to reform nutrition north, refused to invest in ways to ensure that healthy foods are truly affordable, a Liberal government that has refused to work with first nations like Wasagamack to build an airport and communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to build all-weather roads that would directly have an impact on lowering prices.

I am not going to take any lessons from the Liberals with respect to what it is going to take to make food available in communities like mine. They need to stop giving subsidies to The North West Company the way they are and look at reforming nutrition north based on what works for northerners and make the investments in indigenous communities to bring prices down now.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues mentioned earlier in their analysis of the NDP motion, it is targeting a genuine problem but proposing a false solution. How would we cap the prices of essential foods?

I would like my colleague to tell me how the price of bread can be capped when wheat prices are negotiated on the Chicago Stock Exchange.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that we invite the Bloc Québécois to support a motion that seeks to put an end to what is going on with the biggest companies in the commercial food sector. We hope that such measures will also be taken in other sectors in the future.

Now that we know from experience that the price of bread, for example, was fixed by companies in Canada, we need to take far bolder action. We know that economists support such measures. This motion is clear. We need to act in a more concrete and far bolder manner to put an end to the enormous profits of companies that are exploiting consumers across Canada.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I wonder if my colleague could respond to the impacts of the Liberals' constant delays in making reforms to nutrition north. I have been asking since 2021 for changes, having heard from my constituents all along. To date, the most recent responses have been to do yet another internal review, with a possible later external review.

What is the impact on our constituents when the Liberals keep delaying solutions to fix the nutrition north program?

● (1340)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the MP for Nunavut, has been a steadfast champion for accountability when it comes to nutrition north and for her constituents on all issues, including the food insecurity and price gouging they face when it comes to The North West Company and Liberal action on this front.

In fact, one of our first joint press conferences called for action from the federal government on this very issue. The impacts are devastating. Just a few weeks ago, I was in the Island Lake region

and spoke with people. I was in the northern stores and they talked about their inability to buy healthy foods because they were too expensive. Everybody knows that it is a federal government subsidy, but people are saying that it is simply not working.

They also know that in communities like ours, isolation plays an important role and it needs to be addressed through government investment in infrastructure, like all-weather roads. The airport in Wasagamack is critical as well. The reality in communities in northern Manitoba, and I know in Nunavut, is that things are not getting better. Things are getting worse. As prices go up in southern Canada, they are going up even further in the north. We need Liberals to snap out of it, act to reform nutrition north and even call a public inquiry into how it is run.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start off by indicating that I do not want to come across as someone who is going to defend the big five grocers, whether it is Loblaw, Metro, Sobeys, Costco or Walmart. I do not think that they need any advocates on their behalf on the floor of the House of Commons.

I am genuinely concerned about the cost of groceries, and that is nothing new. It is something I have been concerned about for many months, or in fact, for the last number of years. It is a genuine concern. It is something the Government of Canada, in particular the Prime Minister, has been raising a great deal of concern about. It is not like it is something that has just happened over the last few months.

We can talk about there being issues related to groceries, even pre-pandemic, and the lack of competition. It is very real, and unfortunately, Canadians have had to pay a price for that. It is one of the reasons we have given it a considerable amount of attention.

Members will recall when the issue started to really heat up. The Prime Minister and the minister responsible were saying that we wanted to call on those big five grocers that, in essence, have about 80%, or maybe a little higher than that, of the market. It is an area we should all be concerned about. That is the reason they have been called before the government. That is the reason they have been called before a standing committee.

To try to give an impression, in any way, whether it is coming from the Conservatives, New Democrats, Bloc or anyone else, that the government is not concerned about the issue is just false. Over the last number of years, we have come up with thoughts, ideas and actions, whether they were budgetary measures or legislative measures, to try to hold them to account or ensure that there is a higher sense of transparency and more accountability in that area.

Business of Supply

It is really quite encouraging to see that we have a House that is very much aware of the concerns Canadians have. One of the things that gets very little attention, which I want to highlight, is the food price data hub. It is something that has now been reinforced by the government. We want to make sure that Canadians are better informed about prices. Prior to the speeches today and the debate getting under way, I did a quick search on the food price data hub. I took a look at the province of Manitoba.

The food price data hub is complemented by Stats Canada. These numbers are fairly accurate. It provides an average price. Consumers can go there to get a sense of many different products and what they can expect for a cost. What I thought was interesting, because we are talking about the issue of inflation, was looking at some of the more common things.

For example, when we think of ground beef, and I am talking about in Manitoba, in November 2023, it was \$11.22. It went up in December to \$11.75, and dropped down to \$11.10 in January and to \$10.77 in February. Today it is at \$11.37. Pork loin cuts per kilogram were \$9.70 back in November, and I will just go right to March, when it was up by four cents.

A whole chicken per kilogram was \$8.89 back in November, and it is actually down to \$6.89. Chicken drumsticks, one of my favourites, I must say, were at \$8.43 in November, and they went down to \$7.96. When we talk about milk, a four-litre jug of milk was \$5.72 in November and \$5.72 in March. Butter was \$6.29 in November and \$5.99 in March. A 500-gram block of cheese was \$6.65 in November and \$6.59 in March.

• (1345)

The bottom line is that some of the prices have gone up and some of the prices have gone down. I like the general trend that we have been seeing in groceries, and I hope to be able to continue to see that trend. One of the commitments that the government made a while back now was to try to ensure that there is more price stability within the industry. That is something we want to see. It is one of the reasons we made significant changes to the Competition Act.

We often hear about the bread scandal. Many people following this debate today will have already heard it mentioned a couple of times. Members can imagine an industry that ultimately worked together to prop up the cost of bread. Hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in additional profit were made at the cost of higher prices for consumers. That took place virtually throughout the whole time period Stephen Harper was the prime minister. Ultimately, it ended up in the courts, and it was found that there was a price-fixing scandal within that industry. There have been hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties. We have to realize that, if the industry were left on its own, we would see a lot more price-fixing. One of the roles that government has is to ensure that there is competition.

I look at it from a past perspective. We did, at one point, have six major grocery outlets. We had Loblaw, Metro, Sobeys, Costco, Walmart, and Shoppers Drug Mart. A number of years ago, when Stephen Harper was the then prime minister, Loblaw acquired Shoppers. There were no questions asked, and it was acquired. Many people, including me, would argue that this diminishes competition, and by diminishing competition, ultimately, in situations

like this, we are going to see prices potentially go up. There were no Conservatives who talked about that. Today, the Conservatives talk about competition in the grocery market, but back in the day, when they were in government, they did absolutely nothing at all regarding this. In fact, the Conservatives saw one of the grocery giants fall to be taken in by Loblaw.

We can look at the Competition Act and the way the Conservatives filibustered that legislation, trying to prevent the government from passing legislation. That legislation enhanced competition. It provided more resources for the Competition Bureau. By doing that, the Competition Bureau is able to conduct market studies. It is better able to do enforcement. It is better able to look at monetary penalties, and many of the maximum amounts were raised as a direct result.

Most important, from my perspective, is that the Competition Bureau put into place a merger review process that was not of the same nature. For example, it was the whole efficiency argument, where a store would be able to come before the Competition Bureau and say that, by doing this, it would become more efficient and therefore able to provide better prices and more options for Canadians. That argument was thrown out through the amendments that we made to the Competition Act.

These are the types of legislative actions that the government has taken to ensure that there is a better sense of predictability and stability in rates for groceries. That is a positive thing. I will contrast that with the previous administration, and it is a significant change. When Canadians were going through the pandemic, we started to really see it on the inflation graphs. When the rates were coming to the peak, the government responded by taking budgetary action. The government came up with the grocery rebate for Canadians.

• (1350)

The rebate assisted millions of Canadians by giving them extra disposable income because of the increase in grocery prices at the time. Whether it is through legislative actions or budgetary measures, members will find that the government, as a whole, has been very supportive of Canadians. I do think that is worthy of noting.

If we look at other aspects of the NDP motion today, it mentions that the Liberals, as a government, are giving these corporate bailouts, or giving hundreds of millions of dollars to companies such as Loblaw and Metro. It makes reference to Loblaws specifically. What the NDP members are referring to, to the best of my knowledge, are the two ways in which the government, under the Prime Minister, have subsidized groceries.

One of them is through the subsidies for the north, and the other one was more of an indirect one. The government came up with a series of policies dealing with emissions and the environment. One of those policies concerned the way products are refrigerated and the technology advancements in that area. We said that, if a company were to modernize, then the federal government would step up and assist with, I believe, about 25% of whatever the total cost of the project would be.

Statements by Members

There were 50 or so applicants under that particular program, and one of them happened to be Loblaw. Loblaw took advantage of a government program to reduce emissions. The total amount spent was about \$48 million, and \$12 million came from the government, under that particular program to reduce emissions. That one project, from what I understand, was to reduce emissions. I will ask members not to quote me on this, but I believe it was the equivalent of taking thousands of vehicles off the road. It enhanced the opportunity for Canada to continue its leading role in the manufacturing of refrigerators. It created jobs, was better for the environment, and yes, Loblaw was one of many applicants. That is the program they are accusing the government of squandering tax dollars for. I beg to differ on that.

The other program I am aware of is support for northern Canada. Those northern supports are very real. When we take a look at the nutrition north program back in 2011, the budget was just over \$50 million. Today, that budget is worth just under \$150 million. That does not incorporate the community food programs.

On the one hand, in the very same resolution that is being proposed, the NDP is being critical of the Liberals for not supporting northern food prices, stabilization and reduction. They are also saying that we are supporting corporate greed. I mentioned the two programs I am aware of, and I am open to anything else that I might have missed. That is a question I would love to have answered.

When we think of the nutrition north program, it is a program that the Liberals greatly enhanced from a financial point of view with contributions. We have also looked at ways we can ensure that there are technological advancements, so we can see more community food programs put into place. By doing that, we are providing opportunities for northerners to potentially produce more food and become more diversified, if I can put it that way.

• (1355)

At the same time, we are looking at ways we can continue to support lower-priced food in the north through that specific program. We have also invested, with this budget, in local food infrastructure programs, again, to enhance the ability of non-profits, in particular, to generate that local food.

There are many initiatives that the government has taken to support the stabilization of prices, and we see the impact of that when we look at the numbers. The numbers clearly show that we are having a relatively positive impact. However, contrast that to what the Conservative Party is saying. With the first two Conservative members who stood up to speak about this important issue, I do not think they even talked about the issue of food security. All they wanted to talk about was what they were hearing from Jenni Byrne, who is a lobbyist, by the way, for the big grocery chains. The Conservative spin, no matter what is being debated, is that they have to talk about the axe the tax bumper sticker.

The Conservatives are not contributing to the debate or adding any sort of value to it. All they want to talk about is calling an election and axing the tax. I find it unfortunate because there is a whole lot more that we could be doing here in the House of Commons. As much as the Conservative Party wants to focus its attention on one issue, we will continue to look at ways we can enhance opportuni-

ties in many different sectors so that Canadians will ultimately see things such as stabilized food prices. We are already starting to witness that, not to mention the many different programs the government has been bringing forward, one of which I hope to talk about very soon, once we get into members' statements.

Suffice it to say that I appreciate the thought of talking about the price of food, but I think that the motion itself is somewhat misguided. I realize that I will get a little bit more time after question period, and I will provide some more thoughts on that issue when we resume debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, an emergency department is not the best place for a person in a mental health crisis, yet more folks are presenting at ERs as a last resort.

There are better options and organizations like Thresholds Homes and Supports and the Canadian Mental Health Association of Waterloo Wellington are showing the way. They are opening an integrated crisis centre in my community to offer specialized, trauma-informed care in a welcoming space, relieving the strain on ERs in the process. However, with no government support to date, they are pressing forward using existing budgets, meaning that they only can provide three months of service to our community before needing additional funding.

I hope that all levels of government will realize what a critical solution integrated crisis centres are and will step up with the funding required to ensure that when a neighbour is in a mental health crisis, they will get the best possible care.

* * *

PHARMACARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians love our health care system. From coast to coast to coast, we understand and we believe in the Canada Health Act and in the importance of health care to all Canadians.

I was disappointed yesterday when members of the Conservative Party and the Bloc, the unholy alliance, came together and voted against a national pharmacare plan that would support millions of Canadians. Whether with respect to contraceptives or diabetes, these types of programs, I believe, will make a real difference in the lives of millions of Canadians.

Once again, we see the difference between the Conservative Reform Party and a caring Liberal government. Conservatives are more concerned about cutting back on things, compared to the Liberal government, which recognizes the true value of a national health care system that incorporates some components of pharmacare.

FARMERS' MARKETS

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the long, cold winter is gone. The sun is shining, and the days are warmer. June is here, and with its arrival comes the much anticipated opening of local farmers' markets all across Canada.

In my community, we are very fortunate to have three major local farmers' markets operating.

The Barrie farmers' market is back outdoors and is open every Saturday, on Collier Street, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Oro-Medonte farmers' market is open Canada Day, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and after that, it starts its season every Thursday this summer at Chappell Farms, from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Last but not least, the Springwater farmers' market is held every Thursday from June 13 to August 29, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., at the Elmvale municipal parking lot.

I encourage all residents to get out and attend one or all of these great farmers' markets and to support our local small businesses and farmers when they need it most.

I wish a happy summer to all.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we consider the relationship between Canada and China, I am rising today to mark the 35th anniversary of the massacre of those who joined the movement for democracy in China in Tiananmen Square.

In response to that movement, which spread to 400 cities and, according to observers, caused deep divisions within the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, the decision was made on June 2, 1989, to send in the military to put an end to the protest.

Nobody knows the cost in terms of the lives taken on June 4 or in what had been a gradual shift to a more liberal society for China, but the level of suppression ramped up significantly. Today, one can be arrested anywhere in China or in Hong Kong if one dares to comment on or to observe this anniversary.

Democracy is a resilient force, and thousands of Chinese diaspora here in Canada and around the world are speaking up today on behalf of the Chinese people who must mark the day and harbour hopes for the future in silence.

* * *

[Translation]

JOSEPH-ARMAND BOMBARDIER

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, certain symbols resonate strongly with a people and a nation. Joseph-Armand Bombardier launched his business in Quebec, in Valcourt, to be precise. It was in a garage in this municipality in the Eastern Townships that he came up with his inventions, in a building that has since been turned into a very popular museum.

Statements by Members

On May 9, over 60 years after the first snowmobile model came out, its creator was inducted into the prestigious National Inventors Hall of Fame in the United States as part of the class of 2024, joining a select club that includes the likes of Nikola Tesla, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford.

Having recently visited the BRP facilities in Valcourt, I was struck by the impressive number of patents Joseph-Armand Bombardier held, patents that continue to change the world to this day. His ingenuity still draws attention to Quebec's SME model. What is more, he inspired Quebec to dream. He stimulated Quebecers' entrepreneurial spirit and helped put us on the global economic stage.

The Americans now recognize what we have long known, that Joseph-Armand Bombardier is a giant.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *Mabuhay*. Happy Filipino Heritage Month. Throughout June, we honour the contributions of Filipino Canadians who have worked tirelessly to build their lives here in Canada and who have woven themselves into the very fabric of our communities, one million strong and counting.

In Vaughan, the contributions of Filipinos are invaluable, from dedicated health care workers who have been our frontline heroes, to educators and entrepreneurs across all fields. As a twin city of Baguio City in the Philippines for nearly three decades, the ties between the City of Vaughan and the Philippines run deep. In our community, we owe much gratitude to my dear friend, Erlinda Insigne, and all the members of the Filipino-Canadian Association of Vaughan.

A community favourite, Fiesta Extravaganza, started in Vaughan in 2018. It has now expanded to nine cities across Canada and will soon be going south of the border. Together, let us celebrate the vibrant Filipino community, their heritage and their enduring spirit that reminds us of the importance of unity, perseverance and cultural pride.

Happy Filipino Heritage Month.

* * *

FESTA DELLA REPUBBLICA

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, we celebrate the *Festa della Repubblica* in honour of the Italian Republic. This event symbolizes the continuing friendship and co-operation between our two nations. Canada and Italy's relationship has always been close. We are connected through over 1.6 million Italo-Canadians who mainly reside in Toronto, Vaughan and Montreal. We were honoured to have His Excellency Andrea Ferrari, the Italian ambassador to Canada, join us for our flag-raising this morning.

Statements by Members

I am proud of my grandfather, who came from Calabria for the opportunity of a better life. I am especially proud of my grandmother, who raised me to always treat people with respect and compassion. We all have the opportunity to excel in the country that gives everyone the opportunity to achieve their goals.

Nonna, ti amo oggi e tutto I giorno.

* * *

[Translation]

FÉDÉRATION DES COMMUNAUTÉS CULTURELLES DE L'ESTRIE

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des communautés culturelles de l'Estrie has been serving our communities for over 30 years. With 180 projects for cultural associations to its credit, the federation is a key contributor to the socioeconomic and cultural integration of newcomers.

The federation creates spaces where immigrants and their host communities can come together and engage with one another, spaces like the community garden. Federation members are also proactive in the fight against racism, violence against women and discrimination. They prioritize innovative actions that support diversity, openness and inclusivity in communities and workplaces.

I am especially grateful to Boubacar, Mariame, Jesus, Charphadine, Roberto, Soumaïla, Henri and Juan Carlos, who are here in Ottawa today, and to the whole federation team for their amazing work, which fosters intercultural understanding and supports development in the Eastern Townships.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after eight months of the horrible pain of war in the Middle East, many families in Canada are feeling the pain here at home. Too many of us know a family who has lost someone in Gaza or has family living there in fear and in unbearable conditions. Too many know of a hostage who is no longer coming home or a friend or family member who was killed on October 7 in Israel. Too many of us have been affected by the vandalism and violence directed toward our communities because of who we are or because of our beliefs and actions. While we, as Canadians, are out protesting, we must remember not to spread hate and fear through our words and actions, but rather to consider our fellow Canadians and how they might be impacted by them.

We have a right to protest and to free speech, and we also have a responsibility to respect and to protect our fellow Canadians. As we advocate and work toward permanent peace and a long-term resolution to this conflict, let us first and foremost do no harm to our fellow Canadians.

Love for all, hatred for none.

• (1410)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years under this government, our streets are becoming less and less safe. Crime rates across the country keep rising. Montrealers are increasingly afraid in their own city. It has gotten to the point where the city's police department is completely overwhelmed.

Yesterday, the Montreal police service's annual report revealed that 911 calls in Montreal have increased by 10% since last year, to a total of 1.6 million calls. People are worried, and I can see why. This increase in calls is the result of the Liberal government's dangerous catch-and-release policy. Which party is fully supportive of this policy? That would be the Bloc Québécois, even though it has caused all this crime and chaos in our communities.

Bloc members, who claim to be the defenders of Quebec, voted in favour of Bill C-5, which allows convicted criminals to stay at home rather than go to prison. That is why a Conservative government will crack down on criminals with tougher policies to stop crime. We will protect people and their loved ones.

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[English]

NORMANDY LANDINGS

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we commemorate D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, which took place on June 6, 1944, during the Second World War. We honour those who sacrificed themselves and served our country in the ultimate battle that led to allied victory and the liberation of Europe.

On June 6, 1944, more than 14,000 brave Canadian soldiers were involved in the Normandy landings and fought with exceptional courage to regain control of Juno Beach and other positions controlled by the occupying German forces. The price of this sacrifice was heavy. On the first day, 359 Canadians lost their lives, and more than 5,000 died in the two and a half months of fighting in Normandy.

As we commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day, let us not forget the sacrifices our Canadian soldiers made in this battle to bring peace to the world.

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TAXATION

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, Canadians are struggling because the Prime Minister's inflationary spending and tax hikes have increased the cost of everything. In fact, the average Canadian family will pay \$700 more for groceries this year, and many Canadians will have no choice but to go to food banks.

Statements by Members

Canadians deserve relief from the government's failed policies. That is why Conservatives introduced a motion to give Canadians the summer break they need. We proposed to axe the carbon tax, the federal fuel tax and the GST on fuel this summer so Canadians could afford a summer vacation because, unlike the Prime Minister, working Canadians cannot afford to jet off for a luxury vacation. However, instead of fighting for Canadians, the NDP-Liberal government opposed our motion and voted to keep the tax on Canadians this summer.

Only common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax and bring home lower prices for all Canadians.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they advised the Communist regime in Beijing on building military islands, and they tried to block their employees from pro-democracy activity in Russia. They pointed the finger at influential Saudi dissidents, and they helped to supercharge the opioid crisis. They even advised Disney on how to increase profits at the expense of safety. Armed with dark suits and PowerPoint slides, they are the McKinsey consultants, the people who can execute on anything and solve absolutely nothing.

When Liberals came to office nine years ago, they wanted to bring in well-connected insiders, and of course they chose their dear friends at McKinsey. Today's explosive Auditor General's report reveals that the NDP-Liberal government repeatedly broke basic contracting rules to send \$200 million worth of contracts to this certifiably amoral company. There was no value for money. The scales were intentionally tipped in McKinsey's favour, and there is a lack of evidence the contracts were even needed.

Liberals love McKinsey and have broken the rules to shower it with taxpayer dollars, but Canadians have had enough. It is time to throw out the consultants and bring back common sense.

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YOUNG WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently my office ran our 5th annual young women in leadership program. This innovative program pairs mentors with young women to provide mentorship and guidance. Through the program, each mentee is given the opportunity to either explore an existing area of interest or to develop skills in a new area of interest.

I capped off this year's program by hosting a wonderful reception with keynote speaker Professor Maja, an inspiring sociologist, author, TEDx speaker and confidence builder. Her message of self-kindness and leading with confidence resonated with everyone, but especially the young mentees in attendance who are at the start of their professional journeys.

I thank Jas Brar from my office, who did a super job organizing, and I would like to thank all the mentors and mentees from across Halton Region for making the program possible and for creating a safe and supportive environment for the next generation of female leaders.

• (1415)

REACHING OUT ASSISTING REFUGEES

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, June is Pride Month, a time to celebrate 2SLGBTQIA+ people and also a time for people to unite and combat the disturbing rise in hate right here at home and abroad.

There are many organizations doing such vital work that require federal leadership and funding, like that of Reaching Out Assisting Refugees, ROAR, located in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. ROAR works with people who are criminalized and faced with persecution and discrimination internationally for being 2SLGBTQIA+, some even facing the death penalty, forcing them to flee their home country. To engage in this life-saving work, ROAR receives contributions from generous individuals, businesses and organizations, but it needs the supports to see more refugees sponsored and brought to safety.

Today, I urge the Liberal government to commit to the leadership and sustained financial supports required for organizations like ROAR and for all members of Parliament to stand against hate and ensure a future free of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

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[*Translation*]

35TH ANNIVERSARY OF TIANANMEN SQUARE MASSACRE

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we sadly mark the 35th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, during which thousands of students lost their lives.

The brutal crushing of this peaceful movement by the Communist Chinese regime produced images that continue to haunt us to this day. I can still picture the student standing in front of the tanks to stop them from advancing.

We denounced those tragic events, to be sure, but we also denounced the complacency of western countries, including Canada, which, in placing commercial interests above the protection of human rights, had in some ways opened the door to such repression.

Oral Questions

Thirty-five years later, the People's Republic of China exerts even more control over its population and continues to violently target its opponents, real or imagined, in addition to acting belligerently toward its neighbours. At a time when it continues to ruthlessly crush the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong and relentlessly threaten Taiwan, we have a duty to memorialize the tragic events of Tiananmen Square in order to combat the apathy that could once again make us complicit in a recurrence of such events.

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[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the incompetence or the outright corruption.

Today the Auditor General found that \$123 million was given out to Liberal friends in the so-called green slush fund at Sustainable Development Technology Corporation, or SDTC. Fifty-nine million dollars was given to projects that should never have been awarded at all; \$76 million of funding was given to projects that had a conflict of interest, and conflict of interest rules were not followed in 90 cases. In one instance, the Prime Minister's personal friend siphoned off \$217,000 to her own company.

"Corruption" is an understatement. This is shameful. The Auditor General found that the Prime Minister and the industry minister have been found at fault, and the SDTC will be folded up into a federal agency. Ya, that should help. This is on top of everything Canadians are going through.

Shame on the Liberal government for the disregard of taxpayer dollars. Only Conservatives will end the corruption and bring common sense back to Ottawa.

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POWWOWS

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, June is National Indigenous History Month. On June 21, we observe National Indigenous Peoples Day across the country, with celebrations and cultural showcases from coast to coast to coast. It is also the kick-off to summer, and that means powwow season.

I want to congratulate students from Fredericton High School and Leo Hayes High School who worked tirelessly to plan and organize highly successful events, bringing together drum groups, dancers, knowledge keepers and, of course, delicious food to share vibrant Wolastoqiyik culture with their fellow students and staff. It was Fredericton High School's first of its kind, and it will not be the last.

For anyone who has not had the pleasure of attending a powwow, expect to see beautiful cultural expressions and hear the heartbeat of mother earth, laughter and learning. It is truly a spectacle to behold, and I look forward to travelling the powwow trail in New Brunswick with my family.

For all the amazing powwow committees, as well as chiefs and councils across Turtle Island, *wela'lin* for all of their hard work and

dedication and for bringing this important tradition to their communities and surrounding regions each year.

From a time in Canada when critical gatherings like this were outlawed, we fast-forward to today when all are welcome as we continue our path towards reconciliation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption. According to an Auditor General's report on the \$1-billion green fund, \$123 million was spent without following the rules.

Liberal insiders funnelled taxpayers' money into their own companies. One of this government's officials described this as sponsorship-scandal-level corruption. Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for this waste and corruption, or will he just blame others again?

The Speaker: Before the Prime Minister answers the question, I would ask the member for Timmins—James Bay not to speak until he is recognized by the Chair.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, we thank the Auditor General for her work. We will read her report carefully and we will carefully examine the recommendations. Obviously, we need to ensure that we are investing responsibly and transparently as we fight climate change and create a greener economy. That is what we will always do.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report confirms that the government favoured McKinsey with money voted for by the Bloc Québécois. Ninety-seven contracts worth a total of \$209 million, much more than previously thought, were awarded to this Prime Minister's favourite consulting firm.

What is more, 70% of these contracts were awarded without a competitive process. Worse yet, in several cases, at least four contracts were specifically designed so that McKinsey could be hired. Why is he giving this money to his Liberal cronies?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already put measures in place to ensure that the contracts awarded by the public service follow the strictest, most transparent rules. We must ensure that taxpayers' investments are made transparently and responsibly. That is something we will keep doing while we fight climate change and create a stronger, growing economy.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has already proven that the Liberal carbon tax, just like the Prime Minister, is not worth the cost, saying that the vast majority of people are worse off under a carbon pricing regime than without. This is partly because of the economic cost that the carbon tax imposes. One of our members from Winnipeg asked the PBO whether the government had done an economic analysis of the cost, and he said yes, but that the government is blocking its release, referring to it as a “gag order”.

Why the carbon tax cover-up?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we of course respect the work of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who provides independent analysis to the government. In this instance, however, the Parliamentary Budget Officer admitted that he made a mistake with his carbon pricing reports, using incorrect analysis and modelling, which emphasises what we have been saying all along: that eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back from the Canada carbon rebate while we fight climate change.

The next Canada carbon rebate is actually going to be arriving on July 15 in Canadians' bank accounts right across the country. We will continue to put money in people's pockets and fight climate—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that were true, he would simply release the report with the real cost of the carbon tax that he has been hiding.

However, the Auditor General released another report showing that the Prime Minister is not worth the corruption or cost after nine years; \$123 million in spending in the Prime Minister's green slush fund broke the rules. According to one of the bureaucrats involved, the entire expenditure resembles the Liberal sponsorship scandal.

Will the Prime Minister take personal responsibility for these costs and corruption, or will he just blame others again?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has already taken measures to ensure that these programs are properly spent and that the processes are properly followed in terms of contracts. We know we need to continue to ensure value for money for taxpayers while at the same time continuing to step up on the fight against climate change and on the creation of a green economy. That is why we continue to deliver a Canada carbon rebate that puts more money in eight out of 10

Canadians' pockets in regions where it is in place, at the same time as we fight climate change effectively right across the country.

● (1425)

The Speaker: I am just going to ask, please, for the person who has been recognized by the Chair to take the floor, and to ask the question or to answer the question, so not only can the Chair hear all the questions but also that all members can hear. Especially for those who use translation devices, it is difficult for them to hear over the ambient sound.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already knew that the Prime Minister liked to give tax dollars to his favourite consulting company, McKinsey, a company that helped supercharge drug overdose deaths as part of the opioid crisis.

Today we learned from the Auditor General that it is far more money than thought. It was \$200 million in Canadian tax dollars for this one company, and 90% of those contracts did not follow government rules, 70% of them were without a competitive process and 100% of them were with the NDP voting in favour.

Will the Prime Minister commit, here and now, no more money for McKinsey?

The Speaker: Again, I ask members, and I have already asked the member for Timmins—James Bay, to please not comment while other members are speaking so that we can all hear.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the taxpayers deserve to get value for money, which is why we have continued to strengthen our oversight and the measures whereby public servants grant contracts, including to outside consultants.

We have reduced those numbers. We are making sure that we are able to both grow the economy and fight climate change at the same time as we ensure value for money. We will, of course, continue to work with the Auditor General and her recommendations as we move forward.

At the same time, we are committed to delivering more money into the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians as we fight climate change with the Canada carbon rebate.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians has tabled a report indicating that the Prime Minister's Office handles national security issues—and issues of democracy in particular—in a convoluted way, with confusion, denial, complacency and inaction. Apparently, there are currently elected representatives here in the House who are willingly or naively under foreign influence.

What does the Prime Minister intend to do?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we obviously thank the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians for its work. We take interference very seriously. That is why we are taking all necessary steps to protect Canadians from the threat of foreign interference.

We established oversight and accountability bodies. We set up a public inquiry. We introduced new legislation that provides for a foreign influence transparency registry that makes foreign interference a serious crime and allows CSIS to share information with all levels of government, businesses, researchers and more.

We will continue to be there to protect Canadians.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister himself said that he did not read certain reports. He ignored certain reports. He slowed down the intelligence-gathering and investigation process. Even now, there may be elected representatives subject to foreign influence in every party. He needs to tell us. He needs to give us an answer because, right now, the Prime Minister of a Parliament that includes some members under foreign influence is doing nothing.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a little ironic that the leader of the Bloc Québécois is asking these questions, because he himself refused to obtain the necessary security clearance to read the classified documents and understand the issues the government is working on. Despite refusing to obtain the necessary security clearance, he is going into partisan attack mode on an extremely important issue. The government and parliamentarians who take this issue seriously are doing what needs to be done about it.

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that China and India are interfering in our democracy and are using members of Parliament to do so.

A Canadian is dead because India allegedly sent assassins to murder him in Surrey, B.C. Yet, the Conservative leader refuses to condemn India's Modi, and the Prime Minister has failed to protect our democracy.

How will this Prime Minister take this matter seriously and hold these foreign governments to account?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have been the first and only government to introduce significant measures to counter foreign interference. The very

creation of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, an initiative that the Conservative Party campaigned against and fought bitterly against while they were in government, has allowed us to see a lot more and to make sure that all parliamentarians are aware of what the intelligence community is doing to keep Canadians safe.

We have moved forward on election protection protocols. We have moved forward on more tools for our security agencies. We will continue to do everything necessary to protect Canadians.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has delayed on this file and the repercussions are serious.

[Translation]

We know that China and India are actively interfering in our democracy, and are using members of Parliament to do so. However, the Conservative leader refuses to condemn Modi's Indian government, and this Prime Minister is failing to protect our democracy.

How will the Prime Minister hold the Indian and Chinese governments to account for their interference?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only are we giving our security and intelligence agencies, as well as parliamentarians, new tools to counter foreign interference, but we are also taking a strong stand against foreign interference by upholding the rule of law and international law.

We are here to stand up to countries that flout the principles of international law, whether it is Russia, China or others. We will continue to be here to ensure that we protect Canadians and people who come to Canada to flee authoritarian regimes. We will always be here to protect them.

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[English]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption. The AG's latest report found that the Liberal-created green slush fund has been directing tens of millions of dollars into companies owned by, as colleagues have guessed, the Liberals themselves. Their own civil servants called it "outright incompetence", but it is worse than that as \$123 million of inappropriate contracts, almost half, should not have been given to those companies at all. It is even worse, as \$76 million is connected to Liberal insiders. Is it incompetence? Is it corruption? Is it both? What the hell is going on over there?

The Speaker: Before I pass the floor to the minister, I will ask members to please be judicious in the words that they choose, to make sure that they are on the right side of parliamentary language, as well as polite.

Oral Questions

The hon. minister.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr Speaker, I think Canadians are seeing how far the Conservatives will go when we are talking about climate change. We have been very clear from the moment that we received the allegations. We launched two investigations, one by Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton and one by the law firm, McCarthy Tétrault, and now the Auditor General.

We have been clear that we wanted to get to the bottom of this. That is what we have done. Not only have we investigated, but we agree with the conclusion of the Auditor General. We are going to restore governance. We are going to restore funding to clean tech in this country and we are going to restore the confidence of Canadians.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how rich do Liberals have to get before they solve climate change? Tens of millions of dollars is being directed back into their pockets. The Auditor General made it clear that it is that minister who is responsible for the scandal. While millions eat in food banks, young people cannot buy a home and families cannot take a summer vacation. That minister is giving millions of dollars to his friends under the guise of his climate change ideology. Is he actually joking? When will anyone over there face a single consequence for anything?

• (1435)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can see, again, where the Conservatives are going. The Auditor General's report was very clear. Parliament decided 20 years ago to have an arm's-length organization to manage that. We investigated the allegations. Now we are proposing a new governance model, which will be under the rules of the federal public service, so that we can have more rules around HR and more rules around funding.

We are going to restore confidence. We are going to make sure that we have a model of delivery that meets the highest standard. We are going to fight for the clean tech in this sector.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report makes it clear that this Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption. The Prime Minister's billion-dollar green slush fund handed out \$123 million in taxpayer dollars illegally. We know this because Conservatives have been fighting against the Liberal cover-up as we have tried to expose the Liberal minister's incompetence. We know that nearly 100 conflicts of interest were uncovered because of the Auditor General's investigation. It is shocking confirmation of corruption and we know that the Liberals are going to try to cover it up. What we need to know today is this: Is the minister going to assure Canadians that not a single dollar of severance will go to the corrupt executives?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, let me tell Canadians that the Conservatives at the time, 20 years ago, wanted that to be an independent organization, arm's-length from government. That was the delivery model that was chosen. From the moment we had allegations, we investigated because we want to get to the bottom of this.

We have seen the reports that have come up. We have proactively worked with the Auditor General. We are going to restore confidence. We are going to restore governance in this organization. However, one thing is that we are never going to leave our small and medium-sized business owners who are fighting for climate change in this country. We are going to fight with them.

The Speaker: Colleagues, normally this is the kind of energy we would hear on a Wednesday. I am going to ask the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton to please take the microphone when he is recognized by the Chair to do so.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only fighting that we have seen from these Liberals is fighting for more handouts for Liberal insiders. Liberal insiders lined up to get rich, while Canadians line up at food banks. The Auditor General's report makes it crystal clear that the current Prime Minister and his government are not worth the cost or the corruption.

There was \$76 million given out to projects connected to Liberals' friends. They are Liberal friends who were appointed to the slush fund by these very Liberals. Liberals are lining the pockets of Liberals. We know all about it after nine years of this corrupt Prime Minister. Will the Liberals stop the cover-up and commit to get back every one of Canadians' dollars?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here we go with the Conservatives again, against our small and medium-sized business owners in this country who are fighting for climate change. As I have said before, once we received allegations, we initiated the investigation because we wanted to get to the bottom of this. The CEO of the organization has resigned. The chair of the board has resigned. We demanded an action plan by management. We welcome the Auditor General's report. We are going to restore confidence and we are going to restore governance, but we are going to make sure we are always going to be there to fight for small and medium-sized business owners in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption. We are talking about three scathing reports from the Auditor General, not just one or two, but three.

I would like to quote the Auditor General. First, there is "The federal organizations' frequent disregard of policies". Second, there are "significant lapses in...governance and stewardship of public funds." Third, there is the "government's...disconnected approach".

Oral Questions

After nine years of inflationary spending, supported by the Bloc Québécois, yes, Liberal cronies are happy, but why are Canadians paying the price when it comes to rent, groceries and taxes?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me another opportunity to thank the Auditor General for her very important work. The findings of her report are similar to those we already have seen and heard from Government of Canada agencies and committees of the House of Commons in recent months.

In light of the previous findings, we have been taking action for over a year to put an end to all the standing offers, including those with companies similar to McKinsey.

• (1440)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the result of the Liberals' actions: The Liberal green fund and its directors, appointed by the Prime Minister, have lined the pockets of their Liberal friends.

This morning, the Auditor General revealed that the Liberal green fund awarded \$59 million to projects that were not even eligible for grants, all in full view of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. As usual, the minister did nothing. We now know that the minister was aware of it.

Will the minister go ask his friends to pay the money they were not entitled to receive back to Canadians?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are just waking up. It must be the sun. As I said in English: the moment we heard of allegations, we launched the investigation. While the Conservatives were sleeping, we launched investigations with Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton and McCarthy Tétrault. We worked with the Auditor General because we wanted to get to the bottom of things.

The governance model we are putting forward will allow us to kick-start the organization and ensure that we can fund small and medium-sized businesses that are tackling climate change. We are going to rebuild trust and support small and medium-sized businesses in Canada.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of people who might be watching, the report was tabled yesterday. No one was allowed to see it beforehand. Only one Bloc Québécois member sits on the committee, and that is the member for Montarville. Revealing the names in question is strictly prohibited.

I encourage the Liberal caucus in particular to look within and recognize that members of their own caucus may be under foreign influence. At their next caucus meeting, I suggest they talk among themselves so that those involved can be identified.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday and repeated again today, it is important to be very careful when publicly discussing intelligence in any detail.

As the Prime Minister correctly pointed out, we are the only government that has brought in a series of measures that have evolved over the years to strengthen our ability to detect foreign interference. I have a great deal of confidence in our security and intelligence services and the RCMP. I know they are going to do a great job doing the work that needs to be done.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these are troubled times. There are troubling situations in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Mexico and just about everywhere on the planet. Add to that global warming, institutionalized violence and war, and these are troubled times indeed.

It is easy to understand why people from around the world are seeking refuge. That means we find ourselves with record numbers of asylum seekers, people waiting for work permits. They are forced to rely on food banks and social assistance.

As usual, Ottawa is asleep at the switch. When is this government going to take the issue of asylum seekers seriously?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his very fair question.

It is true that Canada, like many other countries, is facing a record number of asylum claims. This year is another one for the record books. That does not mean we are not taking things seriously. On the contrary, we are stepping up our efforts to ensure that the people who come here, fleeing war and violence, are well received and properly supported. We need Quebec's support.

I want to point out how important it is that the Bloc Québécois continue to advocate to ensure that asylum seekers are welcomed in Quebec and Canada.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a cost related to asylum seekers. There is also a responsibility. We have to house them, care for them, educate them and provide them with French classes. We have to allow them to work, something that Ottawa is incapable of doing.

Asylum seekers currently represent 20% of social assistance recipients in Quebec. The Prime Minister says, "come to Canada, oh downtrodden of the earth". He forgets to tell them that once they arrive, he will not lift a finger for them. He cannot even give them a work permit in less than 30 days.

Is that the Liberal definition of being welcoming?

Oral Questions

• (1445)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago, the member across the way claimed that it took six, seven or eight months, I no longer remember how long. People are not entitled to a work permit before three months. We are doing our best to give them one.

Obviously, money earned can go a long way. It is clear that we can do better. It is clear that we want to do better. Obviously, in light of the record number of claims, we are going to need the support of the provinces, including Quebec. I very much welcome that support.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General report proves the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption. The NDP-Liberal government spent \$200 million on McKinsey, which is just another example of the Prime Minister favouring his insider friends. The AG stated this showed a flagrant disregard for procurement rules, as the government sole-sourced with no justification, and competitive processes were changed to favour McKinsey. The clear favouritism is just one more example of the government choosing its friends over integrity.

Why has the Prime Minister been caught red-handed, time and time again, giving his friends lucrative contracts?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for asking this important question, which allows me to thank the Auditor General for her important work on this topic.

The report comes to similar conclusions to those of the report that was released by the government last year. Based on those previous findings, we have been acting for more than a year to end the standing offers with McKinsey and all similar companies, as well as introducing stricter requirements for departments with their own contracting authorities.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or corruption. Dominic Barton, the former global head of McKinsey, was hand-picked by the PM to be the Canadian ambassador to China and the chair of the advisory council on economic growth. Therefore, it is no surprise that, after 2016, McKinsey contracting began to go up and up, with few signs of stopping. He even joined a meeting between McKinsey and the Canada Infrastructure Bank while he was the ambassador, and he hid this from members of committee.

Why should Canadians tolerate a Prime Minister who promotes his rich friends and a government run by McKinsey?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to repeat what I just said in the other official language. We thank the Auditor General of Canada for her important work on this file.

The report reaches conclusions similar to those in the report that was released by the government last year. Nevertheless, we will

continue to take the findings into account. For example, standing offers with McKinsey and all similar companies were cancelled a year ago, and we will continue to implement stricter requirements for departments that do their own contracting.

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report proves that, after nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or corruption. In her audit of McKinsey, the AG found that the Liberal government broke the rules, showed clear favouritism and could not demonstrate value for money.

The Prime Minister needs to take responsibility. Almost \$200 million was awarded to McKinsey. Contracts were rigged, Liberal insiders got rich and taxpayers are on the hook.

Will the Prime Minister finally ban McKinsey from government contracting?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have answered this question multiple times now. I would just add that, in addition to what I have said, these contracts have been closely examined several times, including by the Auditor General. No indication of political interference was ever found.

However, speaking of contracts, may I talk about dental care, about which the Conservative leader has nothing to say, because he believes and claims that it does not exist? Two million seniors in Canada have already registered for dental. Now, why is a Conservative leader misinforming and hurting seniors by telling them it does not exist?

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report proves once again that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the corruption.

Now, Liberals love McKinsey; apparently, all is fair in love and government contracting. Most of the \$200 million in McKinsey contracts did not follow the rules and, in almost half of cases, it was not clear that the contract was needed. In some cases, the government even rigged the process to favour McKinsey.

Why do the Liberals show such affection for McKinsey but such disdain for Canadian taxpayers?

• (1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question has already been answered several times by my colleagues. However, I am glad to hear the Conservatives, albeit obliquely, talking about income inequality in our society. It is a concern that we share.

Oral Questions

The good news for the Conservatives is that they have the opportunity to support us and to support our increase in the capital gains inclusion rate, which is a way to ask those at the very top to help the Canadian middle class. Let us see if the Conservatives will do it.

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[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Alexandre Bouleric (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for years now, customs and border services officers have been seeking retirement benefits similar to those enjoyed by their law enforcement counterparts. This is about justice and respect for these workers, who keep us safe.

A committee has been examining the matter for three years. The Treasury Board president received recommendations in December. It has been radio silence ever since. These officers could go on strike 48 hours from now, on Thursday.

Why are the Liberals still dragging their feet when it comes to standing up for workers?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. We are at the table. We are pursuing talks because an agreement that is fair to taxpayers and public servants is crucial.

We are always there for the public service and for a very just and equitable agreement. We are there.

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[English]

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, Nunavummiut already pay some of the highest airfares in the world. The lowest airfare in 2023 from Ottawa to Grise Fiord was over \$11,000. Even worse is that baggage fees recently went up, ripping off northerners even more. This is all happening under the Liberals' watch, when they promised that airline costs would not go up in the north.

Flights are a lifeline in Nunavut. Why is the government letting airlines gouge Nunavummiut for essential travel?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that affordability is front and centre in everything we do all over Canada, especially the north. We have brought forward \$10-a-day child care for affordability. Nunavut was the first province or territory to take advantage of that. Certainly, affordability is front and centre. We realize that the cost of travel may be high. We are looking into ways to make it more affordable.

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WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every single Conservative MP voted against pharmacare to provide universal access to contraception, and the party's own

caucus members have expressed anti-choice rhetoric. One Conservative member has referenced the legislation as “focusing on wiping out or tapering off the population”.

Could the Minister of Health please share how the Conservative member is missing the point of the legislation and how her remarks can be harmful for women and gender-diverse Canadians?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that over half of the Conservative caucus has been confirmed as being anti-choice and being against a woman's right to choose. We also know that 100% of Conservative MPs voted against free contraception for women.

When a member makes such comments, it becomes clear that, if they are both against abortion and against access to contraception, they are against a woman's right to choose and have autonomy over her own body. It is not Conservative MPs who should tell women whether they should or should not start a family; it is women themselves who must always make that decision.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the explosive Auditor General's report proves that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or corruption. The NDP-Liberal government knew conflict of interest policies were not being followed and did absolutely nothing. With \$76 million green-lit by Liberal-appointed directors, never to be seen again, Canadians deserve so much better.

If the minister knew about these conflicts, why did he not take his job seriously and fire the directors?

● (1455)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually welcome the question from the member, because it seems that the Conservatives have not really listened. The moment we heard of allegations, when they were asleep, we launched the investigation. We launched the investigations by Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton and McCarthy Tétrault. Once we had done so, we suspended funding to the organization. The chair of the board and the CO resigned. We demanded an action plan by management.

We are committed to restoring the funding to the firms. We are committed to having more governance, and we are committed to ensuring that there will be trust in a new organization.

Oral Questions

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister did nothing for 48 months, even though he had officials sitting in the meetings. The Auditor General's explosive report on the NDP-Liberal green slush fund shows that personal friends of the Prime Minister funnelled obscene amounts of money into their own pockets. The Auditor General confirmed that, an incredible 186 times, with almost half of all the green slush fund projects, Liberal swindlers voted themselves hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money to their companies.

Will the Prime Minister call in the police and make these Liberal swindlers pay back this money?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that there were a lot of people on their side sleeping at the switch. What I have said is very clear. We received allegations and we investigated. We investigated. We made sure that we would get to the bottom of this. We suspended the funding to the organization. The chair of the board and the CO resigned. We made sure that there would be a management plan in place.

We want to restore confidence. We expect everyone to adhere to the highest governance. That is why we are proposing a new model of governance that would make sure that public funds are disbursed with the level of governance that all Canadians expect.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Liberal-NDP-Bloc government, which is not worth the cost or the corruption, the Auditor General tells us that Sustainable Development Technology Canada violated its conflict of interest policies 90 times and awarded \$359 million to 10 projects that were not eligible. This is yet another example of the Liberal government's mismanagement.

Why is this government not careful, and why does it waste so much of taxpayers' money?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now the member for Lévis—Lotbinière is waking up.

As I said, we received allegations in February 2023. In March 2023, we launched an investigation with an arm's-length organization that was created by Parliament 20 years ago.

Following the report submitted to us by an accounting and law firm, we took appropriate action and suspended funding. The board chair resigned. The head of the organization resigned.

We will be there to restore confidence and to ensure that our SMEs can get funding to counter—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this minister is asleep at the switch. The Auditor General has discovered that \$76 million in funding was awarded to projects with ties to Liberal cronies. Greasing palms and enriching Liberal cronies shows a complete lack of ethics and responsibility. This is another scandal.

Why are conflicts of interest and money for cronies commonplace in the Liberal government?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in the House can recognize the member for Lévis—Lotbinière's theatrical talents, but the reality is simple. I have said it before, and I will say it again so that everyone on that side of the House and the Canadians watching us can hear it: The most important thing is integrity.

That is why, when we received allegations, we launched an investigation. We made sure to suspend the funding until we received the findings. The CEO of the organization has stepped down. The chair of the board of directors has stepped down.

We are proposing a new governance model to restore confidence and ensure that we can support SMEs in Canada's green technology sector.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report on the contracts the government awarded to McKinsey has just been released. There were 97 contracts totalling more than \$200 million. Most importantly, the report reveals that 71% of those contracts were awarded non-competitively. Nine of the 10 departments and eight of the 10 Crown corporations involved broke the rules. The Auditor General even goes so far as to say that this is a common problem.

How can the Liberals simultaneously increase the size of the public service by 40% while depending on untendered contracts with private firms?

● (1500)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is another great opportunity to thank and congratulate the Auditor General on her important work. Her conclusions, of course, are similar to those we have been hearing in recent months. These conclusions have enabled us, over the past few months, to take those previous findings into account and take action to put an end to standing offers with McKinsey and all other similar companies. We are also introducing stricter and more legitimate requirements for all other government departments to do their own contracting.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report also shows that the use of McKinsey has exploded since the Liberals came to power. That did not go unnoticed. For many of these contracts, the departments were unable to prove that these consultants had the necessary security clearance. Meanwhile, McKinsey had its paws all over public services, immigration, Trans Mountain and even defence.

How can the Liberals stand by and let their own rules be circumvented, even when it comes to security?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right to draw attention to two things. The first is security. The second is spending.

Let us begin with spending. The President of the Treasury Board has been very clear over the past few months. We are reducing professional services contracts by 15% to give the public service even more latitude and capacity to serve Canadians.

When it comes to security, the Auditor General was very clear. She said that we needed more information and more capacity to store and share this information at the appropriate time.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, another gag order victim of the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister has come forward. This time, it is his own Parliamentary Budget Officer, who revealed yesterday that there was a secret government document that would lambaste and completely put to shame the claims on the carbon tax scam. This secret report would confirm most Canadians are worse off in this scam than what they get in phony rebates, and emissions have gone up.

Will the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister lift the gag order on the PBO so that Canadians and everyone can know what they already know, which is that the Prime Minister and this carbon tax scam are not worth the cost?

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, the Parliamentary Budget Officer does important and essential work, and we thank him for the update. Recently, he had an update on his website, saying that the last estimate he had done was based on faulty information, and we thank him for correcting the record. It confirms what we have known all along, what economists and independent organizations across the country have been saying, which is that eight out of 10 Canadians are better off with federal carbon pricing.

The reason the Conservatives are so bent out of shape about this is because it re-emphasizes the fact that carbon pricing both lowers emissions and the Canada carbon rebate supports affordability.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the Liberals are gagging the PBO because they are ashamed he is going to reveal that this carbon tax scam is not worth the cost and it will confirm that a majority of Canadians are worse off in this scam than what they get back in phony rebates.

If the Liberals do not want to ungag him and they do not want to release the report, why do they not just call a carbon tax election so that Canadians can decide whether they want to keep this scam or axe the tax under a common-sense Conservative government?

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, the Con-

servatives have clung to this flawed scenario and they refuse to correct their own misinformation on this very important subject.

I would recommend that the Leader of the Opposition maybe go to Carleton over the summer and brush up on his mathematics. However, it is very clear that it is probably elementary school he needs to go back to. We are talking about adding and subtracting. Conservative math just is not adding up these days. However, I want to reassure Canadians that on July 15, the Canada carbon rebate will be arriving in their bank accounts or in their mailboxes.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everybody knows in Canada, except for maybe the NDP-Liberal coalition, that they pay more in the carbon tax than they get back in a rebate. It turns out that even the government knew. Even the Prime Minister knows. We know that because the PBO said that.

When will the government finally release this report and end the carbon tax cover-up?

• (1505)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know, and Canadians know, that eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back with the carbon rebate. However, there is someone who is being gagged, and that is an MP who sits in the House of Commons, the MP for Peace River—Westlock. He had the temerity to say out loud what the majority of Conservative MPs believe, which is that a woman should not have the right to choose. Now we know that those Conservatives, who campaigned on a price on pollution and are disavowing it, will do the same thing with—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Malpeque.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I was pleased to join colleagues in Halifax for an announcement on the funding for the Ronald McDonald House Charities Atlantic.

Ronald McDonald House serves as a place of comfort and stability for many families across Atlantic Canada in time of need. This weekend's announcement will ensure that Ronald McDonald House Atlantic is the first net-zero house in Canada, made possible due to our government's commitment to infrastructure investments and climate action, unlike the official opposition.

Could the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities please speak to the importance of this investment?

Oral Questions

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for joining me in Halifax to visit Ronald McDonald House. The Ronald McDonald House organization is an incredible organization that allows families to make sure they have a place to be when they are away from home to seek treatment for children who are sick.

We had an opportunity while we were there to meet Brittany and Riley, who recently welcomed Finley, their new addition, who arrived a little earlier than expected, but because the services being provided allowed them a place to stay, they were able to get the treatment they needed.

We are investing nearly \$3 million to help make the facility more efficient, more accessible and, importantly, double the capacity to serve 1,200 families. I want to thank all the volunteers and workers who make it possible to have such a wonderful facility.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Liberal government, the cost of living is too high and Quebeckers are paying the price. Yesterday, the Bloc-Liberal voted against pausing federal gas taxes to give Quebeckers a break. The Bloc Québécois is at it again: It wants to radically increase the taxes that are costing Quebeckers so much.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed yesterday at the Standing Committee on Finance that the government has a report that is being kept secret.

When will this minister publish this report that proves that Quebeckers are right to call for a break this summer?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the 2021 election campaign, every Conservative member promised to put a price on pollution. That was important, especially in Quebec, because Quebeckers understand the importance of climate action. We now see the Conservatives doing an about-face.

The thing that concerns me is the Conservatives' future about-face on a woman's right to choose. The Conservative member from northern Alberta said what he really thinks. We should be afraid of those Conservatives.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the Prime Minister is hiding the truth about the carbon tax, that it costs Canadians more than they pay. Yesterday, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that he had received information from the Liberal government that confirmed his report that Canadians paid more but was under a Liberal gag order from talking about it. Canadians know it costs them more.

When will the Prime Minister stop gagging the PBO and release the secret report that proves Canadians are right?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only person being gagged in Ottawa right now is the Conservative member of Parliament for Peace River—Westlock. He committed the cardinal political crime among the power-hungry Conservative Party of actually telling the truth, of actually telling Canadians what he believes and what he intends to do, and that is to end a woman's right to choose. He is in a majority in that caucus. It is time for the Conservatives to tell Canadians the truth about their intentions.

• (1510)

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 16, the Liberals announced that they were increasing taxes on the investments of Canadians through an increase to the capital gains tax. That tax is supposed to take effect three weeks from today and Canadians have not seen the legislation yet. One wonders what the government is doing over there.

When will the government show small businesses, families, farmers, entrepreneurs and physicians the text of the bill so that they know how this tax increase will impact them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, finally, there is a good question from the Conservatives. I am so glad to say that we will begin the legislative process to raise the capital gains inclusion rate before the House rises. One of the reasons why that is so important is that it will give Canadians a chance to see the true colours of those Conservatives. So far, they have dithered, they have dodged and they have not said whether they are in favour of asking those who are doing the very best to pay a little more. Soon, they are not going to have a chance to dodge.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, Canada committed to net zero by 2050, and our government is working very hard across all sectors to achieve this ambitious and necessary target.

One of the initiatives we introduced is the green and inclusive community buildings program, which aims to make Canada's infrastructure less polluting and more sustainable, as well as more accessible and inclusive.

[English]

Could the minister give a concrete example of a project that is supported by this program and explain why this is beneficial for the community that receives its funding?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through the green and inclusive community buildings program, our government has invested heavily in projects such as the Centre des arts de Stanstead.

Business of Supply

[English]

The \$2.1-million funding will bring the Théâtre Sans Frontières back to life. It will host a variety of cultural and artistic events, as well as many community activities.

[Translation]

The fully renovated theatre will also play an important role in the small border municipality's economic development.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today's Auditor General report confirms what we already know; The Liberals and the Conservatives love their Bay Street McKinsey friends, so much so that McKinsey got over \$200 million, and billions more were given to other management firms.

Our public service has the skills and is ready to do the work, but once again, the Liberals and the Conservatives give preferential treatment to ultrarich corporations. When will they start respecting our public service and stop forking over money to rich consultants?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are grateful to the Auditor General for her important report.

Although the report comes to similar conclusions as the reports released by the government last year, it is obviously important input so that we can continue the work that we have done, such as making sure that we are, for instance, removing McKinsey and similar companies from standing offers. We are also introducing stricter requirements for other departments to do their own contracting in a way that guarantees integrity and confidence in our procurement process.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians with disabilities are struggling to keep up with the high costs of food and housing, and the Liberals' measly \$200 plan will leave people with disabilities living well below the poverty line.

The government has an obligation, legally, to uphold human rights and to ensure an adequate standard of living for everyone. Shamefully, the Liberals are failing, just like the Conservatives before them.

When will the Liberals get serious about ending poverty for persons with disabilities?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada disability benefit is a major milestone in our strong and unwavering commitment to creating a more inclusive and more fair Canada.

Through this budget, we have committed over \$6.1 billion as the initial investment for the Canada disability benefit. This is the first-ever federal benefit designed for persons with disabilities. We know

there is more to do, but we will continue to work with provinces and territories, first, to make sure that there are no clawbacks and to see what more we can do to support individuals with disabilities, now and into the future.

* * *

● (1515)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Oleksandra Matviichuk, Chair of the Center for Civil Liberties in Ukraine, a joint recipient of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—MEASURES TO LOWER FOOD PRICES**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was talking, prior to question period, about a number of initiatives, whether legislative initiatives or budgetary measures, that we have done as a government to support Canadians dealing with the whole issue of the price of groceries. I like to believe we are going in the right direction, where we are seeing more stability in the price of groceries. That is a positive thing because of a number of measures taken by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance or by the ministers responsible for ensuring that there is a higher sense of competition out there.

I want to use my last couple of minutes to comment very briefly—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I see the hon. member for Vancouver East has her hand up on a point of order.

* * *

HONG KONG

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the 35th anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre. What is unfolding in Hong Kong is what many Hong Kongers call the “Tiananmen massacre 2.0”.

There have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That, given that,

Business of Supply

(i) the Hong Kong 47 stands for so many of the values shared by Canadians, most importantly democracy, respect for the rule of law, and standing up for what is right;

(ii) the Hong Kong 47 participated in lawful election primaries in 2020;

(iii) 14 pro-democracy figures from the Hong Kong 47 were found guilty of subversion under the National Security Law;

the House call upon the Hong Kong authorities to release the Hong Kong 47 and cease prosecuting them and others charged under the National Security Law.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member 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)

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BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—MEASURES TO LOWER FOOD PRICES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks by acknowledging the food supply chain and, in particular, our farmers, whether they be the cattle producers in the Interlake region of Manitoba, the pork producers in the pork industry or the chicken and grain producers all over southern Manitoba.

I must say that it is a beautiful sight, come fall time, to see the endless fields of yellow and gold. We get a very enhanced perception as to what degree Manitoba, the Prairies or even Canada as a whole, are there to ensure that we are providing food not only for people in Canada, but also for those around the world. Personally, I want to ensure, as much as possible, that they are getting the dollars they deserve for the work they are doing.

When it comes to Loblaws, Metro, Sobeys, Costco and Walmart, we are watching.

• (1520)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting listening to my colleague across the way. I appreciate that he is thanking his farmers because we all appreciate our farmers. However, what I do not understand and what I find a bit rich coming from the member across the way is that he talks about lowering food prices, yet his government still supports a carbon tax for farmers. Farmers have to pay the carbon tax on many different facets throughout the supply chain. That is what is actually driving up the cost of food and the cost of production for our farmers.

I wonder if the member would support Bill C-234, in its original form, to help lower the carbon tax for farmers on all the things that they have to pay it on, in order to get food to the grocery stores, which would help lower the price of food for Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are like a one-trick pony. They only have one idea, and that idea is to cut the price on pollution or to cut the carbon tax. What the member

does not say is that Conservatives would also cut the carbon rebate for 80% of Canadians who get more money back in the rebate than they pay in the carbon tax.

Here is the really astounding thing. There are 30 Conservative members of Parliament who represent the province of Alberta. On April 1, when the carbon tax went up three cents a litre, the provincial Conservative government increased it by four cents a litre, and not one Reform-Conservative member of Parliament said anything negative regarding a Conservative tax increase in the province of Alberta.

When they look in the mirror, do they ever recognize the word “shame”?

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the most interesting things that took place yesterday on the Hill is that the NDP leader appeared at committee on Competition Act legislation he has tabled that would create greater accountability against corporate greed. He was attacked by the Conservatives, without asking him good questions, and on top of that, the Liberals seemed indifferent to it.

I would ask the member if he could explain the Liberals' position with regard to increasing accountability on the Competition Act and ensuring that Canadians are not going to be gouged because of systemic problems that have been put in place and have been supported by successive Conservative governments and Liberal governments that have left Canada isolated when it comes to protecting consumers.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it was the Prime Minister and the Liberal government that modernized the Competition Act, which ensured things such as the Competition Bureau would have not only more resources but also better capabilities in ensuring there is a higher sense of accountability and transparency dealing with competition in all areas or industries, including groceries. I would argue it is one of the reasons we are starting to now see more stability in some of the prices on groceries.

I would suggest to the member that there are tangible actions the government has taken to support what we are talking about, and that is recognizing the cost of food. As a governing body, we have to do what we can to support Canadians and to keep grocery prices down. One thing I referred to earlier was the food data bank on pricing, in which we can individualize a province and get a sense of whether the actual costs have changed over the last number of months.

Our policy, whether it is budgetary or legislative, is having a positive impact on prices of food. It does not mean we cannot do more. There is always room for improvement.

• (1525)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, according Amautiit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association, Nunavut children suffer the highest rates of poverty, upwards of 35%, compared to Canada's rates. At the same time, the Liberal government is subsidizing corporate greed by giving \$64 million of taxpayers' money to The North West Company, which gives its CEO a salary of \$3.91 million.

Business of Supply

Does the member agree with us that there is an urgency to reform the nutrition north program so that it is actually helping to alleviate poverty rather than supporting corporate greed?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we are very much aware of the important role the nutrition north program plays. Whether it is me, the Minister of Northern Affairs or the Prime Minister, we are exceptionally sympathetic to it. Working with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, we have seen an enhancement of that program in the budget. If we go back to just over a decade ago, the budget for nutrition north was somewhere between \$40 million and \$50 million. Today, it is just under \$150 million.

I would also mention the community food program that has been developed, and it has been well received. It is easy for opposition members to be nothing but critical. However, I would suggest to the member that the government has made significant progress and continues to work with the different stakeholders in the north. We recognize there are always opportunities to improve the program, and that is something the Minister of Northern Affairs has done.

I would suggest that members take a look at the travelling and consultation the minister has done on an ongoing basis. Members might be challenged to find a previous minister who has travelled as much as the current minister has. He has listened to and consulted with the communities. I can assure the member that the whole idea of nutrition north and finding ways that the program can be improved upon is something the government takes very seriously.

If there were more time, I would provide some additional thoughts on the whole idea of corporate support.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even as food gets more and more expensive, our farmers face stagnant incomes and skyrocketing costs.

I have a simple question. How is the government planning to ensure that our farmers, the people who feed us, can feed themselves as they feed the rest of the population?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the reasons to have a grocery code of conduct, which would be to ensure that there is more transparency and accountability in all aspects of the food chain.

That is why I made reference, in my concluding remarks, to farmers. I focused on Manitoba, but that same principle can be applied throughout Canada. We have the best producers in the world with the quality of the product and the food. We play a very important role in the world for food. It is important that we not only continue to support our farmers and producers but also look at ways to ensure farmers are getting their fair share of the value of the products they produce.

One of the ways we could do that would be by looking at the grocery code of conduct to ensure that the big five grocers, in particular, and others buy into it. We need to ensure there is more transparency and accountability so the producers are getting a better price for the products they are producing. We have strong advocates out there for that. I cited a few of them. One I recently had the

opportunity to tour was Peak of the Market, which emphasizes the importance of vegetables. People do not realize that things like onions and potatoes are grown and supplied year-round.

There are all sorts of mechanisms, whether they be budgetary measures or legislative measures, that the government has been using to support not only our producers but also, most importantly, the consumers of the products. This is because we are very much aware of the cost of food. It is nice that this is going in the right direction, and that has taken a lot of work being done by a wide spectrum of individuals, including governments of all political stripes. I believe there is still more to do, and we are committed to doing just that.

● (1530)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Times are tough. Canadians are struggling and, every time they go to the grocery store, they feel the pinch. They go in to buy items that they have bought before, and they see that prices are up. They go in week after week and see prices continuing to climb. Canadians are feeling it when they cash out at the till, and they know that they are being ripped off. When they go in and pay more than ever for their groceries, Canadians know that, at the other end of that, there is a CEO ripping them off.

Corporate grocery stores are posting record profits while Canadians are struggling to buy groceries. One out of four Canadians is skipping a meal. They specifically cite that they are skipping meals because groceries cost too much. There is record food bank usage. We know that these corporate grocery stores are making huge profits and their CEOs are making huge bonuses and salaries. We are saying, "Enough is enough."

[*Translation*]

Without a doubt, people are struggling. Grocery shopping has become harder than ever. The cost of food keeps going up, while the profits of the big grocery chains have reached an all-time high.

The Liberal government keeps letting these big corporations rake in record profits while people are struggling. We are saying that enough is enough.

Business of Supply

[English]

I look at the Liberals' response to this. While people are hurting, they cannot afford their groceries, food bank usage is at a record high and corporate profits for these large corporate grocery stores are also at a record high, what has been the Liberal government's response? What has been the Prime Minister's response? Well, he literally told Canadians that they need to do a better job of shopping. They need to look at grocery flyers. The Liberals genuinely said that to Canadians. Then, the Prime Minister said, "We are going to ask the CEOs of these large corporations, nicely, to stabilize prices." The Liberals continue to give big grocers massive tax giveaways, and they are failing to bring down prices.

The Liberals' response to this crisis was insulting. The Prime Minister's response was insulting and has not improved the situation.

What about the Conservatives? Their response is very telling at a time when corporate profits are at a record high and when Canadians are struggling to buy groceries. Canadians know that they are being ripped off by these large corporate grocery stores. What is the Conservatives' response? Their response is anything else. They are attacking anyone and everything but the real driver that is pushing up the cost of living and the real reason that the price of groceries is so high. That is the thing that the Conservatives avoid.

Why is it that the Conservatives are avoiding talking about the reason that people's grocery prices are so high? I have an idea. Could it be that the leader of the Conservative Party has too close ties to these large corporations and is unwilling to talk about their corporate greed? Could it be that his chief strategist is a lobbyist for Loblaw? Could it be that his deputy leader was a former Walmart lobbyist? Maybe it is because his caucus chair is the chairman of a \$2-billion business profiteering from food inflation. Maybe it is because the Metro CEO is a max donor to the Conservative Party. The leader of the Conservative Party has strong ties, which we have checked out, with the companies still under investigation for bread price-fixing. Let us remember that that was a scheme that ripped off Canadians to the tune of \$5 billion.

With the Conservatives, big grocery stores and big companies pay less, and Canadians end up paying more. That is what they get with Conservatives. With Conservatives, big companies pay less, and Canadians pay more.

• (1535)

Canadians are so tired and so frustrated with the failure of the Liberal government and the Conservatives to act to deal with corporate greed that they have taken it upon themselves. Canadians have banded together to boycott Loblaws. They boycotted a large corporate grocery store, but it should not have to come to that. The role of government is to take on corporate greed to protect consumers from CEOs that want to rip them off. That is supposed to be the role of government, which is why we are calling for concrete measures, real steps, to make food more affordable.

Here is our plan: The government has to force corporate grocery stores to lower the cost of food essentials, and if they do not, then they must impose a price cap. Second, we need to reform nutrition north. We need to overhaul the program to make sure that it actual-

ly delivers help to those in the north who need it. It should not be a get-rich-quick scheme for CEOs operating in the north. Finally, we need to stop Liberal and Conservative handouts going to large corporate grocery stores.

[Translation]

We are therefore calling on the government to do as follows. Large corporate grocery stores must immediately lower the price of essential items or face a price cap. Second, the nutrition north Canada subsidy program is not working and needs a complete overhaul. Lastly, we need to put an end to the big handouts that the Liberals and Conservatives have long been giving to large corporate grocery stores.

[English]

We have also been saying that the government has significant tools and power to take on this problem. Some of the things that we have called for, in addition to what we are calling for today, is that big grocers that throw away good food at the end of the day just to preserve their profits should not be able to do that. They should be required to ensure that food makes it to food banks and to Canadians who need it. We want to make sure that big grocery store corporate chains that are making record profits pay their fair share, and we should put that money back in the pockets of Canadians. As well, we need to increase the transparency of price setting and the transparency of the profits these corporate grocery stores are making. Finally, we need to support independent grocery stores.

Instead of the Liberal approach, which is to try to recruit another multinational, large corporation to come to Canada that will rip off Canadians more, we need to invest in a long-term strategy to have, across the country, in every community, a strong and robust independent local grocery store where people can go and have choice. They need a local independent store in their communities, which needs to be supported with initiatives and incentives to encourage that type of independence. Canadians should not have to pay six dollars for two apples. Canadians should not have to go into debt to buy pasta and bread. Food is essential, and the government has a fundamental responsibility to ensure that people can afford to buy their groceries.

I know what it is like to worry, and I know that so many Canadians right now are worried about the cost of groceries. I remember what it was like when I took care of my kid brother. I was 20, and he was 15. Things were difficult at home, so he came to live with me. When my mom told me that dad had taken a turn for the worse and was not able to send any support, I was on my own. I remember getting off the phone after that conversation, panicking, and going out to get a bunch of minimum-wage jobs, as a 20-year-old can do.

Business of Supply

I was always living with that fear that my kid brother would go hungry. I was trying as hard as I could to stay above water, but I was always feeling like we were about to drown. I remember that fear, which is what drives me to ensure that no Canadian has to worry about affording the food they need for their family, and they should also be able to afford those special treats for their loved ones.

I want to build a country where people have more joy and less worry, where we have less fear and more hope, and where we have less greed and more compassion. That is a country we can build, and to do that, we have to take on corporate greed and bring down the price of groceries.

Tomorrow, the Liberals and Conservatives will have a choice. Will they stand on the side of big grocery and big corporations to protect their CEOs and protect their profits, or will they stand with New Democrats and Canadians in demanding lower prices for their groceries? That is the choice in this chamber. That is a choice, and we will see where the Liberals and Conservatives stand tomorrow.

• (1540)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member opposite mention the Liberal lobbyists and the Conservative lobbyists, but I did not hear him mention his brother, the lobbyist for Metro.

Did the member discuss the motion with his brother before he put it forward here in the House?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that Conservatives want to distract from corporate greed and going after powerful grocery stores that are ripping off Canadians, but I am somewhat surprised at the Liberals. I should not be, because the Liberals have just the same type of ties; they are just as cozy with these large corporations as the Conservatives are. We can see that from their actions. The Prime Minister, instead of forcing the corporations to lower prices and taking on the corporate greed of the big three grocery stores in Canada of Loblaw, Metro and Sobeys, would rather ask the CEOs nicely to stabilize prices. Our motion demands that the government force these corporate grocery stores to lower their prices and make life more affordable for Canadians, or else prices will be capped. That is what our motion calls for.

I can already tell that the Conservatives and the Liberals do not have the courage to go after their friends. They want to protect their rich CEO buddies and those corporate grocery stores. We are going to take them on.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP criticizes the government, but he keeps supporting the same government's policies. Those policies are hurting Canadians every single day. Why would the leader of the NDP not do the right thing and stop supporting the government so that Canadians can choose another government that would do the right job for them?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, that was another uncreative, lazy argument. The Conservatives continue to make complaints and little noises in the corner while New Democrats are delivering for Canadians. We have forced the government to bring in dental care to help seniors, something that the Conservatives want to take away from seniors, from people's parents and grandparents. We have

forced the government to bring in medication coverage for people living with diabetes. The Conservatives think they are not worth it. They have been saying to people, the four million Canadians living with diabetes, that they are not worth it. We say they are worth it. We say seniors who are struggling because they cannot afford to get their teeth looked after are worth it.

We believe our job in this Parliament is to force Ottawa to work for people. While the Conservatives want to complain in a corner, we are delivering real results for Canadians to make their lives better. We are proud of that. There is a lot more that needs to be done, and we will continue fighting for them.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seniors are still waiting for dental care. It is not a simple matter. They are still waiting but, meanwhile, it is not as though they have extra money in their pockets. The government is still stubbornly refusing to increase the old age security pension.

That said, I get the impression that the Conservatives' populism is rubbing off on the NDP a bit. The NDP thinks that one wave of a magic wand will solve the problem, but it is much deeper than that.

The issue of grocery prices is being discussed on the Chicago exchange, but the price of inputs is caused by the fact that farmers are currently struggling because of climate change.

How does my colleague continue to justify supporting a government that is not doing enough in response to climate change, which is having a very significant impact on food prices?

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is a lot to say about what we just heard from the leader of the fourth party in this place, but I would call for quorum.

• (1545)

The Deputy Speaker: We will start counting again.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: I think we are okay.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree that this government has failed to take the measures needed to deal with the climate crisis. We used our leverage over this minority government to force it to take measures that it never would have taken otherwise.

I also want to point out that the main reason why grocery prices are so high is actually price gouging on the part of these grocery giants.

In our motion today, we are proposing a plan to lower prices, because people in Quebec and across Canada are struggling. It is more difficult than ever to buy groceries. That is why we are calling on the government to take measures as urgent as this crisis. We are asking grocery giants directly to lower the prices of essential foods or face a price cap.

I also want to mention that France has a similar plan. It took a similar approach and forced the country's grocery stores to lower the prices of essential foods, and it succeeded.

We want to do the same thing here, because people need urgent measures.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be able to stand and represent the people of Edmonton Strathcona. Today we are talking about the increasing price of groceries. I want to start by talking a bit about my son.

I have a 16-year-old. He is 6 feet, 3 inches tall. He is involved in rugby, football, hockey and wrestling. I can tell members very clearly that I know how much groceries cost, because that kid eats a lot. However, I also want to talk about some other folks in my riding. My dear friend Luanne came to my office. She is a senior, and, as one of my colleagues from the Bloc has mentioned, the government refuses to raise the OAS payments. Seniors are living right on the edge in my riding. Luanne came and asked about buying a little meat for her elderly mother. Luanne is living on OAS. She is trying to make ends meet, and she just wants a little meat for her mother in Canada, in Edmonton, in Alberta.

I want to talk about people living with disabilities. Bev, one of my fantastic constituents, actually has a guinea pig that she dresses up in Oilers colours; Bev's guinea pig is in my pet calendar that I give out to my constituents. Once again, I want to just take a moment to say congratulations to the Edmonton Oilers. She came in with a meticulously written budget of exactly where every single one of the dollars she gets from AISH goes, and there is no room for error there. There is no going out for dinner. She lives so close to the line. She is so cautious and so careful, and every time grocery prices go up, it is another hit on Bev and another time that she cannot afford groceries.

These are seniors and people living with disabilities in our communities, but I want to say that this is not all. Folks who have jobs and who are working can no longer afford to pay for their groceries; they can no longer afford to eat in this country. This is a huge problem, and the cost of food just keeps going up and up. In the last three years, the price of groceries has gone up by 20%. Food banks have reached a 35-year high, and food banks in and of themselves are not a solution: They are a band-aid.

Edmonton's Food Bank served 42,000 people in April alone, and a new report by Food Banks Canada said that Alberta's food insecurity rate is 27% higher than the national average.

Canadians are skipping meals. This is completely unacceptable, and government is urgently required to step up and help. We cannot continue to wait and to watch the Liberals nicely ask CEOs, who are raking in millions and billions of dollars of profit, to stop. That

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is not how we fix this problem. If I were to ask nicely for my 16-year-old to clean his room, it might not happen. Sometimes there have to be consequences if he does not do it. I would propose to the government that this may be the same case.

Loblaws doubled its profit margin in five years. Metro has the biggest profit margin of any grocery store. In fact, in 2023, the grocery sector made record profits, raking in \$6 billion. When is it enough? We should all be asking that. When is it enough profit for them? Canadians cannot afford their groceries; people cannot afford to eat.

I should not even get started on what is happening in the northern part of this country. The member for Nunavut has been fearless and tireless in raising this issue, day in and day out, in this place. However, we continue to see the nutrition north program contribute to corporate greed. Of the \$137 million that went to nutrition north, \$64 million went to the North West Company, and the CEO of that company was paid millions.

• (1550)

My colleague from Nunavut has told me that, when she goes to buy eggs in a store not run by the North West Company, they are half the price. The system is broken. Nutrition north is broken. This means that people in the north are not able to access food and that the Liberals' promise to help people be able to afford food in the north is simply contributing to corporate greed.

What fix have we seen? The Liberals have set up a task force. They have done no tasks, nor are they much of a force, to take the words from one of my colleagues from British Columbia. Again, it is a perfect example of Liberal talk with no action behind it. We have seen this time and time again.

Then we look at the Conservatives, and they have lobbyists within the highest level of their party. When the Conservatives were in power, they cut the corporate tax rate from 22% to 15%, which cost \$60 billion in corporate handouts, and \$2.35 billion of that went to Loblaws and Metro. In the U.S., they have a 21% corporate tax rate, and they are trying to get that up to 28%. These are handouts to corporations that are gouging Canadians.

The Conservatives did this because these are their friends, those whom they represent. This is who is part of their party. These are their donors. Why would we expect that they would do anything else?

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Here is what we are asking for, what the NDP needs to see: We want to make sure that things are fair for Canadians. We want it to be fair for people to go out and to buy their groceries. My leader, the leader from Burnaby South, and the rest of the NDP caucus want to force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the price of essential foods or to face consequences such as a price cap. That is a concrete step we could take now. That is a concrete piece of action that could be taken and that would have immediate effects on Canadians' grocery prices.

We want to stop delaying long-needed reforms on nutrition north programming. This program is not working. It is contributing to corporate greed, and people in the north deserve to be able to afford nutritious, good food. That is not happening right now.

We need to stop the Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers. There has been enough of giving money to those who are making the lives of Canadians harder.

The NDP has been leading on this issue for years. I understand that the Liberals and the Conservatives want to jump on this bandwagon. Obviously, the Liberals' plan is to talk about how concerned they are, perhaps get a task force together, consult with somebody and ask nicely. The Conservatives' plan, of course, would be to continue to give out corporate handouts to their friends. Their leader, the Stornoway king, is the guy who lives in the 19-room mansion paid for by taxpayers. He is not going to take away the gravy train that all his funders give him.

Canadians are going to need to depend on the NDP for this. We have been raising it in committee and in the House for years. The NDP has a plan. We have put forward this plan. There are concrete steps that every member in the House could take. Every member could vote for the motion. It would help Canadians. It would help members' constituents. Canadians are running out of time. I hope members support the motion.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the member have any concerns at all with regard to the government applying a price cap, as she is suggesting? Is there another country in the G20 doing this? I understand that France might be. I do not quite understand France.

Could the member provide any evidence of any G20 country that actually has some sort of a price cap that has been demonstrated to be effective and has not negatively impacted supply?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, there are lots of examples of how other governments around the world have taken concrete steps to make sure that corporate greed is not affecting the citizens in those countries. We have seen this.

We saw President Biden in the United States put in the excess profit tax. We have been calling for that, but the government has taken no action. We have seen, in France, that there is some work being done on this. There are other countries around the world that are looking at it.

What we need to be thinking about, as Canadians, is a Canadian solution for us. What is the solution where we can work on some-

thing that would concretely lower the price of groceries for Canadians?

What we have proposed here is a strong plan that would actually get the prices to come down. It would hold to account those grocers that are gouging Canadians, those big CEOs who are taking the money out of the pockets of Canadians and making record profits. They would be paying their fair share.

That is what all Canadians want. Canadians want something that is fair. They want something where they are treated fairly, where the field is not stacked against them, so that they have a chance to be able to pay for their groceries and feed their families.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Listening to her and working with her is always interesting.

This motion deals with the highly complex issue of grocery price inflation. As I mentioned earlier, rising prices depend partly on the Chicago Board of Trade and partly on the increased cost of producer inputs, largely due to climate change.

I really want to emphasize that point, because in a rural riding like mine, Shefford, we hear a lot talk about the fact that producers are being forced to raise their prices. That is the starting point, the foundation.

Given all the effects of the climate change happening at this time, Quebec has announced a plan to try to help farmers, even though we know it will not be enough. We also know that the federal government can and must do more for agriculture. Does my colleague believe that that the federal government must do its part to help these farmers make it through the climate crisis, like the Government of Quebec did yesterday, in an announcement that was welcomed by farmers?

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is somebody I have worked with quite closely on a number of different files, and I appreciate her insight and thought process.

I would agree with her that this is a very complex issue. There are some things we can do and other things we can continue to work on. Supporting local producers is vital. Supporting our farmers is a very important role that the government can step into and play. I do not know very well the Quebec program the member is referring to. I am a member of Parliament, of course, from Alberta. I congratulate the Edmonton Oilers.

What we can do to support local farmers is very different from making sure that corporate giants are not taking \$6 billion out of the pockets of Canadians and gouging them. Those are two very different things, and we can very much support one without supporting the other.

• (1600)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the bread-pricing scandal was really an eye-opener, when \$6 billion were stolen from Canadians. The Competition Bureau and our powerless laws need to be updated.

At committee, we had the CEOs of all the major grocery stores on the very same day as workers received pandemic pay or hero pay. That type of collusion still exists.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is certainly very knowledgeable about what has happened historically in this place. I know he was here for a portion of the Harper decade when the price-fixing scandal cost Canadians hundreds of dollars each. It was scandalous that over a decade, not a single Conservative stood up and said, “Enough. We want to shut this down.” There was not a single one. Many of the same Conservatives who were in government during the Harper decade are still here. In fact, I would point to the leader of the Conservative Party. The way the Conservative Party at that time allowed Canadians to be ripped off for a decade is absolutely shameful.

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine.

It is always a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise on behalf of those I represent in Winnipeg South Centre, and it is an honour to have the opportunity to rise today for a couple of reasons. One, of course, is that this is a very important conversation taking place in the country right now, and there have been a number of valid and interesting points raised here during debate that are worth further consideration. In particular, I have an interest in this because, over the course of the last number of months, I had the honour of sitting on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, although I am no longer a permanent member of that committee. I also currently sit on and still remain a permanent member of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

The reason I raised these two committees is that we have had lengthy conversations at both about a variety of the different elements of the conversation taking place right now. In fact, at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, we had a study, and I am not sure if that study has actually been released yet or not, but during my final couple of days as a member of the committee it was on the verge of being released, and there were some fascinating conversations that took place over the course of those meetings, inclusive of conversations we had with the CEOs of the major grocery chains.

It has been mentioned on a number of occasions by colleagues across the way that there are some very complex factors that feed into the supply chain and there are a number of different things that have previously driven and continue to drive the price of food in this country and around the world, whether that is the impacts of climate change, which I will come back to momentarily; whether that is conflict in Europe, such as the war between Russia and Ukraine; or whether that is pandemic-related supply chain disruptions. There are a variety of different factors contributing. Of course, there are also some long-standing concerns that we deal with, particularly in provinces like mine and in the north, which

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have to do with the disproportionate poverty facing indigenous peoples in this country.

I was very fortunate to be a part of a number of announcements in the not-too-distant past that focused on supporting the agriculture community across Canada, with particular focus on Manitoba. One of those was announcing an \$11-million grant that was going to Pulse Canada to look at some of the different ways in which we can utilize these strong agricultural sectors and industries that exist on the Prairies and in my home province of Manitoba in order to make sure that we are not only doing our part to deal with the impacts of climate change, but also working toward improving the cost of food and investing in healthier products as well.

Our government recognizes that food affordability is a critical issue that Canadians are facing. I totally understand, through many of the stories that have been shared by colleagues in this chamber today and previously, that there are constituents of theirs, just like there are of mine, who are finding it more difficult to make ends meet. As I mentioned a moment ago, there are a myriad factors that contribute to that.

We are encouraged when we do see data showing that food inflation has fallen from a peak of 11.4% in January 2023 to 1.9% in March 2024. I certainly understand that this is not the end of the challenges that people face, but it is an encouraging statistic in terms of seeing a trend line moving in the right direction.

We remain focused on ensuring that Canadians are paying fair prices for groceries, and that is why we are continuing to take action to ensure there is a continued stabilization of food prices. Food price stabilization requires the full engagement of the entire supply chain. That is why we have called on the grocery sector and those working throughout it, and that means both grocers and suppliers, to take meaningful actions to stabilize grocery prices.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Consumers play an essential role in Canada's economy. Consumer spending represents roughly 60% of our gross domestic product. When consumers are accountable and informed they can improve economic performance by helping stimulate competition and business innovation.

Our government recognizes that the affordability of food is a critical problem facing every Canadian consumer. That is why we reaffirmed in budget 2024 our commitment to ensure that food prices are kept stable and that the cost of living goes down for all Canadians.

Food price stabilization requires a full commitment by the entire supply chain. That is why we have asked businesses in the food sector, both grocers and suppliers, to take significant measures to stabilize food prices. In addition to working with the five big grocery chains in Canada, we are implementing several other tangible measures to support food price stabilization in Canada.

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[English]

I know that Canadians are frustrated with their existing grocery options, with one in three Canadians wanting to see increased competition in the grocery sector. Canadians want diversity, and they are ready and willing to seek out new retailers. To that end, it is important to note that more competition would lead to lower prices.

As our Competition Bureau has noted in two separate examples, this is possible. First, Walmart's decision to cut prices by as much as 35% in Canada in 2008 pressured its competition to do the same. Second, when a large foreign grocer known for a no-frills business model entered the Australian market, it significantly influenced the pricing of other Australian grocers, forcing them to react to its entrance by cutting prices. The competition the foreign grocer injected into the Australian market resulted in near-unprecedented levels of price cutting by domestic Australian competition.

One of the interesting things from the committee meetings that we held at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food was around competition and specifically rules preventing new grocers from entering the Canadian market by virtue of the distance that existed between an existing grocer and where the new one could build if entering into the Canadian market. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry has made some significant changes as per the direction of the Competition Bureau, and those changes have helped to drastically improve the conditions that we can build upon in order to ensure that there is further competition in the grocery sector.

I do want to thank my colleague from the Bloc who, a few moments ago, spoke at length in her questions about climate change. We know that climate change is having a significant impact on the lives of Canadians. It is felt more severely by Canadians living in the north. However, one of the things that I learned during my time as a new member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, and I credit some of my colleagues who sit on that committee with helping me develop and grow in my understanding of the industry, is the creativity, innovation and drive of farmers, and that there is so much work that is being done by farmers, across the Prairies in particular, who are helping to create new environmentally friendly, efficient and productive ways for us to produce our food in this country.

However, there is no doubt, as mentioned throughout my remarks in this debate, that there are challenges that continue to exist. The nature of these challenges and the basis from which they are born are complicated and multi-factor. They do need to be acknowledged, and there are a number of ways the government has acknowledged them and will continue to do so.

• (1610)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the end of his speech, my colleague from Winnipeg talked about his experience on the agriculture committee and the work that we have done on a couple of studies on stabilizing food prices and the cost of food production in Canada. It is unanimous from every agriculture stakeholder that they want Bill C-234 to be passed in this House in its original form, unamended. This would save farmers close to \$1 billion over the next few years, which would help reduce food costs. We have heard that from every commodity stakeholder in the

sector, and yet the member's government, with a clear tool to help reduce food costs, still refuses to support Bill C-234 unamended. Why?

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague across the way. He was quite useful in helping bring a number of important matters to my attention and the attention of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, when I was a member.

As I mentioned in my remarks, there are a variety of things that contribute to the cost of food production in this country. However, I think it is also important to note, and the member has heard this through testimony given by a number of folks we heard from at committee over the course of the past couple months, that climate change is playing a significant role in altering the landscape for farmers in this country.

We have to do our part in order to ensure that we are drastically reducing emissions in this country. If we do not do that, not only is life going to become more difficult for farmers, but by virtue of that, it is going to become more difficult for Canadians across the country.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech, and also thank him for the work he has done. We worked well together on the agriculture committee. We talked about a school food nutrition program and the importance of that. We talked about it for people who are food-insecure.

Can the member expand on how this can also help our local farmers to supply food to our local communities, which will help to keep the cost down?

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, I very much enjoyed working alongside my colleague on the agriculture committee.

I have talked on numerous occasions in the House about my past career as an educator, both as a teacher and as a school principal. I am so proud that the government is following through on its commitment to establish a national school food program. This is going to be an immensely important policy in terms of benefiting the students I used to teach, their families and those who will come after them, as far as their health and their future is concerned.

I cannot remember who across the way mentioned this, but it was a fair point. There is a fairly significant amount of food waste in this country. I think there are lots of ways we can work with farmers, food producers, school divisions, local governments and provincial governments to help ensure there is less food wasted in this country. When there are excesses in the system, they can be passed on to those who are most in need, including children in schools.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg South Centre speaks of excesses. One of the realities is we have excess profits in both the oil and gas industry, and among large grocers.

I can appreciate there are some words in this motion that might lead it to be one that the member might not be able to support. I would like to understand from him more about a specific measure, and that is placing a windfall profit tax on grocers. The government placed a windfall profit tax on banks and life insurance companies in the midst of the pandemic. He might know I have put forward a motion to do the same when it comes to the oil and gas companies that are gouging Canadians at the pumps. We could raise \$4.2 billion if we were to do that. We could apply the same measure to the large grocers that are gouging his constituents, as well as mine.

Would the member share his thoughts on the possibility of, and his interest in advocating for, an excess profit tax on grocers?

● (1615)

Mr. Ben Carr: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we did hear on the study on food price stabilization that was undertaken at the agriculture and agri-food committee was that it was not entirely clear where some of the profits were being derived from. The margins on food, we heard, were not all that large, but a lot of the profits came from some non-food-related items. For example, that could be things like pharmaceuticals and other everyday items. I would be interested in looking at that report and understanding a little more, but I do not disagree that there is a pretty significant amount that CEOs are earning.

I do appreciate, as well, when the member talked about the oil and gas industry, that so much of the conversation that has been attacking a price on pollution has been talking about the increase at the pump. However, so much of the increase that we are seeing at the pump is coming from the oil and gas industry. I am always open to learning more. I am not sure I would agree fully with my colleague about the excess windfall tax, but there are some points there I certainly do take.

The Deputy Speaker: It is good to see my neighbour, the member for Kings—Hants. Hopefully, he can talk about the Apple Blossom Festival and, of course, the chicken dinner in Woodville that I missed, but I know the hon. member was at.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to be in the House to debate and discuss initiatives presented by my opposition colleagues. Today, we are debating an NDP motion that was moved by the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker said that extremely well and we will have this exchange. The 90th Apple Blossom Festival just took place in the Annapolis Valley. I think that the Deputy Speaker was not able to get home for it, but I know he was there in spirit. I will take the opportunity to recognize that the Apple Blossom Festival was created in 1933 as a way to celebrate our agricultural heritage in the Annapolis Valley and also to market our world-class Annapolis Valley apples. It was great. I thank all of the sponsors and the volunteers who helped make that available.

There was the 50th anniversary of the Woodville chicken barbecue. I think about people like Ron Rafuse and Alice VanHatten and

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all the volunteers, the army of volunteers, as well as Dan Keddy, as the president of the Woodville Community Centre. Good on them.

I thank the Deputy Speaker for teeing that up for me accordingly.

[*Translation*]

I will now talk about the motion before us today. It consists of measures and initiatives proposed by the NDP that target food prices. When I saw the motion moved by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, I was not convinced that the initiatives presented by the NDP would really lower grocery prices.

The motion lays out three points. Point (a) calls on the government to “force big grocery chains and suppliers to lower the prices of essential foods or else face a price cap”. We can discuss that initiative. Point (b) calls on the government to “stop delaying long-needed reforms to the Nutrition North program”, and point (c) calls on the government to “stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers”.

I am the chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, and I do not see any measures for our farmers in this motion. Farmers around the world, particularly those in Canada, are having a really hard time right now, because of labour shortages, the effects of climate change and the high prices resulting from the war in Ukraine, the war in the Middle East and other factors. In my opinion, it is very important to present specific initiatives for our farmers, not just partisan elements from the NDP.

● (1620)

[*English*]

I will talk about the price cap. This is something that we have dealt with before in the country. During World War II, there was intervention from the government to establish a variety of prices across the board. I do not know if all Canadians are at that point but I think it is important for parliamentarians to understand that we have to be balanced when we are talking about the conversation on food prices. Yes, I think we can highlight and ask large retailers to do more to reduce prices at retail, but we have to be careful not to push those cost savings down on the margins of farmers. When we talk in this way, sometimes the agriculture community asks about its ability to make a profit and its ability to return money. What about that dynamic?

Of course, we have heard a lot of testimony before the agriculture committee about the actual margins in grocery. They range between 2% and 4%. Could those margins be lower? I think anyone here could have an opinion and say that, yes, they could be lower or they could be higher. It is really subjective. Certainly, the actual gross profit in the sector has grown and there are moral and ethical questions about how much profit is too much.

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I will give the NDP credit on that idea, but the price cap becomes an interesting question of whether the Government of Canada is the best constitutional authority to implement those types of price caps, whether that is better suited under the Constitution at the provincial level and whether that can be done without having a major impact from putting price caps and price mechanisms through the entire supply chain for the agriculture and agri-food processing sector. Those are some reflections that are not really well articulated in today's opposition day motion and those points would have to be borne out before we could ever move in that direction.

[Translation]

I want to talk about other initiatives that are important to our farmers. I mentioned the impact of climate change. In the Annapolis Valley, extreme storms, extreme cold and hurricanes in the Atlantic are causing problems for our farmers. This is having a direct impact on their products. We are having conversations at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food about the importance of improving the risk management programs.

When the Conservatives were in government, Mr. Harper slashed programs that were very important to our producers. I am talking about risk management programs, specifically agri-stability and agri-insurance. It is important to study these initiatives for our farmers.

With regard to the horticulture sector, I think it is also important to explore how the federal, provincial and territorial governments are going to find a way to increase the supply of local vegetables and fruit, particularly for the apple and vegetable sectors.

[English]

We think about our hospital system and education system, and I certainly applaud the government in its work to establish a national school food program. It is long overdue. We were the only G7 country without it and this is going to help make a difference on the affordability for individuals to access healthy, local food, but I think we can do more on procurement. It is a tough line. We have to be careful because we have trading relationships and we are a trading nation, but we have an ability to buy vegetables and fruits that otherwise could not find their way to the market, and we can find this in an affordable context in an institutional procurement setting.

• (1625)

[Translation]

I also want to elaborate a bit on the programs that highlight how important foreign workers are for the horticulture sector. We need to improve the permit process for the use of pesticides and other necessary farm products and tools.

I introduced Bill C-359, which is further down on the order of precedence for private member's bills. However, I hope the government will consider some initiatives in that area. I think that is important.

I must admit that I would need more than 10 minutes to discuss this very complex issue.

Finally, when it comes to the connection between our farmers and grocery store prices, what comes to mind is a code of conduct.

It is very important to introduce and implement a code of conduct, an agreement between farmers, the links in the supply chain and Canada's grocery giants. It is important to create a good relationship within the supply chain.

[English]

I am going to leave it at that. All parliamentarians should be calling on major grocers to join the grocery code of conduct.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and congratulate him on his excellent French.

He said that today's motion does not propose any solutions that would help farmers in a way that would then have a direct impact on food prices for consumers.

My esteemed colleague and I are both members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, which studied a bill that had been introduced here in the House of Commons. Bill C-234 was making its way through the legislative process, but as we know, this bill has stalled.

As the chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, could my colleague encourage his fellow government members to vote to bring this bill back in its original form, which would give our agriculture sector a major boost?

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-234 is important to our farmers. That is exactly why I voted in favour of that motion.

The bill stands in the name of the member for Huron—Bruce, a Conservative member. I would remind my hon. colleague that I was frustrated with how the Conservatives moved this bill forward. Quarrels were started and threats were made against senators by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and by the leader of the Conservative Party in the Senate, which then required an apology for their behaviour in the Senate.

Consequently, yes, I absolutely think this bill is important. I hope that the member for Huron—Bruce will bring this bill forward for a vote soon. However, I want to reiterate that the Conservatives are also responsible for the mishandling of this bill.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech in French.

I know he chairs the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Today's motion is about the cost of food. I represent a rural riding, where the economy depends heavily on agriculture.

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Every year—every day—I, like my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé, invite my colleague to talk to farmers. Climate change and rising input costs have a significant impact on the cost of food. The federal government can play a role in all this, but it is failing to meet farmers' needs and expectations at this point. Farmers want protection for supply management, a review of the AgriStability and AgriInvest programs, reciprocity of standards at the border and help overcoming problems caused by the climate crisis.

Farmers need help. When will the federal government do something?

• (1630)

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed important for members from rural ridings to work together in the House of Commons to support our farmers. I agree that we need to provide more support for our farmers.

However, I would remind my colleague of this government's initiatives, including increased funding for the provinces and territories to help our farmers under the Canadian agricultural partnership and increased funding for risk management, because the Conservative government did away with that program.

It is very important to have initiatives to support farmers and help them deal with unforeseen events and climate change. It is very important to ensure that we have tools in place to help businesses recover.

I will continue to work with the member for Shefford and the others on the issue of agriculture.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nine months ago, the Prime Minister told the big grocery retailers that they had to stabilize prices or they were going to face consequences, such as taxation. It has been nine months, yet the result has been nothing.

In France, where people are also suffering from massive food price inflation, the government managed to broker a deal with 75 of the biggest food companies that agreed to lower their prices, not stabilize them but lower them. The deal covers 5,000 different food products.

I am just wondering whether my colleague could compare and contrast the two different approaches. Why do the French people seem to have a government that goes to bat for them and manages to force the big food companies to actually lower their prices, while here the Prime Minister simply asks politely and receives absolutely no action in return?

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I will be quick because that was an important question. I know the question of food prices right now is a top-of-mind issue for all Canadians. I want to remind my hon. colleague that the Prime Minister was asking retailers, and working with them, to try to stabilize food price inflation, which has happened. Food price inflation has stabilized; that is true about the inflation piece.

Are the prices too high for some average Canadians? Absolutely. I think that raises the question of why the NDP would present a motion here today that would have absolutely zero support for

Canadian farmers. How does it think we are going to get to lower prices? Yes, of course we can put in measures to try to help push major retailers, but we also have to try to lower costs for farmers and make sure that there are initiatives in place.

I want to just address the example of France. The French government has huge interventions in the entire supply chain of the French agriculture community. If we want to go down that route, we can, but the member is truly comparing apples to oranges because of the dynamic of how the French agriculture sector works. I would be happy to discuss with him further after this.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Housing; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Public Services and Procurement; and the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, Taxation.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is just so nice to be here again this evening.

I know the Conservatives have tried to adjourn the House, calling quorum time and time again, because they really do not want to talk about the fact that people are starving, even though very often in the House they demean folks living in tent cities in poverty, folks who happen to live in my riding, actual human beings who are often struggling with mental health and addictions. The Conservatives put them down. We are talking about the cost of living, and the Conservatives weaponize, demean and stigmatize people living in poverty.

I am glad I get to rise here today to speak to an issue that is affecting people across the country: rising food costs, rising food insecurity and rising financial insecurity, which is one of the reasons I put forward a private member's bill, Bill C-223, in support of a guaranteed livable basic income.

We know things are getting harder for people. The cost of food has increased by over 20%, and we know that one in five Canadians is skipping meals. This is nothing new in my riding, a riding that has some very serious human rights violations directly related to poverty. What I have often said is that poverty is one of the most avoidable, violent human rights violations in this country. Poverty is a violation of the Canadian charter, yet the Conservatives today are trying to have the House adjourned because they really do not care about struggling Canadians.

I have not seen any of the Conservatives fight for issues that would change the material conditions for the folks I am so proud to represent in Winnipeg Centre. I am proud to represent all my constituents, including constituents who live in tents as a result of failed housing policies and the corporate greed that has been sponsored by Conservatives and Liberals, which is something we are talking about today.

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We know the grocery sector is making record profits. In 2023 it raked in \$6 billion. This is unconscionable, especially in a place like the riding of Winnipeg Centre. If we want to talk about people having a hard time, a hard time is figuring out every day how one is actually going to survive. What do the Conservatives do? I am bringing this up because it is pretty grotesque the way people in my community are put down regularly, stigmatized and marginalized. They are people who are doing their very best to survive, but as a result of failed housing policies by the Conservatives and Liberals, they are now living in tents, and nobody is talking about affordable housing with rent geared to income. Nobody is talking about co-operative housing except New Democrats.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives are trying to adjourn a debate on grocery pricing, which is totally unacceptable when people are struggling to make ends meet.

I cannot remember the name of his riding, but a member is trying to heckle. He probably has big feelings about my calling out the fact that he puts down some of the most vulnerable folks in Canada, many of whom live in my riding. I have to call that out, because I was elected to stick up for people, to respect people and to ensure that people have human rights and can live in dignity, not so they can be pushed down, shamed and kicked in the face by Conservatives.

We know that Conservatives do not care. I am going to give some examples. I have a whole textbook of headlines, and I hope I do not faint and run out of breath. The first ones are “Corporate lobbyists are flocking to [the member for Carleton]’s cash-for-access fundraisers” and “A Conservative collection of Harper...scandals”. There is a good one about the Senate appointees Mike Duffy, Patrick Brazeau and Pamela Wallin. There are headlines about election scandals in 2006. There was Maxime Bernier. There are headlines about Veterans Affairs not looking after veterans; the Conservatives called that one a no-brainer.

On Afghan detainees, there was a news story about a Canadian diplomat, Richard Colvin, who appeared before a parliamentary committee and made a bombshell charge that detainees taken captive by Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan and transferred to local authorities were almost certainly being tortured and abused. Conservatives certainly do not care about newcomers to Canada and ensuring they live in dignity. There are articles about G8 funding and the \$50 million spent.

• (1635)

Of course, let us not forget Peter MacKay, the guy who had to be rescued from a salmon fishing lodge in a private jet that cost \$16,000. There is the fact that the member for Thornhill was recorded as a lobbyist for Walmart. The Conservatives were caught with the \$50-million bread price-fixing scandal. There are many more examples, but I have important points to make. As I said, I just about fainted, running out of air with all the hot air I hear from the Conservatives all the time.

However, we know that some of these issues are the most severe in northern communities, which are being awfully impacted by the climate emergency. Farmers are concerned about the climate emergency because their crops are burning down. We want to talk about cost of living and things getting tough. Why do we not talk about

the climate emergency and the fact that Manitoba farmers are concerned because they cannot make any money off their crops? They are literally burning to the ground.

Of indigenous households with children, 52% experience food insecurity compared to 9% of non-indigenous households. Food prices are 2.5 times higher in indigenous communities than the national average. We have heard all about nutrition north. There is the CEO of Giant Tiger, or the North West Company. Members of the Conservative Party are owners in that corporation, which is how closely tied they are, and they are making multi-millions of dollars.

The result is that many indigenous households have no choice but to rely on cheaper, less-nutritious options, such as highly saturated and processed foods, to feed their families. If we want to talk about saving money, how about ensuring that people can have access to nutritious foods so that we do not have greater costs to the health care system? Diabetes, for example, is often related to nutrition. Why do we not talk about that?

This affects dignity. It affects one’s ability to live a healthy life. It causes psychological distress, and although the Liberals are talking about how they cannot put on price caps, the Liberals actually need to start talking about the fact that we need more competition. However, we do not need more grocery competition by big CEOs and these big companies, such as Metro, Loblaws or Walmart. We need more competition by supporting—

• (1640)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Shepard is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe we have quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Let us do a quick count.

Let us ring the bells for a couple of seconds. Hopefully people will come back to their chairs.

And the bells having rung:

The Deputy Speaker: We now have quorum.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, this is an example of what I was talking about. I am glad of it, because I am going to put it on the record that the Conservatives do not care that people are starving. They certainly do not care about people in my riding, who are some of the poorest people in Canada. In fact, the Conservatives are trying to stop a debate on fighting for the human rights and dignity of the most marginalized in this country. They run out of the House and call quorum so that we adjourn and we do not have to talk about that, because I have given too much information about their corporate buddies.

I share all this because we know there is also an intersectionality with food insecurity. We know that, although it is an issue facing many in Canada today, the rising food prices are intersectional. According to Statistics Canada, in 2022, families with a female major income earner were more likely to be food insecure compared with those with a male major income earner.

I just want to point out that it is not surprising. Last night, the Conservative men fought violently against contraception for women. No women were talking about not paying for contraception. It was all men in the Conservative Party.

I am not sure I have to do this, but I will be splitting my time with the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Families with Black or indigenous major income earners report significantly higher levels of food insecurity than families with non-racialized or non-indigenous earners do. However, we know how much the Conservatives care about residential school. They have been quoted as residential school denialists many times, and let us not forget it.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have talked a great deal about trying to establish food stability in terms of prices. It is interesting when we look at the G7 countries today, in terms of the graphs. We find that the highest is Germany, followed by the United Kingdom and France. France is the country that is often cited by the New Democrats. Next is Italy and then comes Canada. The lowest two are the United States and Japan. Again, we fluctuate within that graph.

The concern I have is that, first, we need to achieve stabilization and to look at ways in which we can keep down food prices as much as we can. Having said that, the New Democrats are implying that we should be looking at putting in a price cap. Is the member concerned about the issue of supply and the impact it would have on the producers?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I find it really, I guess, peculiar that the member is worried about that. He represents a riding, Winnipeg North, that has tons of small local grocery stores owned by very diverse communities. It is where I shop. I actually go to shop there because I find that the food prices are better.

I went to, for example, a local place on the weekend to buy my vegetables. I go to a local meat market in Winnipeg to buy all my meat. I do not want to support big grocery chains when I can avoid it. Of course, we have had consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments that really love the corporate greed stuff and supporting their corporate buddies. However, we have local producers and local grocers whom I would prefer to support, who are not ripping off people in Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the government's dogmatic adherence to one specific policy instrument with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which is the consumer carbon price levy, or the carbon tax. It does not seem to be working in terms of meeting Canada's climate targets. It has an impact on inflation, as well as food inflation. The NDP leader has had varying positions on this

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issue on different days. Could the member just discuss whether the juice is worth the squeeze on the consumer carbon tax, to quote a colleague friend of mine, given that it could be increasing food costs?

Ms. Leah Gazan: That's the problem, Mr. Speaker. Although I have enjoyed working with my colleague throughout the years, the Conservatives do not have a climate plan. If we want to talk about the rising cost of food, then we need to deal with the climate emergency.

I mentioned what is happening in Manitoba. Manitoba farmers are speaking up because they are concerned about the climate emergency. What is happening to their crops? They are burning down, because we do not have a government in place right now that has a real climate plan. Moreover, we have many people in the Conservative caucus who are still arguing that the world is flat. We want to talk about a one-size-fits-all plan. First, we need a Conservative party that will actually acknowledge that we are in a climate emergency.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, one thing we have learned is that the nutrition north program was created by the Conservative government and is now protected by the Liberal government. Could the member share with us what the impacts of the Liberal government protecting the Conservative-created program are on the poverty levels of indigenous peoples in Canada?

• (1650)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Nunavut for her advocacy around improving human rights and material conditions for her constituents. She has been a tremendous champion.

In saying that, nutrition north is just one example of how Conservatives and Liberals have turned their backs on indigenous people. It is 2024, and we are still talking about clean drinking water. We are five years out from the national inquiry, and the Liberal government has responded to two calls for justice; former prime minister Stephen Harper said that this was not even on his radar.

We are watching kids starve while the head of nutrition north makes multi-millions of dollars. It is one of many examples of how Liberals and Conservatives have turned their backs on indigenous people, now and historically.

The Deputy Speaker: I give my normal warning to keep our questions and answers as short as possible so that everyone can participate.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak to the motion brought forward by my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford regarding food prices.

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The motion calls for something rather simple. It calls on the Prime Minister and the government to force the biggest grocery chains in this country to lower food prices or face consequences.

There are a lot of statistics in front of us, which have been offered up over the course of this debate. Most people in our ridings, in the communities we represent, understand this issue intuitively. They do not need to know what the rate of food price inflation was over the past three years or precisely what the profit margin of the big grocery giants has been compared with historical profit margins.

People are going to the grocery store in places such as Prince Rupert, Smithers, Kitimat and Terrace. They used to spend \$100 on the two bags of groceries that they are buying, and now they are spending \$120. They are wondering why. They are looking around, after the difficult years of the pandemic, and seeing that the biggest corporations in this country have been raking in massive profits, but their buying power has not increased. Their salary has not gone up. Their employer has not given them a 20% raise, yet every time they go to buy food for their family, they are paying 20% more than they did just three years ago. It is wrong.

What the motion seeks to do is to take real action to ensure that those prices do not just stabilize but actually come down. The cost of food in Canada has gone up 21% in just three years. The grocery giants posted profits of \$6 billion in 2023 alone. The margins since 2021 have been double what the historical margins were in the grocery sector between 2015 and 2019.

It is fairly clear what has happened here. The big grocery giants have taken advantage of the conditions of the pandemic, when, for all sorts of reasons, we saw the cost of everything go through the roof. We have seen other factors drive food price inflation, things such as global conflict and extreme weather events.

However, what we see is that the price of food goes up quickly, but when the price of the inputs goes down and those supply chain issues resolve themselves, when things get better, the price of food does not come down. Why would they lower the price of food when they can simply rake in more profits?

That is why we need action from the government. Now, the government has acknowledged that there is a problem, but the approach has been to ask politely for these corporations to do something on behalf of consumers. It has been nine months since the Prime Minister called on the grocery retailers to stabilize prices or face the consequences. At the time, he mentioned taxation as a possible consequence of inaction. However, we have seen no action, and we have seen no consequences.

I looked through the much-lauded grocery code of conduct. I think the average Canadian reading through this document would be hard pressed to see how its contents are somehow going to lead towards lower prices at the grocery store. In fact, in reading through the code of conduct, I only found the word "price" mentioned twice. We also did a search for a word; I believe it was "reasonable". We found 12 mentions of it. This is a voluntary agreement that asks the parties, companies in the food supply chain, to be reasonable with each other. Somehow this is supposed to lower prices for Canadians. I do not think that is a reasonable assumption.

We need action from the government. We have seen, around the world, that other governments have been willing to act on behalf of their citizens, to take more aggressive action with companies that are raking in unreasonable profits.

● (1655)

We have been talking about the example of France. In France, the government stood up for people and told the biggest food companies in the country that the prices of the products they were selling were unreasonable. It required them to bring down the prices of 5,000 products, and if they did not do that, there were going to be consequences. It came to an agreement with the 75 biggest food companies in the country to lower the prices of those products. That is what a government that is serious about protecting its citizens from price gouging is able to do. However, in this country, the Prime Minister politely asks it of companies, over and over again, and reflects back to Canadians that times are tough, things are difficult, but he has done very little to lower prices.

I want to talk for a moment about the distinction between stabilizing prices and lowering them. We have seen, as I mentioned, that the unreasonably high prices have stuck. Yes, food price inflation has declined in previous months, but those prices are still at a level that Canadians cannot afford to pay. The margins are still at a level that is far in excess of what they have been historically. We need the price of food products to go down so that people can finally afford the groceries they need to feed their families.

I mentioned the example of France. Greece has also taken steps to tackle food prices in a more aggressive way. South Korea has intervened on behalf of its citizens. Clearly, there are things that the government could do. This motion simply urges the government to take aggressive action, to say that enough is enough and that it is not going to ask politely anymore. It needs to require these companies that are raking in massive profits to lower the prices of their products for all Canadians.

I think everyone accepts that we live in a market-based economy, where, for so many things, the price is set as an agreement between a willing seller and a willing buyer. That is a premise that most folks in the House accept, but there are also some things in our society for which we have said that we are not willing to solely allow the market to dictate the price of things that people need. When it comes to rent, most provinces in this country have controls on rent increases because, in the past, they have seen the cost of rent increase year over year, to the point where people simply cannot afford basic housing.

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The same is true with energy. We know that people need to be able to afford energy to heat their homes. In British Columbia, the price of energy is regulated so that people can have some sense of certainty when it comes to the cost of electricity. The government has intervened on behalf of consumers and said that, for certain things, it is not going to let the free market dictate what we pay. Of all the basic things that people rely on, one would think that food would be something the government would intervene on and say is non-negotiable. We simply cannot have a free-for-all when it comes to the prices people are paying for basic groceries.

Everyone accepts that retailers should be able to make a modest profit as part of their business, but the profits that we have seen are not reasonable. The price that people are paying for food in this country is not reasonable. Therefore, we are urging the Prime Minister to step in and, despite his cozy relationship with these companies, be firm with them and establish what the consequences are going to be. He needs to look to these other countries around the world that have had some success in driving down the price of food and deliver food price reductions for Canadians in the short term. That is what is being asked for here. It is a very reasonable demand that every Canadian can get behind, and I hope everyone in this place supports the motion we have put forward.

● (1700)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand to ask the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley a question.

I do support the motion, but I want to ask him if he agrees that the complexity of food prices is more than corporate greed and gouging. Yes, that is a factor, but the climate emergency is also a factor. The 2005 book *The Long Emergency* explained then that we were going to see food scarcity and food insecurity, and that we needed to do more with local food supply and supporting our farmers because long global supply chains induce food insecurity in a climate-ravaged world.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with my friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands. Some of these factors are unavoidable unless we change our food system and change the supply chain to localize it and make it more resilient. We are going to see the impacts of extreme weather around the world drive up the price of food. I think we have all seen news articles that have clearly documented this effect.

What we are talking about here is what happens once those food products get to our country from where they are grown to the shelves they are bought from. What we are seeing is that certain companies are taking advantage of a situation, marking up the products by unreasonable amounts and raking in record profits on the backs of Canadians. That is what has to stop.

We can do both things at the same time. We can make our food system more resilient and address the clear price gouging and excess profit-taking that we are seeing in the grocery sector.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I referenced earlier, there is a concern with the impacts of a price cap.

The NDP has consistently brought up France as a country we should be looking to when setting up our model. I understand that, within the G7, Canada is doing reasonably well on the food inflation issue. Does the NDP have any information from the last three or four years about the cumulative total of food inflation in France was compared to Canada?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, while the numbers I have show that France has seen a 21% increase in food prices in just two years, in Canada we have seen food price inflation of more than 20% in three years. Maybe there is a slight difference there, but what we are talking about is unreasonable food price inflation. Whether it is 20%, 30% or 15%, we are talking about food price inflation that is far in excess of the overall rate of inflation.

When we dig into the numbers, we see massive profits, which have grown substantially, and that is because companies are taking advantage of a situation. I think everyone accepts that companies are going to pass along their increased costs to consumers, and sometimes those increases are inevitable. However, what we are seeing in this case is profit-taking that is not inevitable, but a conscious choice being made by these CEOs to take advantage of consumers, and that is wrong.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the government, and this was even in the Auditor General's report that came out this morning, does not know how to manage its affairs.

I know my colleague is making the point, and I agree with him, that the price of food and groceries has certainly risen. We are looking at a cost of \$700 more for food in 2024 over 2023. It is fine to want to have a policy to lower those food prices, but it would be more cost-effective for the New Democrats to consistently want to bring the carbon tax down because in the member's province it amounts to about \$1,600 for each family, which is double the price of the food increase.

● (1705)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to pluck away on this one-string banjo about the carbon price and its effect on what they say is the price of everything.

There is a small impact. People have dug into these numbers and there is actual evidence as to the impact of the carbon pricing on things such as food. Professor Trevor Tombe from the University of Calgary looked into this and found that the overall impact is about 0.3% per year. We saw with grocery prices, at the height of it, that it was around 11% per year. At 0.3%, it would mean that, if a bag of groceries goes up a dollar, that is an infinitesimally small amount. A third of a cent on that dollar would be the impact of the carbon tax.

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I think we need to keep things in perspective. It is not that there is no impact, but when we look at the profits these companies are raking in, the effect of that on the prices that people are paying is dozens of times higher.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise in the House of Commons to speak on behalf of the constituents of Battle River—Crowfoot. I will be sharing my time with my friend, the member for Calgary Shepard.

We are here debating a motion that the NDP has put forward in which it is asking for action. The NDP is asking somebody to do something, anything, to address the skyrocketing costs of food. Now, I will agree that the price of food has gone up substantially, but here we are, as the NDP stands in this place and touts that somehow it is not responsible for voting constantly in favour of the measures this government puts forward, which is causing much of that price inflation. Further, its members are asking somebody to do something.

In fact, the member who just spoke, the leader of the fourth party who spoke earlier this afternoon and the party's whip are all saying that it is time to do something concrete. The tragic irony is that the motion we are debating today would truly do nothing. New Democrats are accusing the government and saying that it is time to stop asking nicely. They are accusing the Conservatives of focusing too much on the fact that taxes are causing an increase to the cost of food.

What are the NDP members doing? Well, instead of proposing measures that would lower the price of food, they are throwing a temper tantrum. They are shirking the responsibility and the opportunity to actually debate and challenge the government to address some of these things. They are simply saying, while stomping their feet, that it is simply time to stop these prices from going up.

The tragic irony is that it was only yesterday when that NDP member and every other left-leaning member of Parliament in this place voted against the common-sense Conservative measure that would have axed all the federal taxes on fuel to give Canadians a fuel tax holiday this summer. That member is as responsible as every member of the government for the increased costs that Canadians are facing when it comes to food.

I have heard throughout the debate today a pure lack of understanding of the most basic economic principles that are driving up the price of things such as food. In fact, we hear this from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance herself. She is celebrating the fact that inflation is now 2.7%, but that is a misnomer because, as the Liberals celebrate inflation, she says it herself that it has come down, which is misleading in every sense of the word because no costs have come down.

What they are celebrating is that prices have increased dramatically, but they are just not quite increasing as quickly anymore. It is a pure example of the economic incompetence that we see in the Liberal government. Its front bench, backed up by a Liberal backbench and the New Democrats, seems to be unwilling to take into account basic economic principles.

I am proud to represent a region of Alberta that has a whole host of farmers growing some of the most incredible agricultural products on the planet. My father Jay, my uncle Darren, my family friend Dale and my cousin Grainger are all in the field today planting crops. They are putting in the last of our spring planting season on the family farm and planting oats today. However, here is the reality that farmers face. They are subject to the carbon tax, but not just, as it seems the Liberals and the NDP like to suggest, on what they pay for the fuel that they put into their vehicles. No, it is much more than that.

• (1710)

I want to share a basic economic principle here. It is that the carbon tax, by design, is meant to increase the cost of everything in order to drive consumer change. That is what the carbon tax is. Quite frankly, it was the Prime Minister who said it would never go above \$50, prior to the 2019 election. After the 2019 election, all of a sudden it was that it would never go above \$170. We know that some friends of the Liberals, the very same economists whom the Liberals quote and tout so often, are calling for the carbon tax to be raised to over \$1,000. Can members believe that? I have asked the question directly to the Liberals, and they have refused to answer it.

A basic economic principle is that a mechanism like the carbon tax drives up the cost of every part of the supply chain. From the farmer who plants, to every aspect of the agricultural operation; then the transportation of the harvested good; the storage of that good; the processing and production of whatever the secondary or tertiary product is; then the further transportation to a warehouse or further processing, or ultimately to a store or something like a grocery store or a warehouse; and then to a grocery store. The product is then sold to the consumer.

Further, the consumer has to pay the carbon tax on every part of the process to purchase said product. Take a loaf of bread, for example. Consumers are paying the carbon tax on their home and on the fuel to go to the grocery store. At every single step of the supply chain, the carbon tax applies. By design, it is meant to increase costs. The Liberals have succeeded in accomplishing that objective. Further inflation in that process has had a significant impact in increased costs.

What do we do about it? This is what the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Carleton, talks so often about. It is time to empower people within our country: farmers and producers, those who know how to get the job done. Let us lower costs for them. Let us make sure that we lower costs for every step of the food supply chain. As a result, we could see the price of groceries go down for Canadians. We could see Canadians save costs directly. We would see the indirect savings throughout every stage of the supply chain when it comes to food.

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The NDP members are acting like peacocks today. They are standing up, stomping their feet and yelling that somebody ought to do something. It is an acknowledgement, I would suggest, of what an abject failure their confidence and supply coalition agreement is with a Liberal Party that is truly not worth the cost. Conservatives have a practical plan to see costs lowered for Canadians and then, further, to make sure that we unleash the potential that exists in the Canadian economy, whether that be in energy, agriculture or manufacturing. Anything that can be done, I am confident that our country can do it. It is just that right now it is held back by an ideological Liberal-NDP government that truly does not understand the basic principles of what it is to see an economy prosper.

When an economy prospers, it is the people who can benefit at every step of the process. Whether that be the producers or whether that be the buyers of the goods, when there is a free market that is functioning at its best, prosperity reigns. We can get back to that point when the member for Carleton becomes the prime minister and unleashes the true potential of our nation. That is why Conservatives are going to bring it home.

• (1715)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was here when the member for Carleton was actually on the front bench with Stephen Harper, and I remember their cutting the veterans office in my riding.

It is interesting that one of the things that the Conservatives like to run away from, but is a real fact and truth, is that they were the ones who brought in the GST to this country, which is a consumer tax on citizens. Later on, the member for Carleton also championed and brought in the HST. To bring the HST in, we actually had to borrow money during a deficit, which we are still paying for to this day. Second, the former Conservative government had to provide \$6 billion in payoffs to provinces to bring in a new tax for Canadians, including on groceries. How can the Conservatives continue to say that they are supportive of the passing-on of costs to consumers without taking full responsibility themselves?

The Conservatives never did a single thing when competition issues came forth with the bread scandal, letting the CEOs and companies off while Canadians were actually being charged high prices, gouged, for the basic staple of bread. The Conservatives were complicit in working against Canadian consumers. They never did a single thing about that.

The Conservatives have also been opposed to new Competition Act issues that we are finally bringing into place. How can they continue to do that to Canadians?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, that was an exposé in economic incompetence. I will give members a clear example as to why I say that definitively. We are talking about the previous Mulroney governments, so we are really reaching back more than three decades where there were a series of taxes levied against Canadians that were hidden in costs. What did Brian Mulroney do? He brought forward the GST, which Canadians could see. That should be proof positive that when the NDP is involved, economic incompetence reigns.

When it comes to the motion before us, I am so proud that the legacy of the Conservative Party is one of building a nation that

prosper, of building a nation where competition can reign and where there can be investment. When the private sector is able to build a future, it encourages Canadians to take the risk of being an entrepreneur. It encourages young Canadians to be able to take a risk to buy a home and be able to ensure that there is a future for them in our country.

It is unfortunate that the socialist NDP that props up the Liberals wants to continue to keep Canadians from being able to reach the full potential that I truly believe they have.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the factors driving up food prices is climate change.

The Retail Council of Canada representative explained that recent droughts and heat waves in California and western Canada have had a direct impact on the produce aisle. The price of lettuce and cauliflower increased by 30% during major heat waves that devastated crops, including in California, Arizona and Quebec. There are many other examples.

What does my colleague think about the impact of climate change on rising food prices?

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I always find it interesting that, as somebody who is proud to come from a farming background, I am lectured often by other members from different political parties about how farmers should address the challenges related to climate change. Farmers are up to the task. They are capable of ensuring that they can provide the high-quality products that Canadians need at an affordable price.

However, I will tell the House what the biggest inhibiting factor to that is in our country today. It is a big, bloated government with a bureaucracy that is driving up the cost of everything and with policies that are intentionally designed to raise prices to change consumer behaviour. Those policies are supported in many cases by the Bloc Québécois.

I would simply end my response to the member with this: If the member is concerned about rising costs, including the cost of energy that has an impact on the supply chain, then I hope he would take seriously the need to support Alberta energy's getting to global markets so that we can, in fact, be a world leader. We not only want to drive down emissions, but we also want to be able to provide high-quality goods, like food, to Canadians and to so many people around the planet, at a cost and with an environmental footprint that Canadians can and should truly be proud of.

Business of Supply

• (1720)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour, obviously, to rise and speak on behalf of my constituents in Calgary Shepard. I know that the residents have seen it fit to send me back here to speak on their behalf. One of the issues that I often get emails and phone calls about is the daily cost of living. Whether it is constituents' cellphone bill, rent, mortgages or prices at the grocery stores and elsewhere, the cost of goods and services is going up, and everybody sees it all around them.

A lot of that is related to decisions that were made during the pandemic. The government massively increased the monetary supply and more than doubled the national debt at the time. We know from the Auditor General and the PBO that only about \$205 billion of the \$600 billion in spending had nothing to do with the pandemic. There is a lot of spending there.

On this opposition day that has been put forward by the NDP, I heard one member on the other side whom I want to correct. The member for Edmonton Griesbach was talking about three apples for \$7. My favourite store in Calgary is the Calgary Co-op. It is a co-op with 400,000 members, and I am a member. There is no way; one would have to buy a lot of apples. I highly recommend that the member drive down from Edmonton, go to the co-op in Calgary and purchase my favourite, which is Granny Smith apples, for \$1.32 for every single apple. If he buys more, he gets a discount. It is highly recommended that he do so.

Again, someone can pick and choose which grocery stores they want to go to. There is choice out there. One thing I will mention is that the federal government is making it making it more expensive to shop at Calgary Co-op because the government has banned the store's fully compostable green bags, which have no plastic in them whatsoever, from being used, despite the fact that the City of Calgary worked with Calgary Co-op to create a bag that was fully compostable in the city's composting system. Even the ink does not have any plastic in it. It is not artificial. It is a completely recyclable bag.

I have tabled petitions on behalf of the residents in my riding. I have spoken up on it. I have sent the minister letters on this fact, pointing out to him that the City of Calgary is one of the first movers on compostable bags in its jurisdiction, trying to address the issue of single-use plastic bags. I will say that I prefer the compostable bags.

There are many residents who have emailed me, many more than I ever thought would. There is now the ridiculous situation where one has to buy the bags in a roll. The clerks are not allowed to give them out. People have to buy them from a bin right before the cash and then have their groceries bagged. They are much more expensive than they were before, and that adds to the cost of buying groceries unless one remembers to bring cloth bags or one's own other bags. Many of us forget to do so. When someone has kids and the kids are hassling them, it is very difficult to do. That is just one very small example of what happens as the cost of daily living increases.

Some of the examples that they have here include the government's ordering companies to reduce prices, as if that would work, when the government is pushing up prices because the supply

chains are stressed and because the monetary supply has been vastly increased. There are more dollars chasing fewer goods and services. It is as true today as it has been for decades before.

I especially find it concerning that the government would introduce price caps here. Price controls have never worked in any jurisdiction. It has been attempted. It leads to rationing by suppliers and by producers, because if someone cannot get the price that it costs to make the product and to ship it, so that it can be on our store shelves, that makes them not do it. Therefore we run short of goods. This was true in western Germany. It was true well after the war. It is true in many jurisdictions for different types of goods and services when the government puts a cap on prices.

It was tried in Canada in the 1970s. Famously, it was tried in the United Kingdom by a Labour government, and it led to shortages of goods and services. In the United Kingdom, the national Labour government was actually setting tax rates. The national government of the U.K., in the 1970s, set tax rates. It is reported in one of Lady Thatcher's biographies in which she wrote about her time in government.

I would think on (b) in the motion, with respect to the delays in long-needed reforms to the nutrition north program. I think many of us would actually agree that reforms are needed to the program. I do not think anybody disagrees. We have had some of the prices quoted back to us as to what it costs to live in the north. I think that for me and other members who have come to be educated thanks to others who have done the research and who have put forward the numbers, this is something we would generally agree with.

• (1725)

However, it then goes on to say, "stop Liberal and Conservative corporate handouts to big grocers." I wonder when the NDP leader is going to talk about his brother, who lobbies for Metro. I wonder when we will have a conversation about all the big, major corporations that are so busy lobbying ministers. Some of these ministers were lobbyists before they became ministers and are now buddies with the people they were lobbying. I would like to hear more about that.

In Alberta, one of the major costs and cost drivers for suppliers of produce and grocery goods on the store shelves is the carbon tax. Before the rebate, the average family in Alberta will pay \$2,943. Every Alberta family will be worse off in just a few years if they are not worse off right now, on average. Consistently, many constituents are sending me their Enmax bills and Hydro One bills, which show that they are paying a lot of money, sometimes more than they use in natural gas, just on the carbon tax.

I have a great love for Yiddish proverbs, and I know there are those who appreciate it when I use them. A fool says what he knows, and a wise man knows what he says. Now I can transition to what I think is the greatest foolishness: budget 2024.

The \$61 billion of new spending in it will only drive up the cost of our goods and services even further. This is \$61 billion of new government spending that the coalition has decided to support, further driving up the prices of goods and services in Canada. It is not just me saying this. RBC says it. CIBC says it. TD says it. The big banks are reporting it. Economists are saying it. Analysts are saying consistently that if we drive up public spending and drive up public borrowing, we will crowd out private spending and private borrowing because they become more expensive and there are fewer goods to go around. In fact, RBC's budget analysis headline for federal budget 2024 was "Lack of spending restraint offset by revenue surprise and tax hikes".

This is the last thing I want to raise. We often say in this place, and I hear rhetoric from the NDP side on it, that companies are being greedy and that usually it is just profit-making. Companies are trying to earn a profit, whether it is a family company or a company that has shareholders. What about government greed? What about the government incessantly raising taxes on everyone in this country and then expecting to get as much of that revenue into its pockets as possible so it can have a Liberal green slush fund? The Liberals are so embarrassed by it that now they are going to shut it down. What about government greed and the incessant voracious appetite for tax dollars so they can be misspent, thrown away and corruptly given to consultants? This is something I do not hear the New Democrats and Liberal MPs talk about enough.

We have endless examples of corruption in different government bureaucracies. The latest is the SDTC's green slush fund, which the government has admitted to and is shutting down. The government is abandoning it and trying to run away from its own board members, whom it appointed. They corruptly gave money to the corporations they ran. However, that money came from taxpayers in each of our ridings, who paid more at the end of the day.

Families in my riding, as I said, pay \$2,943 more in carbon tax. That does not just raise the price of groceries. It is on their utility bills and it is for the staycation they want to take. It is in all the goods they are buying for their homes. All of those costs are incurred as part of it. There are shipping costs too. There are no farms in my riding. The closest connection we have to farms in my riding is the grocery stores, and it is the same thing for seafood. That is the closest connection we have to the food chain, and when we go to grocery stores, we see prices being inflated because the shipping costs have gone up so high.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30, pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[Translation]

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.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I would like a recorded division because all Canadians deserve to know which members of Parliament are fighting for lower grocery prices and which ones are not.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 5, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-252, An Act respecting Jury Duty Appreciation Week.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-332, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (controlling or coercive conduct), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

[English]

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

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I ask that it be carried on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Laurel Collins moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Private Members' Business

She said: Madam Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging that it is not often that all MPs agree in this chamber. Especially around this time of year, politics can be particularly divisive and partisan. However, all members from all parties have come together to support my private member's bill and support survivors of intimate partner violence, and I want to extend my gratitude. I hope that we can all think of this bill as an example of the great things we can accomplish when we reach across the aisle and collaborate. When we work together to put aside political differences, focusing on the needs of our constituents, we can change their lives for the better.

In Canada, a woman is killed by an intimate partner every six days. Let that sink in. Every six days, we lose a woman to intimate partner violence, and it disproportionately impacts indigenous women. Of the women killed, 22% are indigenous.

I want to acknowledge that yesterday was the fifth anniversary of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report, and after five years, only two out of 231 calls for justice have been implemented. When the report was tabled, the commission confirmed that the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls crisis is a genocide, yet the government has delayed and delayed. Former commissioner Michèle Audette says that she has "lost faith" in the government's ability to tackle this issue. I want to remind my colleagues that as elected officials in Canada, we have a responsibility to stop the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

The 2019 report highlights that intimate partner violence disproportionately impacts indigenous women and girls. In the same way that all parties have worked across party lines to support my bill on coercive control, I call on MPs in this House to put aside political differences, tackle the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and implement the calls for justice, including fully funding a red dress alert.

I want to thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for her leadership and advocacy on this.

We know that coercive control is one of the most common precursors to femicide, even when there have been no other instances of physical violence. I have spoken in the past about how coercive control has impacted my family, but I have also heard from hundreds of people across Canada who have written to me, met with me and spoken to me about how coercive control has impacted them either directly or through loved ones.

Each person who shared their story told me how grateful they are that this piece of legislation exists and that they hope no one will ever have to go through what they experienced. While each story is unique, the pain is very similar. The pervasiveness of coercive control is all-encompassing, and the trauma is deeply rooted. One story that sticks with me is from a constituent of mine. She has asked me not to use her name out of fear of retribution from her abuser, but she has given me permission to share her story. For her anonymity, we will call her Lisa.

Lisa spoke to me about how she experienced coercive control by her children's father. Her abuser had taken over every single aspect of her life, and like so many other stories, the abuse eventually became physical. When she was finally able to escape that relation-

ship, her abuser began to control her through her children. The father of Lisa's children would withhold her children from her and threaten them. She had to do what he wanted just to see her own children. When the issue of child support was in front of the courts, the judges ignored the fact that Lisa had been sexually assaulted and abused by the father of her children, who were now being withheld from her.

• (1735)

She spoke about how the legal system favours men so heavily that even when Lisa's daughter spoke to the lawyers and the judges about the situation with her parents and when she spoke about being scared, if she seemed prepared, there would be allegations that Lisa was coaching her and that she was manipulated. Then if the child's recounting of events was missing details, then there were doubts about the validity of the story.

At the end of the day, both parents now have equal access to the children, despite the abuse, despite the coercive control and despite the harm that continues to be done to these children.

The reality is that, currently, there is no law that protects people from situations like this, from situations like the one that Lisa went through. Lisa told me she is extremely grateful that this legislation is moving forward, but she spoke about how much more work needs to be done. She worries about the systemic issues that will still exist even if, and hopefully when, this bill, Bill C-332, is passed and implemented.

A key part in Lisa's story is the fact that in every step of the judicial process, the system does not favour people who come forward and share about the abuse they are experiencing. When people report abuse to police, they are often turned away due to a lack of evidence. If their case is accepted by the officer and is brought forward to a judge, they risk the case being thrown out again. If they are one of the few who get to have their case heard in court, judges and lawyers have no requirement to be trauma-informed.

Many judges, prosecutors and other individuals in the criminal justice system do not have the training needed to understand the dynamics of intimate partner violence. There are also judges who have made sexist and misogynist comments during trials and judges who have ill-informed preconceptions about victims of gender-based violence.

The enforcement of this legislation would be incredibly important. While many judges who would oversee cases of coercive control would be provincial, the federal government has a responsibility to lead by example and to ensure that judges and lawyers who would work on cases of intimate partner violence, including coercive control, receive adequate training and that they be trauma-informed.

Private Members' Business

Survivors of coercive control are not only abused by their partners but also face retraumatization by the legal system itself. This needs to end, but that will only be accomplished if the government stops delaying and dragging its feet, and makes the reforms needed to support survivors of intimate partner violence. Survivors need a criminal justice system that supports them instead of revictimizing them.

Today, while Lisa is out of the relationship with her abuser, he is still able to control her through her children. While there are pieces of this legislation that touch on the fact that coercive control can include having children withheld from people or having threats of violence against children to control people, the topic of parental alienation is not considered in this legislation.

We have heard from stakeholders like the National Association of Women and the Law that parental alienation is a controversial concept not founded in scientific evidence. It is used in clinical and legal settings to describe when children are refusing or resisting contact with a parent. Abusers use accusations of parental alienation as a form of coercive control.

Unfortunately, this concept continues to be weaponized against women in abusive situations. It is weaponized to silence them, to remove children from their care and to remove them from the care of the victim of abuse, simply because the children do not want to spend time with the abusive parent.

Organizations and frontline workers have been ringing the alarm bell on this. More than half of workers in women's shelters in Quebec describe the accusations of parental alienation as a core priority for their shelter or their organization. It is one of their primary concerns.

• (1740)

It is a real issue that has impacts not only on mothers, but also on children who may be facing situations of abuse or witnessing that abuse. The impact of that abuse is so widespread, and it affects women who are in women's shelters or in the health care system, as they access our judicial system, and it has impacts on how they participate in our economy. While I hope that this bill, Bill C-332, can be voted on and passed, I urge parliamentarians to consider the very urgent need to train judges, to train everyone in our criminal justice system, to change the legislation, to better support victims of intimate partner violence and to better support parents facing discrimination in our criminal justice system.

I want to take a moment to thank the many organizations that have come together to support this bill, Bill C-332, and who have had a hand in crafting it. I am thinking of Sagesse and many of the organizations in my home community of Victoria, which includes the Victoria Women's Transition House and the Cridge transition house.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, for his continued efforts to ensure that we criminalize coercive control. He first tabled a version of this bill in a previous Parliament and has been an incredible ally not only to victims of abuse, but also an ally to me in this Parliament and an ally to women who face gender-based violence on a daily basis.

I also want to thank the courageous people who have come forward to share their stories, and they include the many survivors of intimate partner violence, the family members who have shared their stories of loss and the professionals who have been working on the front lines of the crisis of gender-based violence and the crisis of intimate partner violence and who have been continuing to advocate every day.

I also want to thank my sister who shared her story and who allowed me to share her story. She has pushed and supported me throughout this process to make sure that we are better supporting survivors of intimate partner violence and gender-based violence.

These issues are so deeply rooted in our society, and we must do more. As we have seen a rise in intimate partner violence, we know that the cost of living crisis, the pandemic and all of these stresses have a detrimental impact on intimate partner violence. We need to come together in this chamber not only to pass this bill, Bill C-332, but also to commit to giving victims and survivors the tools they need to not only leave abusive situations, but also to find justice in our justice system.

• (1745)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I noticed that there was a fairly high sense of co-operation at the committee stage. I understand that there were a number of government amendments accepted. I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts in regards to the process where it would appear as if there is virtually all-party support, and I think we saw some of that at the committee stage.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, we did see all-party support for this bill.

I also want to highlight some of the important changes that were made at committee. I thank the members on the justice committee for ensuring that this piece of legislation is robust, that we have a more robust legal definition of what constitutes coercive control and that we actually address some concerns that were raised by organizations to make sure that judges take into account who the vulnerable party is when these situations occur.

I have to mention that the justice committee has done incredible work, but it had this study two years ago. It has been two years, and the government, unfortunately, has waited for a private member's bill to take this step. I encourage it not to do the same thing when it comes to the other critical reforms that we need in our criminal justice system.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for this very important bill. I got out of a meeting just moments ago with somebody who was talking about parental alienation.

Can the member share her thoughts on that? What does parental alienation look like? What are things that we should be aware of, especially when it comes to coercive control and understanding the complexity of it?

Private Members' Business

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, the story I shared about Lisa is an example of this. I have heard from so many women who have had accusations of parental alienation weaponized against them and who have been in courtrooms where judges do not have an understanding of what domestic abuse and what intimate partner violence does to women and children. There is a need for an understanding of gender dynamics when it comes to addressing these issues.

We need training for judges, for prosecutors and for everyone involved in the criminal justice system. We need the government to seriously look at the issue of parental alienation and to consider whether legislative changes are needed to better protect survivors of abuse.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Victoria for her speech. We share the same concern about coercive control.

Today, I am thinking about Mirabelle who, during the pandemic, made me aware of this issue. The number of women sharing their experiences on her blog skyrocketed during the pandemic.

On March 8, as part of International Women's Day, Quebec's National Assembly called on the federal government to criminalize coercive control this year.

On April 17, I attended a symposium on violence against women, organized by a consortium of community groups from the Brome-Missisquoi and Haute-Yamaska regions. At this symposium, participants also asked that the federal government look into this issue, and we talked about my colleague's bill.

I do have a question: Why is this taking so long?

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her questions and comments, and for her continued advocacy in combatting gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

I also want to extend my thanks to the province of Quebec for writing to the federal government and calling on it to make this legislative change. It has been two years since the justice committee tabled this report, and the government's inaction has meant that more women have faced coercive control without the tools to address it. It also means that because coercive control is one of the most common precursors to femicide, more women die. The more we delay the needed reforms to support survivors and victims of intimate partner violence, the more women die.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the many words the member for Victoria has put on the record this evening on a very important and substantive piece of legislation. It reminds me of Keira's law, which was introduced by the former leader of the Conservative Party, Rona Ambrose. It was a significant piece of legislation.

On several occasions here this evening, the member has already referred to the importance of education for judges. Of course, it is important that we recognize judicial independence, there is no doubt about that, and yet there is a responsibility for us to take the necessary actions to improve our judicial system. That is what I looked at with Rona Ambrose's bill and the manner in which the government approached that legislation. It received unanimous support because it was a good, solid, sound idea.

It is interesting that we now have another piece of legislation that is not from the government, but a member of the opposition. The reason I brought up the importance of the legislation being passed at committee stage is that a series of amendments were brought forward and, because of the general goodwill from all political parties, many of them passed. My daughter, who is an MLA in the Manitoba legislature, has brought forward Keira's law. The premier of the province is very sympathetic. The other minister responsible is not as much. I would like to think that the NDP government in Manitoba would reflect positively on the law itself. It would be great to see Bill 209 pass because it deals with education. I like to think, whether it's Rona Ambrose's law or Keira's law being adopted in other jurisdictions, it rises above political interference of any form, that people get on side, accept it and try to get it through their appropriate legislature.

With regard to murdered and missing indigenous women and girls over the years, one of the first things that we did as a government was to commission a public inquiry into it, or a task force, that came up with a number of recommendations. There are over 200. I do not think it is fair to say that only two recommendations have been acted on. I suspect we would find that a number of things take place that show goodwill towards a number of the recommendations, as some of those recommendations might include other parties being involved.

One of the things I have recognized for many years is that in our judicial system, no one jurisdiction has complete control. The federal government, the provincial government and, I would even suggest, the municipal governments that have law enforcement agencies, all have a role to play. Then, on the other side, there is the whole idea of judicial independence. All of those things need to be factored in. On murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, we are moving forward. In the last budget, the red dress alert was getting off the ground. It is going to be a pilot project in my home province of Manitoba, and I see that as a very strong, positive thing.

• (1755)

With respect to the content of the legislation, one of the critical things to take note of is the issue of controlling behaviour. I like the explanation that was provided to me and I want to read it.

Private Members' Business

When we think of coercive control, it states that “coercive control” or “coercive and controlling behaviour” have been “used in both family and criminal law contexts to describe a pattern of controlling behaviour that takes place over time in the context of intimate relationships and serves to entrap victims, eliminating their sense of freedom in the relationship. A broad range of controlling conduct may be employed, some of which may constitute criminal offences in and of themselves, such as assault or uttering threats, but the focus is on how a pattern of such conduct serves to subjugate the individual's in incidents in which abusers exercise control. Coercive control is concerned with the cumulative impact of the abuser's conduct on the victim.”

Coercive control offences have been implemented in some countries. We have seen that over the last number of years, but it has only really had that impact within the last decade. Therefore, it is nice to see that we are moving forward, albeit in the form of a private member's bill. There is nothing wrong with using a private member's bill in a situation like this. We know the degree to which the government's legislative agenda is fairly full and is taking up time; it is becoming very difficult to get legislation passed. The thing about private members' bills is that there is a time allocation automatically. It is a program that ultimately will see legislation get through.

In this situation, and I made reference to it earlier, if we look at the number of amendments that were made, and the context in which those amendments were received, we see that there were substantive amendments made to the legislation that made it a whole lot easier for government members, in particular, to get on board. I like to think the real reason for doing that is because no one here inside the chamber would not recognize the negative impact that coercive and controlling behaviour has on society. There are far too many victims of that sort of behaviour, which takes place all the time, and we need to look at reforms that are going to improve life situations for families. Although we think of a victim being a spouse, quite often in that family unit the children are also victims.

It was highlighted in recent history through the pandemic, when there were more people staying at home and many relationships were being tested: I believe there was a lot more of that coercive behaviour taking place. It is one of the reasons why, as a government, we have been very supportive financially of women's organizations. I am thinking of the fine work that was being done in many communities across the country. For example, I think of Osborne House, which has been in Winnipeg for many decades. It has supported not only the women who go there as short-term occupants, but also those who see it as a resource that provides information to individuals who are being abused.

I am pleased to see that the legislation has gotten to the point it has today. I am expecting it to receive substantial support because of the general attitude in recognizing just how important the issue is. Fortunately, for all of us, we have the opportunity to see some tangible action on it.

• (1800)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thankful that this bill has been brought forward. This is a really important bill that we need to discuss. In my

time here in the House of Commons, I have had the opportunity to do a lot of work when it comes to violence against women, domestic violence, intergenerational trauma and impact to families.

American forensic social worker Evan Stark is at the leading edge on this. According to Lagdon et al., “coercive control is characterised by a pattern of negative behaviours which aim to intimidate, threaten and humiliate a person or restrict a person's liberty (e.g. isolating a person from friends and family; taking control over aspects of everyday life such as where a person can go and who they can see; repeatedly putting a person down; making credible threats of violence; or economic oppression) entrapping them within an abusive cycle”.

Bill C-332, an act to amend the Criminal Code, recognizes the dynamic between this and intimate partner violence and how intimate partner violence is different from other forms of harassment or assault. When it comes to a trusting relationship between partners, we know it is a very different relationship when a person is a subordinate to someone in charge or when a person has any vulnerability. Although the Criminal Code does recognize sexual assault and violence, it does not dig deep enough when it comes to coercive control.

I would like to talk about this bill a little bit. The amendments the committee made are very well done. I specifically looked at these amendments because the bill had to get into the language regarding what coercive control was. Getting into the details, we have to understand the pattern of conduct; we need to understand that it is not just a single event. Many times, police are called to a single event of a physical nature, but coercive control is something that happens time and time again. Seeing that it is fully detailed in here, I would really like to thank the members of the committee who did great work on this. We need to make sure that when we are talking about it, if we are going to educate on it, if we want to ensure that the police know how to enforce it, we need to have a good understanding of it. The committee has done a great job on that.

The exact issue is when it comes to reporting. Education has to be paramount here. One of the greatest tragedies we have is that when abuse does happen, especially to women, they do not call. We know that, in over 90% of cases of violence against women, the victims are not calling the police to report. We have to look at the group of people who are not reporting. In that group we find more marginalized women who are becoming more vulnerable. Often, they are not reporting because of trust. If somebody has reported once or twice before, will they call back if it continues to happen? Without coercive control in the Criminal Code, this will not happen.

Private Members' Business

It is so hard to prove what coercive control is. By indicating specifically in the bill what it is, it gives much greater depth to the courts and to the police to make sure that we are actually laying the charges that are necessary. To survivors, though, this is a very difficult thing for them. Survivors of coercive control are fighting between trying to protect their children and protect themselves; they are making sure that they do not lose their children, making sure that they are protecting their children from their perpetrator. In many cases, we are looking at revictimization. We have heard time and time again of people going into the courts after accusing somebody and being revictimized. The NDP member who sponsored this bill saw what impact coercive control can have.

We need to ensure that our courts are informed by trauma, that those working with victims of violence and intergenerational trauma are trained, because these are very vulnerable people. It is not just about a person being hit and getting bruised, but it is also about what that does to a person inside. Many of these victims who have come forward are already ripped apart, so making sure that we can support these people is very important.

I would like to read a few quotes from women's organizations because, when it comes to their support of this bill or some of their concerns, they have been very active. I would really like to thank these women's organizations that are out there working day in and day out to make sure that women, when they are looking for shelters and financial support, receive support. Luke's Place is one of these organizations. The legal director at Luke's Place, a family law support centre for abused women in Oshawa, says the majority of women who are abused do not report it to police and therefore would not benefit by this new law.

• (1805)

That is one of the concerns that they brought forward, and that is why it is important that we have all of this information. She worries that with this law, women who defend themselves from abusive partners might themselves be accused of coercive control. That is why we have to talk about coercive control and parental alienation, and understand how all of these pieces come together to create a really complex issue.

We also have to wonder, will the police be able to enforce this? When victims are making these phone calls, it may be the first call or it may be their 11th call. We do not know. We know that it usually takes up to 11 times for a woman to make that first call after being violated. We do not know what call that is. However, if they have lost trust in the system, there is an issue.

As we are moving forward, we need to see what is positive and what is negative. How can we control this to ensure that when victims are coming forward, they do not, in turn, get forced into coercive control, that the tables do not get turned on them?

We have heard so much testimony from women across Canada, whether it is at the justice committee or at the status of women committee. We have heard from women who have come forward and shared their stories about the tables being turned on them. When they came forward, they were talking about not having money, being followed, being stalked, and a variety of different things that could happen, such as name-calling, all of these abuses, and the

fact that at the end of the day they did not have that support. These are the things that we need to talk about.

One of the biggest things, and this is what I think this legislation does, is that it provides a tool. It provides something to go back on and to lean on. This would allow early intervention. If people are educated, they may be more aware of it. They may be more aware of what is going on in a person's life.

Only 30% of women, of people, have visible injuries as a result of domestic violence, and only a certain number of people experience, perhaps, emotional, sexual or financial parts of this abuse. When we know that 30% have bruises, what about the other 70%? What does that look like?

Why do we need to do this? Just moments ago, people were talking about the correlation between women and femicide. These things are happening. Between 2011 and 2021, police reported 1,125 gender-related homicides of women and girls in Canada. Of these homicides, two-thirds were perpetrated by an intimate partner, 28% by a family member, 5% by a friend or an acquaintance, and the remaining 1% by a stranger. We know that, in many cases, women are victims of their own partner, the people they trust the most in their lives.

Between 2011 and 2021, in all the gender-related homicides of women and girls, the largest proportion died by stabbing. Now we have to look at this. Is this a first-time incident? What happened prior to this? When we look at this, we will find that this would not have been the first time of violence. It is much greater than that. Although most homicide victims are men and boys, women and girls are disproportionately killed by someone they know. That is exactly what we need to talk about when we are looking at coercive control.

I want to end this with one last example. This is the case of Daniella Mallia. She went to the police three days before her death to report that her ex-boyfriend was harassing and threatening her via text. She repeatedly told police that her ex-boyfriend's behaviour caused her to fear for her safety. This was three days before this young woman was murdered.

We can do more. We can do better. I fully support this bill. I look forward to its passing in this House today.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to start my speech with a sad statistic. As of May 28, 2024, in Quebec, there have been as many femicides as in all of 2023. My thoughts are with the victims and their loved ones.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-332, which would amend “the Criminal Code to create an offence of engaging in controlling or coercive conduct that has a significant impact on the person towards whom the conduct is directed, including a fear of violence, a decline in their physical or mental health or a substantial adverse effect on their day-to-day activities”.

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This is a subject that is very important to me since I raised this issue at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, where we are currently conducting a study on the matter. I will talk about the definition of coercive control, some of the details of this bill and a few reservations I have about the bill.

First, coercive and controlling behaviour includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, financial control, implicit or explicit threats to the partner or ex-partner, and against their children, belongings or pets.

Coercive and controlling behaviour does not relate to a single incident, but a pattern of behaviour that takes place repeatedly. It is important to understand that certain behaviours, taken in isolation might be considered normal, but it is the pattern and repetition of those behaviours that make them coercive or controlling violence.

Megan Stephens, one of the witnesses who took part in the study at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, indicated that there is no universal definition. However, a few definitions were discussed during the study, including restricting a person's movements, refusing them access to the home, controlling what they eat, disconnecting phone lines, breaking their cellphone and preventing them from going to work or to school. Taken together, these behaviours amount to coercive control.

Coercive control is low-level and repetitive. It often does not involve physical violence and takes away a person's sense of personal agency. Victims no longer make decisions based on what their own best interests are or what their driving motivators are, but they make decisions based on fear of what the other person will do to them if they don't make a decision in a certain way. It is generally understood as a course of intimidating, degrading and regulatory practices used by abusers to instill fear and threat into the everyday lives of their victims. Victims are deprived of their liberty and autonomy. The intent is to gain and maintain power and control and strip away a person's freedom and their sense of self.

Abusive behaviours are intended to cause fear and gain power and control over a woman's thoughts, beliefs and actions. Controlling another person's thoughts, beliefs and actions does not require specific overt acts of violence, although those acts certainly may be occurring as well.

Abusive partners use isolation, both physical and psychological, as a means to control their partner's contact with friends and family to emotionally bind the partner to them with the shackles of fear, dependency and coercive control tactics. In some cases, abusive partners use state-sanctioned structures to continue to coerce and control women through custody of and access to the children. The legal system is used as a weapon against the victim.

Second, I want to look more specifically at Bill C-332, introduced by the member for Victoria. It is part of a growing trend among legislators who work against coercive violence. In recent years, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights produced a report on this issue. I mentioned it earlier. It was tabled in the House on April 27, 2021.

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women is currently studying this issue. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women dealt with this issue during their study on safe practice in sport.

In the last Parliament, the NDP member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke introduced Bill C-247 in October 2020. In November 2021, during this Parliament, he introduced Bill C-202, which is essentially a new attempt to revive the legal framework, definitions and criminal consequences relating to coercive or controlling violence.

Bill C-332 is the NDP's third attempt to put this issue on the agenda. The fact that it passed first reading and was added to the order of precedence of the House on September 20, 2003, makes Bill C-332 the most successful so far and the most likely to complete its legislative journey.

- (1815)

More recently, there was also Bill C-233 from the Liberal member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle. It received royal assent on April 27, 2023, after study by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. This piece of legislation amended the Criminal Code to require judges, in cases of domestic violence and before issuing a release order, to consider whether it would be desirable for the accused to wear an electronic monitoring device. In addition, the bill amended the Judges Act to require continuing education seminars on matters related to sexual assault, intimate partner violence and coercive control.

According to a study published by Statistics Canada in April 2021, intimate partner violence, including controlling or coercive behaviour, is an integral part of this problem. It is a scourge. It is difficult to put an exact figure on the scale of violence in this country, as most cases are not reported to the police. This is the main obstacle when it comes to identifying and documenting this behaviour as well as implementing solutions for victims.

In her testimony before the committee, Lisa Smylie, the director general of communications and public affairs at the research, results and delivery branch of the Department for Women and Gender Equality, reported that approximately 36% of domestic violence incidents and only 5% of sexual assaults are reported to the police.

Based on data reported by police services in 2018, women in rural areas experienced the highest overall rates of intimate partner violence in the country. The committee also noted that marginalized women, including indigenous women, racialized women, women with disabilities and migrant women, face the greatest risk of violence, not to mention children. Furthermore, although coercive and controlling violence can occur in other contexts, it is present in 95% of relationships where there is domestic violence as we know it.

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Today, this coercive and controlling violence is facilitated by technological advancements. GPS systems make it possible to track women. Small cameras can be used to film them. Smart phones and social media platforms are used to spy on them. All these means and tools make it easier for abusers to continue to extend harm, isolation and control regardless of victims' physical locations. As we saw, there are also the traditional forms of blackmail on social media, impersonating the victim, sending persistent threatening messages, or even distributing private information or sexual content about the victim.

Third, the committee noted a few problems in enforcing the current law in the cases of victims of coercive or controlling violence. I will go over them quickly. The victims distrust current mechanisms, police services and the justice system and have little confidence they will adequately address their trauma. Unfortunately, this attitude is particularly pervasive among groups that are most often targeted by these acts, in other words, indigenous or racialized women, marginalized populations and immigrants. Women who are immigrants or who do not have Canadian citizenship fear the repercussions that reporting the abuse will have on their immigration application.

Furthermore, several stakeholders report that victims believe that they will not be taken seriously. They know that there are myths out there and they want to avoid being judged by institutions on their credibility when they come forward. It is undeniable that the fear of being blamed in turn means that few victims come forward. Victims are limited in what they can do because they may be dependent on the abuser, financially for example. They are caught in a vicious cycle where they could lose everything, end up on the street or lose custody of their children.

This point was raised by several witnesses during a committee study on women's economic empowerment. While aspects of coercive control and controlling behaviour may be present, the police and the justice systems often say that the victim's word alone is not enough to file a complaint. The numerous cases of femicide and harassment show the limitations and major flaw of the infamous "810 order" in cases where violent men pose a high risk of reoffending. They must be treated differently and be forced to use a monitoring device.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois supports the objective of Bill C-332. However, we believe there are significant shortcomings that will need to be studied in committee. For example, we will have to study the possibility of expanding the scope of the bill so that ex-partners and other family members can testify in order to address the problem of one person's word against another's. We will also have to address the severity of the sentences and the consideration given to children in cases of coercive or controlling violence, as well as the connection between the new offence and the impact on family law and protection issues. Many other aspects need to be studied.

In conclusion, I would say that we need to have a debate on the duty to protect the victims of controlling or coercive behaviour relative to the obvious right of the accused to a fair and equitable trial. Let us continue to reflect on this issue. That being said, this is done elsewhere in the world and there is not one country that would backtrack on this issue of coercive control.

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, for many reasons, I am really pleased to be standing to debate the current bill at third reading. I am happy, because I first tried to bring this issue to the attention of the House nearly four years ago. It has been a long struggle to get the bill to this state. I am also happy because the bill does something quite important: It recognizes that, in intimate partner relationships, there are other forms of violence than broken bones and bruises, and they are equally harmful. I am happy that all parties have now come to support the bill.

We owe a great debt of thanks to the survivors who came forward to committee and publicly told their stories of suffering coercive and controlling behaviour. We owe it to the women's shelter workers, who gave very eloquent testimony about the need not only for better legislation but also for better supports for women who suffer from domestic violence. We also owe a debt of thanks to the police who talked about their frustration. In particular, those in the Saanich Police Department told me that, many times, officers visited homes that they knew they would come back to. They knew that there would be bruises and broken bones next time, but they did not have the tool they needed to intervene.

Finally, I want to thank the member for Victoria. I took this, as my own private bill, as far as I could get it in the last Parliament. I have been very pleased to work with her in this Parliament to make sure that the bill gets across the finish line.

There is an urgency here. Quite frankly, I was worried that the bill might get lost in the rancour of the end of a sitting in a minority Parliament. I want to express my thanks to the member for Calgary Nose Hill, who did some important negotiations today that will help us get the bill back in front of the House next week so that we can pass it before we rise.

Why is it urgent? Of course, we all know the terrible statistic that, once every six days, a woman in this country is murdered by their intimate partner. Not as familiar is the statistic that nearly 25% of those are indigenous women. Given the promises that we have all made in this Parliament, especially the government, to act on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women, this becomes a part of that package.

It is also urgent because, often, the women who are subjected to coercive and controlling behaviour are among the more marginalized in our society, whether they are indigenous women; new Canadians, who may lack the connections and supports in the community to escape such relationships; or those within my own community, the queer community.

We recognize, and we heard very clearly, that there is a concern about ensuring that the bill not do further harm. There were some extensive amendments made in committee to prevent revictimization as much as we can for those who survive, as well as to prevent the use of the bill by the actual abusers to continue their coercive and controlling behaviour.

Two of those amendments are quite important. One would forbid those who self-represent from being allowed to cross-examine their partners. These are perpetrators who engage in coercive and controlling behaviour and who represent themselves in court. Instead, the judge would appoint an independent lawyer to do that. That is an important part of avoiding revictimization by the abusive partner. The second is equally important. It says that, in findings of guilt under this offence, the judge must consider the overall context of the relationship. In common language, this means that the judge would have to ensure that the actual abuser, not the victim of coercive and controlling behaviour, is the one being charged. It is my hope that, after seeing these important amendments, the other place will also act expeditiously to pass the bill.

In addition to the women who are subject to coercive and controlling behaviour and the harms they suffer, and in addition to those who eventually die by femicide, which, 95% of the time, is preceded by coercive and controlling behaviour, the other victims of coercive and controlling behaviour are children. Children who are in households where coercive and controlling behaviour is taking place quite often suffer enormous psychological damage as a result of this behaviour as it goes on.

That leads to a related question that the bill does not address, and that is parental alienation. As I like to say when we talk about family law, this is not a thing. There are people who try to use the concept of parental alienation against their partners, saying that it is not their behaviour that has caused their children to be afraid but their partner, who is alienating the children's affections.

The bill does not deal directly with parental alienation, but it does deal with one of the fundamental causes of those disputes, which is the coercive and controlling behaviour at its root. We have heard today that all parties are very interested in making sure that we also address the question of parental alienation.

• (1825)

Will the bill end domestic violence? Of course it will not. There are many other supports that the frontline women's shelter workers talked to us about. They include legal aid in family law at the provincial level and additional funding for shelters. During the pandemic, it became quite clear that many women do not have good options for leaving these relationships.

Even when women finally come to the conclusion that they have no other option but to leave, there is no place for them to go in the community. In particular, many women stay in relationships because they have children; they are not sure how they will provide shelter and food for those kids. Therefore, they suffer through that coercive and controlling behaviour in the interim.

Quite clearly, we need better education in the justice system on the issue of coercive and controlling behaviour, as well as domestic

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violence in general. Too often, stereotypes of survivors and relationships interfere with the proper operation of the justice system.

Many police forces have done good work in establishing domestic violence units. Not all police forces have those units. We need to make sure that police forces have people who are trained and have the sensitivities to recognize when there are harmful relationships in front of them. When the bill is in place, they would be able to use it to help people get assistance in those times.

We also know that prosecutors, quite often, do not proceed with cases because of a victim's reluctance to testify. We need some education there, both for the survivors and for the prosecutors, to make sure that these situations actually proceed in court, as they should. This is a way of sending a very strong social message that this behaviour is unacceptable and that those who engage in it will be sanctioned by society.

Finally, there is a difficult topic and one that I am always concerned about: We need to encourage judges to better educate themselves in this area. I respect the independence of judges, and I am not arguing here today that we make judges do something. What I am arguing is that we should get the attention of judges and have education provided to them, within their own professional organizations, on the topic of domestic violence and, in particular, coercive and controlling behaviour.

No, the bill would not stop domestic violence, but because of the close connection between coercive or controlling behaviour and femicide, it may play an important role in reducing femicides in this country. The bill would provide an important tool to catch harmful and dangerous situations in interpersonal relationships earlier than we do now. This is what I heard very strongly from the frontline shelters and from the police. Right now, we lack a tool that recognizes and allows action before there are bruises and broken bones.

I am pleased to see virtually universal support for the bill. I am pleased that we have a good prospect of getting it passed next week and getting it sent to the other place. I am hopeful that the amendments we made address the concerns of some of the Senators and allow them to act expeditiously as well.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-332, an act to amend the Criminal Code on controlling or coercive conduct. The bill would create a coercive control offence that seeks to protect victims of intimate partner violence and hold their abusers accountable. These are laudable and pressing objectives that I know we all support. I want to thank the member for Victoria for bringing the bill forward; I also want to note that it is important to thank the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. I thank him for his years of work on this issue and for the incredible speech he just delivered.

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I am very pleased that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights adopted the government's amendments to Bill C-332, which seek to further the critical objectives of the bill. These amendments were informed by provincial and territorial input; the fall 2023 stakeholder engagement process led by Justice Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial partners; the testimony of witnesses who bravely appeared to speak to Bill C-332 as introduced; Scotland's domestic abuse offence model, which was recommended by stakeholders who support enactment of a coercive control offence; and—

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am going to have to interrupt the hon. member. The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION ACT

BILL C-20—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration at report stage and five hours shall be allotted to the consideration at the third reading stage of the bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration at report stage and at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration at the third reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[English]

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so that the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is the third time we have seen the current bill or something similar before the House. The first time, the Liberals allowed it to die before the 2019 election. The second time, they killed it off themselves when they prorogued to hide one of their many ongoing scandals. We now have it back a third time.

How bad is the government? How incompetent is its scheduling that it has to invoke time allocation on a bill that has been before the House three times now?

• (1835)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from Edmonton West's enthusiasm to pass the legislation. We certainly share his sense of urgency. It has been before the House three times. This feels like the right time. I am confident that the third time will be the lucky one.

It is too bad that we got to this point; as colleagues know, and my colleagues on the security committee know better than I do, the Conservatives have deployed a series of dilatory tactics to ensure that the legislation did not come out of committee. The Conservatives are even proposing frivolous amendments to delete the short title. Therefore, sadly, my colleague's enthusiasm to pass the bill seems a bit disconnected from some of his colleagues' actions to ensure that we had to bring in time allocation.

No government ever wants to have to bring in time allocation; I think all colleagues know that. Certainly, the Conservatives would not ever support time allocation. When they were in government, it was not a robotic, knee-jerk instinct that their government had; of course it was not.

Therefore, we are looking forward to hearing from colleagues. We think this is important legislation, and it is time for Parliament to proceed to vote on it.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am wondering why this is so urgent it requires closure. The bill was introduced on May 19, 2022. Second reading was completed on November 25, 2022. The committee report was completed on November 9, 2023, which was over six months ago.

If it takes the government six months to realize that it has to pass a bill, what does that say about its ability to plan?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I understand why my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou would ask that question.

When I look at the bill's timeline, I can see that it has been before Parliament for quite some time. That is probably one good reason to pass it speedily. The committee spent a significant number of meetings on this bill, during which our colleagues amended it.

Our government recognizes the importance of having a civilian authority mandated by law to oversee both the Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP. We all know of situations where that kind of independent civilian oversight would have been desirable.

I think it is time for the House of Commons to vote on this bill, and I hope my colleagues will support it.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP worked assiduously to improve this legislation, and we had to do it with the Conservatives blocking it at every single stage. What I found were delays at the committee level, when we tried repeatedly to have meetings to hear from witnesses, and each time it was blocked by the Conservatives. Despite that fact, because we are the worker bees in the House of Commons, the NDP worked to improve this bill, Bill C-20, which is a necessary bill. We had about a dozen improvements to the legislation, including banning the use of non-disclosure agreements to silence victims, ensuring there was no intimidation that could be imposed, ensuring union representation and increasing transparency. All those things improve the legislation and are needed.

Why have Conservatives blocked legislation like this, which is something that is needed and which all parties understand that it needs to be adopted through Parliament?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I have had the chance to work with our colleague, the House leader of the New Democratic Party, over a number of years. He is an experienced, dedicated parliamentarian. I might have even given him the title of “worker bee” as well. He has been, and his colleagues in his caucus have been, extraordinarily constructive in committee in improving this legislation. We worked happily with our colleagues from the New Democratic Party. The member for New Westminster—Burnaby in particular brought a number of thoughtful amendments. He identified the improvements the committee made to this legislation. We were pleased that it was an example of a parliamentary process working well.

I share his concern. I am dumbfounded as well why the Conservatives would resist having independent, legislated, civilian oversight, for the first time ever, of the Canada Border Services Agency and having strengthened oversight of the RCMP. We thought parliamentarians would be in favour of this. Canadians are in favour of it. It is pretty disingenuous for Conservatives to bring amendments, for example, to delete the short title just to make sure the legislation does not come to a vote. That is what we are trying to fix this evening.

• (1840)

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. The minister speaks about the urgency with which we really need to pass this legislation, yet here we are. I was going to say it is déjà vu, but it really cannot be déjà vu because this is my first term. Those who have served three terms can actually say it is déjà vu. In fact, I am looking right now at the Library of Parliament summary that we have on this, and it is dated August 30, 2022. The government says that we need to move quickly and we have to truncate the rights of debate of members. How can the minister possibly square that with the fact that the Liberal government has been sitting on this legislation for the third time now and for about two years?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo is in his first term in this Parliament, and he is correct that he would not have seen previous Parliaments that were not able to pass this legislation. However, we can con-

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clude that this simple fact would behoove all of us to work collaboratively, as the committee did, and the support of the Conservatives at committee, for example, was important.

What we do not understand, and I think what other parliamentarians may not understand, is why the Conservatives are now seeking, through a series of frivolous amendments, to delete the short title. We think the idea of having an independent civilian oversight of national security agencies is important, which is something the Conservatives of course resisted when they were in government. Maybe it is an extension of their same hesitancy to set up a national security committee of parliamentarians to ensure that the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency would have the substantive authorities that it has now. Finally, they are seeking to delay and to obstruct the idea of a civilian review commission to look at the Canada Border Services Agency, for the first time ever, and of course to look at the RCMP, which we think is a good idea. Canadians would expect us to work collaboratively on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his interest in border services.

However, it seems clear to me that the Canada Border Services Agency is experiencing a major governance problem. Therefore, in the context of today's debate, which is about implementing a new mechanism to address this governance problem, would it not have been a good idea to review the existing governance model and ensure that those responsible have the necessary skills to deal with the new complaint management mechanisms?

We know that ArriveCAN was a disaster. The handling of stolen vehicles at the port of Montreal also raises many concerns.

I would like to hear the minister's thoughts on the governance of the Canada Border Services Agency.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, our colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue raises an important issue, namely the internal governance of the Canada Border Services Agency.

The CBSA has gone through some difficult times, what with the Auditor General's report and the internal reviews of ArriveCAN.

I have a great deal of trust in the current president of the CBSA, Erin O'Gorman. I got to know her when she was a senior official at the Treasury Board. She has a lot of experience, specifically in matters of governance.

My discussions with her and the executive vice-president of the CBSA reassured me tremendously about their commitment to improving the governance of that organization. The idea of having a civilian-run independent commission to address this and deal with complaints is an important addition to the discussion.

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• (1845)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I look at the legislation as enabling additional public confidence in an institution that plays such an important role in many different ways. Our Canada border control officers, in general, do an outstanding job, and there has been a great deal of work, through the minister and the minister's staff, to bring it to the point where it is today. Unfortunately, with the legislative agenda, what we find is that the Conservative Party of Canada, better known as the “Reformers” inside the House, really do not want to have legislation that is good for Canadians ultimately passed, and that is really quite unfortunate.

I am wondering if the minister can provide his thoughts in regards to how this legislation, once passed, would really add value in terms of public confidence in the system.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I thank our colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for highlighting what surprises colleagues on our side of the House, in terms of the Conservatives' reticence to adopt legislation that would provide, for the first time, independent civilian oversight of the Canada Border Services Agency and that would strengthen the previous complaints commission process for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Our national security institutions do great work to protect Canadians, to serve Canadians and to ensure, in the case of the Canada Border Services Agency, that duties are collected appropriately by competent authorities. It is important for the Canadian economy, and it is important for the treasury of the Government of Canada. That work is very important, and it is done well.

There is also a national security, a border security, element. All of these agencies benefit from independent, strengthened oversight to deal with complaints, to deal with, as my colleague, the New Democratic Party House leader, identified in the case of some union circumstances or employees.

All of this should be important for members, in terms of providing the support for these agencies, and I hope Parliament will adopt this bill, Bill C-20.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the NDP fought hard to improve this bill, Bill C-20, to increase transparency and accountability and to ensure that there was more investigative power. There are many improvements to this bill. However, as we know, it came out of committee, and then promptly ran into the stone wall, which is the Conservative Party of Canada, that blocked dental care, pharmacare, the affordable housing provisions that the NDP has pushed the government to put into place and the improvements to the Competition Act. Of course, Conservatives do not accept the blame for having delayed this bill now for months because they blocked everything else before it.

The disingenuous idea that somehow this bill, Bill C-20, can just make its way through the House of Commons when the Conservatives have blocked every single piece of legislation that helps the country and that helps their constituents, I think shows the extent to which Conservatives are willing to mislead the public. The reality is that Conservatives have been unwilling to pass this bill, despite

all the benefits for Canada and for those who work for CBSA and the RCMP, which would ensure more accountability and transparency of those institutions and would ensure a way for the public to make complaints.

With all those benefits in Bill C-20, why have Conservatives been blocking it for so long?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby again identifies what, for us, was a very constructive and positive effort from our colleagues at committee to improve the legislation. As I said, the New Democratic Party was a very steady and constructive voice in bringing thoughtful amendments that, from our perspective, strengthened the legislation.

The member identified, for example, the importance of the public having a process by which complaints could be adjudicated by competent authorities, the appointments process of members of the commission reflecting the diversity of our country and the appropriate role for this complaints review commission, with respect to the internal matters involving employees. These were all things the committee strengthened or improved in the legislative process.

I too share my colleague's view of the disingenuous way in which the Conservatives now pretend that there is no urgency to pass this bill, Bill C-20, after they took every conceivable step to make sure that this legislation would not get to a vote. The good news is that we may be getting to that point this evening.

• (1850)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I have to laugh at the minister's comments about being disingenuous. He talked about strengthening oversight with this bill, Bill C-20, the importance of the appointments process and the appropriate role of the complaints process.

I wonder if the minister made the exact same arguments to the Prime Minister and the rest of his cabinet before he voted to prorogue government in order to cover up for the WE scandal.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, members, I hope, will agree that there is some irony in a member of the Conservative Party criticizing prorogation when its former leader, former Prime Minister Harper, prorogued Parliament to avoid a confidence vote that would have likely replaced his government. He had to have a one-hour wrangle with the Governor General to ask for that unconstitutional and unprecedented request. I thought the Conservatives were addicted to prorogation, particularly if it involves a confidence vote that might avoid their government being accountable to this very House.

I certainly would not impute some impure motive on our colleague from Edmonton West, but I think he should be careful when he sees prorogation as essential to the survival of his former Conservative government.

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[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is naturally in favour of this bill. I hope this will give citizens effective recourse. I heard about a lot of cases of abuse of power against people who wanted to be served in French, including at the Montreal airport. This seems to be done with impunity. There was even a university professor who was jailed for being a bit too insistent on being served in French.

I am not sure what my—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. minister.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I thank our colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île. What a beautiful name for a riding. I am a little envious of the name of his constituency.

Our colleague raises an issue that should be of concern to everyone. I, too, am concerned. I fully share our colleague's concerns about the importance of having border services officers who can serve people in both official languages, whether at the Montreal airport or anywhere else in Canada.

In every conversation I have, I obviously encourage other CBSA senior officials to ensure that the kind of situation described by my colleague does not happen. I would also like to thank the Bloc Québécois members for their very constructive support in moving this bill forward. I would be happy to make sure we resolve this kind of issue correctly.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is very clear, certainly from the news, that there is a need for independent oversight. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls called for systemic change, particularly relating to calls 9.1 to 9.11.

It is not shocking to me. We know there is systemic racism in policing. We know it is not effective for police to police themselves. To the minister, why do you think the Conservatives are so against addressing systemic racism in both the CBSA and the RCMP, which has been highly reported, including at the United Nations?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member that she is to address questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the minister.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, the member identifies something that we have acknowledged: the presence of systemic racism in policing institutions and other governmental institutions. It is a concern that we share with her.

Again, one of the constructive elements of the work done by colleagues at the committee, including the House leader of the New Democratic Party, was the ability to collect race-based data and to look at the issues around overrepresentation of racialized people and indigenous people in the criminal justice system. Sadly, in many cases, the entry point for many of these people in the criminal justice system is interactions with the police or conceivably the Canada Border Services Agency. That is why it is important that

the appropriate people be appointed to this oversight group to ensure that exactly the kind of concern that our colleague from Winnipeg Centre raises is addressed at the highest levels and with the utmost vigour.

• (1855)

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

I just want to reiterate the point made by my colleague from Edmonton. He asked the minister whether he advised the Prime Minister in relation to this bill when prorogation occurred in the 43rd Parliament. The minister danced, weaved and dodged, and he would not answer the question.

I will ask it again. Prior to the prorogation in the 43rd Parliament, did he advise the Prime Minister in relation to this bill, yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, dancing and weaving are not physical activities that I would pretend to be very effective in doing.

What I thought I did, which I judged by the smiles of a number of colleagues in the House, including across the aisle from where I stand now, was point out a certain irony. “Hypocrisy” may be an unparliamentary word, so I would not propose to use that word, but there is a certain irony in Conservatives finding anything other than joy in prorogation. I would have thought they were addicted to prorogation. They love prorogation. They now pretend to have manufactured outrage around prorogation with legislation in a previous Parliament. They prorogued Parliament not even to call an election but to avoid a non-confidence vote. I am having trouble understanding the sincerity of that question.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, as members know, we introduced and passed Bill C-290 to protect whistle-blowers. Neither the CBSA nor the RCMP were included in that bill.

Can the minister assure me that Bill C-20 will change things so that my constituency office stops receiving emails from officers asking for help with unjustified layoffs, threats to suspend their pensions, and so on? Will this kind of thing finally end with the passage of Bill C-20?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, our colleague from Beauport—Limoilou has raised another important issue. I completely share her concern regarding complaints that could land in her constituency office from people who did not really have appropriate recourse or a robust independent voice for the review and handling of those complaints.

Government Orders

I hope that this bill and the independent commission that it creates and that will apply for the first time both to the CBSA and to our friends in the RCMP will provide exactly the recourse that our colleague from Beauport—Limoilou has identified as missing in the past.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it a bit odd to hear my Conservative colleagues talk about transparency. That is not really a concept that we have seen them apply in the past.

I would like the minister to tell us about important measures. This bill talks about transparency and accountability. I think it is important to hear what the minister, who is very eloquent and obviously very familiar with the sector, has to say about this. Canadians who are watching at home this evening will be interested to know what measures are set out in this bill to promote transparency and accountability.

I am sure that the minister can tell Canadians this evening why this bill is good for the future of our country.

• (1900)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, our colleague, the Minister of Innovation, rightly raised an important issue. In his parliamentary or ministerial work, my colleague is someone who is very focused on the type of critical question he just asked.

I think that the very fact that the commission will regularly release reports will reassure Canadians as to the importance of this aspect of civilian review, which will apply to the CBSA for the first time and which will be strengthened in the case of the RCMP.

I completely agree with the Minister of Innovation as to the importance of reassuring Canadians that we have put in place appropriate measures to guarantee not only their safety but also the accountability of our national security agencies.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, when I asked the minister a question about systemic racism, I heard Conservatives heckling. I bring this up because we know there is an overrepresentation of excessive force used against Black people, indigenous people and people of colour. We have a serious issue of systemic racism in this country, which informed part of the TRC final report and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Let us not forget that the roots of the RCMP are in apprehending children and shipping them off to residential schools. That is the history upon which the RCMP was founded. Of course, some Conservative members have been quoted as residential school denialists, and it is concerning.

I am wondering whether the minister can reassure me that we will stop allowing the Conservatives to stall and will make sure we address the serious systemic racism in this country.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, our colleague from Winnipeg Centre raises a very troubling and important issue. We acknowledge the presence of systemic racism in many aspects of the criminal justice system. The overrepresentation of indigenous persons, Black people and racialized people is a source of concern

for all of us. It should concern all Canadians. It certainly is a concern that I share.

As expressed by our colleague from Winnipeg Centre, there is no doubt that having more reliable data, which is one of the important things this legislation would do, would help us come up with the policies appropriate to reduce this very concerning overrepresentation. I would obviously be happy to work with our colleague from Winnipeg Centre, who has been a very powerful voice on these issues, to ensure that we have the right series of measures in the criminal justice system at all times and that this important circumstance is addressed and addressed quickly. We have made some progress, but there is still a lot more work to do, and we think this legislation is one of many steps necessary to address the issues that she so correctly identified.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is as follows. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

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

• (1905)

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, we are seeking a recorded vote, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1945)

[*Translation*]

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that we were unable to identify the member for York South—Weston.

The Deputy Speaker: His vote will be withdrawn.

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

(*Division No. 795*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin

Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach

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Chen	Chiang	Arnold	Baldinelli
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)	Barlow	Barrett
Cormier	Coteau	Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Dabrusin	Damoff	Bergeron	Berthold
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Bérubé	Bezan
Dhillon	Diab	Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Drouin	Dubourg	Bragdon	Brassard
Duclos	Duguid	Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	Calkins	Caputo
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith	Carrie	Chabot
Fillmore	Fisher	Chambers	Champoux
Fonseca	Fortier	Chong	Cooper
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Dalton	Dancho
Freeland	Fry	DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Gaheer	Gainey	Desbiens	Doherty
Garrison	Gazan	Dowdall	Dreeschen
Gerretsen	Gould	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Green	Hajdu	Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Hanley	Hardie	Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Holland	Housefather	Ferri	Findlay
Hughes	Hutchings	Fortin	Gallant
Iacono	Idlout	Garon	Gaudreau
Ien	Jaczek	Généreux	Genuis
Johns	Joly	Gill	Gladu
Jones	Julian	Godin	Goodridge
Kelloway	Khalid	Gourde	Gray
Khera	Koutrakis	Hallan	Hoback
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Jeneroux	Jivani
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux	Kelly	Khanna
Lapointe	Lattanzio	Kniec	Kram
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Lebouthillier	Lightbound	Kusie	Lake
Long	Longfield	Lantsman	Larouche
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Lawrence	Lehoux
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Lemire	Leslie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Liepert	Lloyd
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Lobb	Maguire
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	Majumdar	Martel
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McLeod	McPherson	McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McLean
Mendès	Mendicino	Melillo	Michaud
Miao	Miller	Moore	Morantz
Morrissey	Murray	Morrice	Morrison
Naqvi	Ng	Motz	Muys
Noormohamed	O'Connell	Nater	Normandin
Oliphant	O'Regan	Patzer	Pauzé
Powlowski	Qualtrough	Perkins	Perron
Robillard	Rodriguez	Plamondon	Poilievre
Rogers	Romanado	Redekopp	Reid
Sahota	Sajjan	Rempel Garner	Roberts
Saks	Samson	Rood	Ruff
Sarai	Scarpaleggia	Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schiefke	Serré	Seeback	Shields
Sgro	Shanahan	Shipley	Simard
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh	Soroka	Steinley
Sorbara	Sousa	Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Sudds	Strahl	Stubbs
Tassi	Taylor Roy	Thériault	Therrien
Thompson	Trudeau	Thomas	Tolmie
Turnbull	Valdez	Uppal	Van Popta
Van Bynen	van Koeverden	Vecchio	Vidal

NAYS

Members

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Williamson

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Members

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Guilbeault
Kayabaga
Paul-Hus
Richards

Desilets
Hepfner
Lalonde
Petitpas Taylor
Trudel — 10

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind members that, pursuant to order made February 28, for the remainder of the sitting, the Speaker shall not receive any quorum calls or dilatory motions and shall only accept a request for unanimous consent after receiving a notice from the House leaders or whips of all recognized parties stating that they are in agreement with such a request.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was cut off during my last speech on Bill C-20, which was my first time debating the bill. It now, unfortunately, has been time allocated. I am a big believer that all members of Parliament should at least have the opportunity to debate one stage of a bill, as it goes through the parliamentary process, to represent our constituents and express any concerns or support for said bill.

As was pointed out in the time allocation motion debate a little while ago, this is, unfortunately, the third attempt to pass this bill. It was Bill C-98 in the 42nd Parliament, which died on the Order Paper when that Parliament ceased to exist. In the 43rd Parliament, it was Bill C-3, but it died when the Prime Minister called the unnecessary election, which he called despite having voted a couple of months before the election against doing that.

Ultimately, Bill C-20 has been kicking around for almost two years now. It came out of committee last fall and was only brought forward here last month. My last comment in the first two minutes of my speech was that I was looking forward to finishing this speech when it became a priority for the government again. Lo and behold, it only took it a month this time to make it a priority and now the government has decided to time allocate it.

What is this bill about? There are two fundamental things. It is renaming the existing review body, which already exists for the RCMP, but now it would be expanded to cover the Canada Border Services Agency, too. This is important because currently the CBSA is the only public safety agency in Canada without an independent oversight body for public complaints. Establishing this independent review body would foster and enhance public trust and

confidence in Canada's law enforcement and border services institutions, something we can agree is desperately needed. It is just disappointing that it has taken this long.

The first of the concerns I heard, and I know this was brought up when it was being studied at committee, was a lack of consultation. There is also the concern over the qualifications or experience required for these Governor in Council appointed commissions, which is an oversight. The third concern is the potential lack of independence for access to the information, and the final concern I have heard is with the lack of a mandated review period. I am only going to have time to address part of this in my remaining few minutes. I really want to focus on the lack of consultation because it is clear that these crucial conversations did not take place.

Various stakeholders, including indigenous chiefs and the National Police Federation, which represents the RCMP, flagged various problems with the bill. Most importantly, they felt the current framework, which relies on the RCMP to investigate itself, is insufficient and does not inspire public trust in the process. Bill C-20 does not fully address this as the new complaints commission would still rely heavily on RCMP resources, meaning that it would not be truly independent. Conservatives tried to move various amendments to increase the independence at the committee stage, but it was clear that there was no will from the other parties.

Another issue, raised by the CBSA union, was the need for remuneration for back pay for officers who had been suspended when an investigation ultimately deems them innocent. This is a major oversight in the bill, which common-sense Conservatives advocated for. Particularly in the midst of this cost of living crisis created by the Prime Minister, it seems especially cruel to punish these officers. As one stakeholder said, "When the allegations are not founded and it's found that there was no wrongdoing, we're told to file a grievance to recuperate the lost salary. It's devastating to people. You're right—I really don't know anyone who could go a year with no pay." Once again, it is sad that it was not the will of the public safety committee to adopt this common-sense amendment.

I want to draw a bit of a parallel to something that was tabled last November by the NSICOP committee on a study of the mandate of the RCMP for federal policing. There are two recommendations I would like to share. The first recommendation states:

The Minister of Public Safety provide clear and regular direction to the RCMP to strengthen Federal Policing, including in areas of governance; financial controls; human resources, recruiting and training; and information management. In each of these areas, this direction should include the Minister's expectations, clear interim and final objectives, and clear performance measures.

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• (1950)

The second recommendation is that “The Government recognize that Federal Policing resources are insufficient to fulfil its various mandates and put in place measures to ensure Federal resources are appropriated fully to Federal priorities.” The reason I am bringing up those two recommendations from that report is that it is crystal clear from reading that report, which is completely unredacted, with the exception of two sentences in the whole report, that it talks about the strain and pressure that the RCMP is already under to fulfil its federal mandate, yet here we have another example of additional resources still being pulled, though for an important reason, from within the RCMP and not outside it.

The last thing I want to bring up is that the CBSA, which, if I heard the news correctly today, is potentially only a couple of days away from taking strike action, needs this additional support and oversight, because it would help protect not only those workers, but the whole mandate of what the CBSA is there to do, which is to ultimately protect Canadians. We need that, because our CBSA officers are phenomenal. They help keep us safe and keep our borders safe. We have heard from umpteen debates in this House, when it comes to justice issues, about the lack of support that the CBSA has and the lack of necessary resources coming from the government to deal with so many crimes, such as the illegal trafficking of firearms across our border.

In conclusion, I really want to highlight that this is an important bill. It is a bill that I intend to support. However, it is frustrating and disappointing that it took the government this long to make it a priority for debate in this House.

• (1955)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the concluding remarks from the member. He supports the bill. He is disappointed that it is taking us so long to pass it, and at the beginning of his comments, he was talking about how the government was unable to get it passed in the last session. It is truly amazing. “Look in a mirror”, I say to the members opposite. The reason it does not get passed is that the Conservatives do not want it to pass. The member needs to talk to his House leadership team. The Conservatives moved a very simple motion to delete the short title of the legislation in order to prevent it from passing.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on why he believes his own Reform-Conservative Party does not actually want to pass it and instead filibusters.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I will just push back and counter the parliamentary secretary's comments, because, as I mentioned at the start of my speech and as I have brought up in debate previously, I am a big believer that every member in this House should have the opportunity to speak to every piece of legislation, if it is something that their constituents want them to speak to. That member is a member who speaks at every stage to every bill and to every amendment. In fact, he even spoke just two days ago to my private member's bill. He did not even listen to my speech on it, and I am the sponsor and the mover of the bill. There were other Liberal MPs I talked to who wanted to speak to it, yet he does not want to

let them speak. He has to speak to it, when he does not even have a clue what he is speaking about.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I like the member very much, and I would like to hear his comments on the following point.

During his speech, he talked about the importance of transparency and independence. My understanding of the bill is that the chairperson of the commission is to report to the minister rather than reporting directly to the House. This is a problem we have previously discussed. For example, the military ombudsman reported exclusively to the minister, which led to issues with transparency in the Jonathan Vance case.

Does my colleague think that this is one of the blind spots in the bill and something that could perhaps be improved down the line?

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, it is very important. Transparency is not only something that we see with different ombudsmen and different roles, but ultimately it is important.

Again, we just need to look at anything that has been tabled in the House recently on some of the reports that have been coming out. We can look at foreign interference and the importance of transparency there to get to the crux of what we need to tackle as Parliament, and what the government needs to focus its efforts on.

When it comes to complaints, it needs to be dealt with. My background is that I am ex-military. Unfortunately, I just read in the news today that the Information Commissioner was complaining that she has to take extraordinary action to even get information out of the government when it comes to understanding what the issues are.

When we have a complaints commissioner set up, they will need to have that same access to all the material, ultimately, and not be held up during the process.

• (2000)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member is saying that the Conservatives will be supporting the bill. It is kind of belied by the fact that the Conservatives have tabled nuisance amendments that delay the bill at the same time as they are saying that the bill should pass.

The member mentioned the NSICOP report. It is very important. There are worrisome allegations in this report about foreign interference into the recent Conservative leadership process. Does the member believe, as I do, that a full and complete investigation by all the appropriate authorities is warranted into that Conservative leadership convention?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the member knows that as a member of NSICOP, I have to be very careful and judicious about what I talk about.

Government Orders

I congratulate all the members, including the NDP member, the four Liberal members, the Bloc Québécois member and the senators who are part of that committee. It is a very important report that was just tabled. I know there are lots of questions being raised by other members of Parliament.

I encourage the government to follow up on the findings of that report and the recommendations made. I encourage every single MP to read the report because, ultimately, we all have a responsibility to make sure we are being very judicious in our actions and whom we interact with, and to make sure that Canadians and this country are first and foremost in everything that we do.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-20 in this place.

This bill is incredibly important, as it would enact a new stand-alone statute to establish the public complaints and review commission, or PCRC, as an independent civilian review body for both the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency. For the first time, both these law enforcement agencies would fall under the scrutiny of an external review body. The bill would also bring about enhanced reporting mechanisms, improving our ability as parliamentarians to hold the Minister of Public Safety to account in relation to complaints and systemic reviews.

I urge my hon. colleagues to adopt this bill without delay. It responds to long-standing, unfulfilled commitments from the government's first mandate to introduce legislation to create a review body for the CBSA. Indeed, Bill C-20 follows three previous attempts to fill this gap. Now is the time for us to make sure that Bill C-20 passes the finish line. Robust, independent review of our law enforcement agencies is essential to public trust and the rule of law, and central to our role as parliamentarians in holding to account the Minister of Public Safety through his reporting to Parliament.

Bill C-20 is an effort to foster trust between Canadians, the RCMP and the CBSA, and it would do so by providing greater transparency and accountability. Adoption of this bill would be timely, as there has been a notable erosion of trust in Canadian law enforcement agencies. There are many reasons for this, but the erosion has largely been influenced by several recent events involving law enforcement misconduct. The erosion of trust is also the product of broader discussions around systemic racism within law enforcement. A public opinion survey from 2022 found that only one in three Canadians agreed that the RCMP treats members of visible minority groups fairly or that it treats indigenous people fairly. CBSA and RCMP officers are entrusted with broad powers, and Canadians expect and deserve assurances that these powers are not abused or misused. They expect and deserve assurance that any allegations of misconduct will be reviewed and redressed when warranted.

As lawmakers, we have the power to restore public confidence in our law enforcement agencies in order to sustain our country's peaceful and civilized society. Under this legislation, we would ensure that Canada's two largest law enforcement agencies are required to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to justice and fairness in all their actions. Through the establishment of the new inde-

pendent review body, they would also need to be transparent with the public about their powers and their integrity in exercising these powers.

As I mentioned, Bill C-20 responds to calls from the public for greater transparency and accountability from Canada's law enforcement agencies. The PCRC would replace the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP and extend its mandate to the CBSA with increased accountability and tools at its disposal. Complainants and eligible third parties would now have access to an external body that could independently initiate, review and investigate RCMP- and CBSA-related complaints as they relate to conduct and/or levels of service.

In general, the PCRC would first refer the cases to the RCMP or the CBSA for initial investigation, to ensure accountability remains first and foremost on these agencies. If an individual is not satisfied with how the RCMP or CBSA handled the complaint, they could ask the PCRC to review it. At the end of the PCRC investigation, the review body would report its findings and make recommendations. Tracking these recommendations and their implementation by the RCMP and the CBSA would better allow us to hold the minister to account.

Further, the bill would allow third parties to submit complaints to the PCRC. Vulnerable individuals are sometimes reluctant to file a complaint or may be unable to proceed with the complaints process, because of language barriers, distrust of law enforcement or other reasons. In some cases, a complaint against the CBSA may come from someone who is detained in a CBSA facility.

● (2005)

The inclusion of third parties would provide for greater representation from individuals who may be reluctant or unable to complete the complaint process. This would make the PCRC accessible to a greater number of individuals who interact with the RCMP and the CBSA, including migrants detained in immigration holding centres and provincial facilities or in any future designated immigrant stations as proposed in Bill C-69.

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There is a second type of review that the PCRC could undertake as part of its mandate, and that is the conduct of specified activity reviews, or SARs, on the PCRC's own initiative, at the request of a third party or by the Minister of Public Safety. Also called systemic investigations, SARs would allow the PCRC to identify systemic issues and develop recommendations around policies, procedures or guidelines relating to the operations of the CBSA and the RCMP. These investigations would provide the PCRC with the tool to identify broader concerns in Canadian law enforcement and to contribute to solutions to address them.

In contrast to its predecessor, Bill C-20 would also provide PCRC with enhanced tools to fulfill its complaints and review mandate. First, it would establish the PCRC under stand-alone legislation to reinforce the commission's independence from the agencies it reviews. To further increase accountability, the bill would also create codified timelines for the RCMP commissioner and the CBSA president to respond to the PCRC's interim reports, reviews and recommendations. This would help deliver on some of the recommendations made by the Mass Casualty Commission with regard to creating more transparent reporting of federal law enforcement agencies.

In addition, deputy heads of the RCMP and the CBSA would be required to submit an annual report to the Minister of Public Safety to inform them of the actions taken in response to the PCRC recommendations. Annual reports would be tabled in both Houses, allowing for parliamentary scrutiny, which would further strengthen the accountability process. To facilitate the identification of and contribute to the government's efforts to address systemic issues around vulnerable populations, the PCRC would be required to collect disaggregated demographic and race-based data of complainants.

The bill would seek to improve law enforcement's interactions with the public by mandating PCRC outreach activities, including with indigenous or racialized communities, and raise awareness of people's right to file a complaint.

I think the legislation is crucially important. All members at the committee stage and all parties represented have had the opportunity to put forward amendments and work collaboratively with us. With respect to the arguments around its timing to get here, if members truly believe the legislation is needed and important, then they should vote with us to ensure that it passes quickly.

• (2010)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way mentioned timeliness. At committee, the NDP put forward an amendment that would assure timely action on some of the complaints, the specified activities complaints. The amendment had the support of a large coalition of groups across the country and the support of the union, yet the Liberals voted it down even though it included provisions to extend the deadline if necessary. I am wondering why the Liberals voted against our amendment for timely action on these complaints.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, part of the work is to ensure that we can build a system that is in place to help protect Canadians and bring complaints forward, but part of the important work is also the review process. The concern my hon. colleague raises is

something that now Parliament would be able to see and be seized with, in annual reporting, to determine whether the process is working. There would now be reviews to ensure that there is transparency and accountability.

Should additional changes be needed in the future, Parliament and the other place would now have the appropriate mechanisms and would also have data that is clear in order to make good policy choices.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois obviously supports Bill C-20, but we have to wonder. Neither of the two former bills C-3 or C-98 were prioritized by the government, so they died on the Order Paper.

The next election campaign is fast approaching. Next winter will be the last before the next election. Can my colleague assure us that, this time, her government will make this bill a priority and modernize the way that the CBSA and the RCMP process complaints?

Furthermore, we cannot overlook the need to review the funding of these organizations. There is no time to address existing complaints because the number of complaints is growing, in part due to high immigration levels. Will the government provide the funding needed to process these complaints in a timely manner?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member, and I thank the Bloc for its constructive work at committee. The legislation before us is important legislation. We do want to see it move forward. I think the witness testimony we heard and the amendments put forward by all parties are a very good example of how Parliament and parliamentary committees can actually work together to improve legislation that the government members supported.

With respect to the member's question about funding, I can confirm that, in order to set up the PCRC, we would invest over \$112 million over the next six years and then \$19.4 million ongoing. The member pointed out quite correctly that, after its establishment, more complaints may come forward, but it would be crucial to protecting Canadians.

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Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that most Canadians recognize when they elect people to Parliament is that we come here to make laws. We come here to make laws between elections, and we participate in committees. I know that I have a lot of colleagues with relevant background who were at the committee and who did not feel like their considerations were actually dealt with during the legislative process. At the end, the amendments matter. When we bring people forward, we bring people from different walks of life in Canada to give their expertise in making amendments.

I would like to ask the member whether she would consider some of the amendments brought forth by some of the law enforcement officials now serving in Parliament who had some significant value to add to the bill.

• (2015)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, if the amendments are so important to the Conservative member and to the Conservatives, then why was the only amendment they brought forward to delete the short title? It is quite embarrassing that the member would stand in this place to say that Conservatives have concerns, despite the Conservatives' moving a fake amendment to delete the short title.

Therefore, my question in return is this: What specifically was wrong with the short title that took precedence over the so-called amendments that the member would support from law enforcement agencies?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-20 is the second bill that I had the chance to work on at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security since I first joined it in 2020. First there was Bill C-21, which we talked about a lot here, then there was Bill C-20.

Many people have talked about the timing of the study of this bill. It has been a long process. The bill was introduced in the House on May 19, 2022, more than two years ago. As some colleagues mentioned, before Bill C-20, there was Bill C-3 during the 43rd Parliament, and Bill C-98 during the 42nd Parliament. Both of those bills died on the Order Paper simply because the government chose not to prioritize them.

That is basically what happened with Bill C-20 as well. It took a very long time to get to second reading in November 2022, six months after the bill was first introduced. The bill was then referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, where, once again, it took a very long time, another six months, before it could be studied. The government obviously bears some responsibility for these long delays, but the Conservatives also played their favourite game in parliamentary committee, specifically slowing down the work under the pretext of having another priority. There are always other priorities.

The study of Bill C-20 was therefore delayed by many hours. In fact, we lost several meetings over several weeks. The committee was finally able to begin its study before the summer, so members could hear from the minister, public servants and various witnesses. However, right when the committee was about to begin clause-by-

clause consideration, it suspended its work for the summer. When the committee returned in the fall, the same thing happened and parliamentary business was delayed for various reasons. It was not until six months later that the bill came back to the House of Commons, which brings us to third reading today.

I am going over these events to show those who might be following our work that the process of studying and amending a bill can be long and sometimes arduous.

That said, the Bloc Québécois still managed to help improve this bill, and that is what I am going to talk about this evening.

It is worth noting that there is still no external review commission to address public complaints against the Canada Border Services Agency. There is one for the RCMP, but not for the CBSA, which is the only federal security organization that does not yet have a review commission associated with it. However, 20 years ago, Justice O'Connor recommended that an independent process be created to handle public complaints against the CBSA. This issue dates back to 2004.

Bill C-20 finally corrects this situation. Victims of the CBSA, and they do exist, have been waiting for this bill. As with any organization, abuses of power can happen, and some people have indeed been the victims of such abuses. They have been contacting us and asking to meet with us ever since the bill was introduced two years ago. They want to help us improve the bill. For them, the process has been very long, and I salute them today. As my colleague mentioned earlier, it is a little ironic that this evening's debate is subject to time allocation, as if time is suddenly running out. However, I do hope that we will see the process through to a successful conclusion and pass this bill quickly.

As we know, the CBSA has certain powers. These powers are fairly significant, such as the power to detain and search Canadians or deport people. Cases of misconduct have been reported in recent years. One that comes to mind is the case of Maher Arar, a dual Syrian and Canadian citizen who was arrested during a layover in New York City on his way back to Canada. I have talked about him in this place before.

In January 2020, the Privacy Commissioner of Canada found significant flaws concerning searches of travellers' electronic devices. Documents released around 2017 or 2018 mentioned complaints about racist or rude comments about clients or travellers. They also noted allegations of sexual misconduct. I would remind the House that the number of investigations into misconduct by border officers increased during the pandemic even though the number of international trips had decreased. The misconduct primarily involved giving preferential treatment or showing disrespect toward clients by making inappropriate comments about people, as I was saying. Other border services officers abused their authority and shared private information about the CBSA.

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• (2020)

It is not just Canadians and travellers from this country who can be victims of the CBSA. Immigrants and refugees can also be targeted. The Canadian Council for Refugees came to committee to share what it would like to see improved in this bill. It should be noted that people who do not have permanent status in Canada are often extremely reluctant to file a complaint because they fear that it will be used against them and might hurt their chances.

When something goes wrong during a person's removal, it can be difficult for the person to lodge a complaint and go through the process, as it can sometimes be complicated given that they are outside the country. That is why the Canadian Council for Refugees told us that it would be good if organizations could bring forward third party complaints on behalf of people who, for various reasons, are unable to do so.

The government had not included this in the bill. That is why the Bloc Québécois tabled several amendments to this effect, which were fortunately adopted. Thanks to these amendments, third parties will be able to reviews of specified activities, file complaints and help citizens file complaints. Thanks to the Bloc Québécois's additions, they will also be notified if there is a refusal to investigate and will be informed of the reasons for decisions. This is a major improvement over the original bill.

It is important to note that many people who are mistreated by the CBSA are unlikely to file a complaint, as I said, sometimes because their status is not secure or because they fear consequences or reprisals. It may also be because of language barriers or problems accessing a computer or the Internet. In short, non-governmental organizations, such as the Canadian Council for Refugees, are well placed to file complaints on behalf of individuals. Some individuals may simply prefer that the organization with which they have established a relationship of trust file the complaint on their behalf.

Also, given that organizations work in this field and obviously see quite a few situations of this nature, they are well placed to identify and act on problematic patterns. If they have several examples of the same situation, a complaint about a pattern of behaviour may be more viable than an individual complaint about one person. This way, they can provide stronger evidence that there is a problem. Thanks to the Bloc Québécois amendment, organizations will be able to act as third parties, which is extremely valuable.

Essentially, the bill creates the public complaints and review commission. It will be made up of civilians who are not former members of the RCMP or the CBSA. It was very important that this be included in the bill. However, there was nothing in the bill to say that the members of this commission should reflect the diversity of society. We therefore tabled an amendment to ensure that would be the case. It was actually a recommendation from the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP, which already exists and has experience in handling complaints. It said that it was important for the people who sit on the commission to reflect the diversity of society. The Bloc Québécois therefore got this amendment adopted.

Other changes were made. The proposed subsection requiring that the commission be satisfied that sufficient resources exist for conducting the review of a complaint has been removed. There

were concerns that the underfunding of the organization would be used as an excuse to avoid reviews. Witnesses told the committee that underfunding is common. This clause was like a loophole in the bill that would allow the commission to refuse to deal with complaints. However, we are confident that the government will properly fund its organizations, including this new commission, and that the commission will not be able to hide behind this aspect in order to avoid handling complaints.

We also added the requirement that a copy of communications be sent to the complainant's legal representative, because that was not the case previously. If the victim was the only person who could file a complaint, there would be no legal representative involved. That part was therefore added, which was a request from the Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association.

• (2025)

Some aspects pertaining to the refusal to investigate were changed thanks to amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois. We proposed allowing the commission some room to manoeuvre. Now it may refuse to deal with a complaint, instead of being forced to refuse to deal with it, if other recourse is available to the complainant. These are small adjustments, small additions, that may make a big difference for victims of the CBSA.

We hope that these people's voices will be heard, that their complaints will be addressed in the most neutral and objective way possible and that they will get justice. Obviously, we hope that this bill is passed quickly.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member's comments, I can appreciate why the parliamentary secretary responsible indicated that she is very co-operative and helpful, has all sorts of ideas and is, apparently, a delight to work with on the committee, so I commend her on her actions there.

The question I would have for the member in regard to the legislation is with respect to the issue of how the passage of this legislation would assist in building public confidence within the system itself because of the independence of what is being proposed. Could the member just provide some further thought on that aspect?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words.

It is important to point out that there is already a system for handling complaints internally. There is no requirement for public disclosure, however, which allows for the possibility that complaints may not always be handled objectively and without bias.

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The union even came to tell us that it would be a good thing. Yes, it is good for the public, but it would also be good if officers themselves could file complaints against their superiors. Apparently it is complicated to do it through the internal process. Obviously, this will promote public trust, or at least, I hope it will.

Earlier on, my colleagues were talking about funding. We need to make sure that the commission is properly funded so that all complaints are processed and people receive a response. Sometimes, the process seems long and arduous, and people might think that a response will never come. If someone has a bad experience, and on top of that, they get no response to their complaint, their trust in the institution will suffer. That does not encourage trust in the CBSA.

I really hope that Bill C-20 will help improve public trust in the government authorities in charge of public safety.

[English]

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

The Liberals made this a campaign promise in 2015, yet here we are in 2024, and it is only now being passed. This bill, Bill C-20, seems to have broad support. I just wonder if the member could give her perspective as to the reason that it did not get passed, say, in the 42nd Parliament or in the 43rd Parliament, obviously due to prorogation.

Does the member believe the bill is the priority that the government says it is, given that timeline?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the very beginning of my speech, I do not think that this type of bill is a very big priority for the government. This is the third Parliament. This is the third try. I hope the third time is the charm.

The government's neglect explains the delays in studying this bill. However, as I also mentioned before, the Conservatives deserve their share of the blame. We lost many hours of debate in committee. We lost weeks and even months because the Conservative Party wanted us to examine a motion on the transfer of an inmate from a maximum-security prison to a medium-security prison. That is a very important subject, but we were studying Bill C-20, and this bill stalled because of those delays and the Conservatives' infamous filibustering.

Yes, I would like to say that it is the government's fault that this bill has not yet been passed, but I think that the Conservatives are also to blame.

• (2030)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, knowing that receiving abusive behaviours from law enforcement can be quite traumatizing, sometimes it could take courage and a very long time to be able to submit a complaint. I wonder if the member can share with us the NDP's amendment that was passed, which amended the time to be able submit a complaint from one year to two years and

how important that is for those complainants who need to build up the courage to do so.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, this is indeed an extremely important amendment. Interestingly enough, the Bloc Québécois had drafted the exact same amendment, but the NDP's amendment came up first, so we supported it.

Our intention was to provide the time required, obviously, as well as ensure that victims receive a response within a reasonable timeframe. We can assume that these experiences are trying. That also leads me to mention the fact that the people who sit on the commission must reflect the diversity of society, which could also help them to better understand various situations.

Yes, this is an extremely important amendment that the Bloc Québécois was proud to support. If the NDP had not proposed it, our party would have. We had more or less the same intention here.

[English]

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the shout-out; the chair of the mighty OGGO is here to witness this.

I am very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-20, which would establish a public complaints and review commission for the Canada Border Services Agency and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Both the RCMP and the CBSA are critical organizations that protect the security of Canadians. While carrying out their mandates, employees of both organizations are quite literally on the front lines.

The employees work around the clock to ensure Canada's security each and every day, and to achieve this mammoth task, they are entrusted with significant powers. Among others, these powers include the ability to use force, to search and to detain individuals. They are essential to the safety and security of the public. That said, equally essential is the need for independent review of these activities to ensure that the RCMP and the CBSA are transparent, and accountable to the population they serve and to Parliament.

The adoption of Bill C-20 would provide for increased accountability and transparency of the RCMP and the CBSA. This would be done through the establishment of an enhanced mechanism for independent review of these organizations. The RCMP already has an external review body in the form of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, CRCC. Bill C-20 would build on the CRCC through the establishment of the public complaints and review commission, PCRC.

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The PCRC would serve as the external review body for the RCMP, but would have enhanced power to fulfill this mandate. The bill would, at long last, also provide for independent review for the CBSA, which currently does not have an independent review mechanism. It would do so by giving the PCRC an additional mandate to serve as the review body for the CBSA. The PCRC would do that using the existing knowledge, processes and expertise of the CRCC, and expand them to include the CBSA.

We have been talking about evidence-based steps to get here since 2015. We established the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians that reviews the work of national security and intelligence agencies. As part of that consultation, we examined how well existing oversight and review bodies function. We also sought answers about what sort of independent review would be needed for agencies that do not currently have an independent review, such as the CBSA.

As we know, effective civilian review is central to the rule of law and maintaining public confidence and trust. Bill C-20 embodies that concept. It would respond to a long-lasting need for independent review of the CBSA and improve RCMP review. It seeks to ensure that both the RCMP and the CBSA continue the work to transform their culture, and to enhance transparency and accountability, as well as equity, diversity and inclusivity.

Bill C-20 would provide an avenue to ensure the public is able to have its complaints about the conduct and level of service of RCMP and CBSA employees reviewed by an external body. It would also provide an avenue to identify and investigate systemic issues within Canadian law enforcement.

Today, I wish to concentrate on how this bill would help us as parliamentarians contribute to enhanced accountability and transparency of the RCMP and the CBSA. Bill C-20 does that through the establishment of a series of additional and enhanced reporting requirements, and accountability measures for the PCRC, the RCMP and the CBSA. These measures would ensure that parliamentarians in both chambers are equipped to monitor the state of the complaint and review process, and to hold the Minister of Public Safety to account in relation to complaints and systemic review.

Bill C-20 would do so by enhancing PCRC recommendation-making powers of the PCRC, as well as establishing annual reporting requirements for the RCMP and the CBSA. By clearly showing parliamentarians which PCRC recommendations have and have not been implemented by the RCMP and the CBSA, this would strengthen the accountability to Parliament of the minister, and through the minister, of the RCMP's and CBSA's deputy heads.

• (2035)

As mentioned by my colleagues, the bill would also establish defined timelines to ensure swift responses and decisions throughout the review process. These include codified timelines for the RCMP and the CBSA to respond to PCRC reports, systemic review and recommendations. The PCRC would receive the information it needs promptly and include it in its annual report to Parliament.

The bill would also equip Parliament with an ability to identify allegations of systemic racism and other systemic discrimination in policing by requiring the PCRC to collect and publish demographic

and race-based data on complainants. Stakeholders, including police chiefs, have long called for such information to be collected as it is essential to the development of responses to systemic issues in the criminal justice system.

Bill C-20 would also establish a statutory framework for CBSA responses to serious incidents currently provided for in an internal policy only, so that the PCRC would be informed on the nature and responses to serious incidents involving the CBSA, such as death in custody. This would take place through a requirement for the PCRC to report on the number, types and outcomes of serious incidents as part of its annual reporting.

For the first time, parliamentarians and the Canadian public would be informed of serious incidents that involve CBSA officers, including incidents involving immigration and detainees. The PCRC would retrieve this information through requirements for the CBSA to notify and provide information to the PCRC when serious incidents take place and permit the PCRC to send an observer to assess the impartiality of the CBSA's investigations.

Through enhanced reporting to Parliament, Bill C-20 would help to ensure our border services and national law enforcement agencies remain world class and are worthy of the trust of Canadians.

On this note, I also want to thank the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for its important study of the bill. Its amendments have served to reinforce the reporting requirements I just noted. Among others, I would want to highlight a government-introduced amendment that would set the time period allowed for the PCRC to submit its annual report to Parliament. The extension of this timeline would give the PCRC sufficient time to analyze the annual reports of the RCMP and the CBSA and give the commission the ability to comment on these reports as part of its own annual reporting to Parliament.

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SECU also made an amendment that would ensure the PCRC would include the number of complainants it refers to NSIRA in its annual report. This would give parliamentarians and the Canadian public a look into how the work of these two reviewing bodies intertwine. I encourage all members to join me in supporting Bill C-20 today.

● (2040)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the colleague and I worked together on the mighty OGGO, and we were doing a study on the CBSA and also on the whistle-blower act, Bill C-290, which was brought in by the Bloc colleague from Mirabel. We heard from witnesses from the CBSA who were basically persecuted by the management of the CBSA, even to the point of employees being poisoned by their co-workers when they brought issues forward as whistle-blowers.

I want to ask my colleague if he will push for his government to bring in and enact the whistle-blowing legislation and changes that OGGO had recommended.

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, we heard witness testimony, quite frankly, that was very hard to hear. I commit myself to encourage moving forward as quickly as we can on those recommendations and bringing that forward.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one aspect we can talk about in relation to the bill is the issue of transparency, which is a problem right now with the CBSA. We keep hearing about it. There is the ArriveCAN app, but there is also the lack of surveillance at the port of Montreal, which is a hub for vehicle theft. Canadians are asking questions about these files and really demanding answers.

Many whistle-blowers have raised this issue. I would therefore like to hear the member's comments on how important it is that this bill address those issues and the question of transparency at the CBSA.

[English]

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, and other members have spoken about, the CBSA was never included in this type of a review, and we are encouraged to see that this transparency will now be brought forward. The CBSA will be included and will have to answer to any incidents that do occur.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret when it comes to law enforcement in the country that there is a disturbing pattern that is particularly identified by those who suffer discrimination, whether it is indigenous or Black Canadians, at a disproportionate rate. We know this from several reports, including Auditor General reports.

So many indigenous organizations have called for a particular level of reform that would include indigenous persons in the actual accountability mechanisms. Can the member speak about whether or not the government would be not just consulting indigenous people in this work, but actually moving to find ways to directly incorporate indigenous ways of knowing, indigenous principles, in oversight and accountability mechanisms here?

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my comments about the collection of data, which has never been done before, to look at race-based discriminatory incidents that may take place, as it comes back to Parliament, parliamentarians from diverse backgrounds would have an opportunity to address those needs.

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

We have been talking a lot about the CBSA here, and I am not sure if my hon. colleague is aware, but the CBSA has a real problem on its hands when it comes to high-risk detainees. This might be an area where there could be some complaints, in that CBSA has no way of dealing with high-risk detainees who might be at risk to flee the country.

I am wondering if my colleague will answer the question, or if he is aware of the issue, wherein there is no maximum security setting, in this area at least, and the federal government is contracting with the provinces to provide detention. Is he aware of the government's response to this very important issue?

● (2045)

Mr. Parm Bains: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member, a fellow British Columbian, for the question. Of course, I am happy to always answer questions from the member.

If we look at some of the measures that are being brought in, they would increase transparency. I think the issue at the heart of the matter that the member is questioning is learning about what high-risk detainees there may be. We would now understand what the needs are based on the transparency that is being reported through these measures.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and speak on behalf of the constituents of Red Deer—Mountain View.

First of all, I would like to simply speak to our RCMP, who have done such a great job. They have been neighbours and fellow coaches. They are the ones who run into emergencies when trouble comes, and I appreciate their commitment to the community. Certainly, as someone who has spent some time working with rural crime in Alberta, as one of the co-chairs of a report that we sent out, it is an honour for me to be able to speak to the other side of the issue.

Those of us who have been in this place for a long time also know that there are many cases that are referred to the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, and we always hope that there are solutions that can help in that regard.

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With the rise of hate-related incidents in Canada, we are now more in need of a strong police force than we were several years ago. Therefore, the need never faded; it has become much more pronounced. Considering that a rise in crime results in a growing need for police, we must take steps to hold law enforcement bodies to the highest standards while standing up for the security of Canadians. The public complaints and review commission, as it is proposed, is an overdue effort to carry out these objectives.

The commission would investigate complaints made by the public against the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency. In fact, this oversight was promised by the Liberals in 2015, and the government is now trying to ram it through one month before Parliament breaks. This comes after nine years in government.

I want to be clear in my support of the bill and its efforts to create the effective oversight of federal law enforcement agencies that Canadians expect, but I am disappointed that it has taken so long for the Liberals to follow through on their initial promise to Canadians. The Conservative Party supported the legislation in its previous iteration at each stage without amendments.

The Conservative Party believes in the dignity of our borders and ensuring that the CBSA is properly resourced in both manpower and equipment. The commission would grant explicit oversight over the Canada Border Service Agency and push the CBSA to be even more effective alongside the RCMP.

The current process by which the RCMP is held accountable to the public, along with the current lack of such a process for the CBSA, presents challenges that may undermine the public's trust in our law enforcement. We often speak of avoiding even the appearance of a conflict of interest when discussing matters of ethics. This matter is no different.

The National Police Federation made a submission to the House on Bill C-20, citing a number of disadvantages with the current way the RCMP is investigated by the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, the CRCC, which often refers matters back to the RCMP for internal investigation. Some of these disadvantages include perceived bias of police investigating police, a lack of independence, a lack of transparency and reduced trust in our investigative process. With the lessons learned from the flawed implementation of the CRCC as a means of holding the RCMP accountable to the public, I am glad to see that the proposed legislation would move us in the right direction of a more independent means of oversight.

The CBSA is an important part of maintaining the integrity of our borders; however, as with any arm of the government, it must be held accountable to the public in a timely and efficient manner. With that in mind, I want to draw attention to two areas that are significant. I believe that aspects of the bill would lead us in the right direction, but I also believe that aspects of the bill are setting the commission up for failure.

I am happy to know that debate and discussion on the bill will continue as it moves forward. First, I want to go back to my earlier point, in which I illustrated the importance of avoiding the appearance of a conflict of interest in matters concerning law enforcement here in Canada. As of right now, it is true that there is no separate

or independent apparatus designated to review civilian complaints lodged against the CBSA. This is deeply concerning, as it brings us right back to the same problem.

● (2050)

When border agents must investigate complaints internally, this presents the appearance of a conflict of interest and may undermine Canadians' trust in due process and the accountability of federal agencies. With a commission that will not consist of current CBSA members or agents, we would be able to largely minimize the risk of there appearing to be a conflict of interest when complaints of this nature are being investigated. In this way, we will be doing what we can to ensure Canadians' trust in our federal agencies remains strong. Establishing an independent commission that does not rely on the resources of the RCMP or the CBSA will also reassure taxpayers that the funding for these agencies is not being spent investigating wrongdoings against the public.

Conservative estimates of an average of 1,500 investigations per year, requiring 40 hours each, will cost taxpayers roughly 60,000 work hours, with no cost recovery mechanisms. On that note, I believe that this proposed legislation is taking us in the right direction. However, I also believe that more discussion needs to be had on the nuances around the structure of this commission and the delegation of tasks. Making note of the latter of those two things, I would be interested in seeing discussions around how we can ensure that the resources of the commission are deployed efficiently. I especially wish to highlight this point, as the Canadian Bar Association wrote this in their submission on Bill C-20: "It seems inevitable that as the Commission's workload increases, delays will grow."

This brings me to my next point, which is around the glaring omission of a maximum delay for the commission to resolve complaints. In its current form, Bill C-20 places the onus to set resolution timelines on the commission itself. While I can understand why this language was chosen, I'm also concerned with the statements raised by the Canadian Bar Association, which I mentioned earlier. It seems like common sense to think that, as we consolidate the duties of investigating both the RCMP and the CBSA into one commission, the workload of the commission will increase. In its submission on Bill C-20, the Customs and Immigration Union said, "we fear an investigation could take years to complete, which is neither fair to the employee under investigation nor to the complainant."

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Ambiguity in the resolution timeline of these cases, especially in the most egregious of complaints, is a disservice not only to Canadians but also to the future commission. Setting out concrete timelines in which every step of the complaint process is accounted for will show that our government is taking our responsibility to Canadian taxpayers seriously. It will also show our commitment to the RCMP and CBSA officers and agents who work tirelessly to serve Canadians by maintaining our domestic security and the integrity of our borders. These are necessary considerations that must be discussed and debated as consideration of the bill continues. While I do support the bill, I believe more work needs to be done to address the matters I have raised so far.

Let me be clear: With the reckless use of time allocation and programming motions by the NDP-Liberal government, the Conservative Party is doing what it can to ensure that proper debate takes place on critical government bills. As we pass legislation to improve the lives of Canadians, we must exercise caution so that we do not make matters even worse. When bills are not afforded adequate time for debate here in the House, we risk missing the observations and voices of Canadians, which may prove to be consequential in our discussions around shaping the federal policies of this nation.

It is our unique responsibility to ensure that the proceedings here are conducive to fostering an environment in which open debate can always be had. Canadians look at us in our roles as members of Parliament and how we navigate discussions in which we may have differing opinions. It is important that we continue to ensure that we have ample debate on proposed legislation, showing Canadians that we take this responsibility seriously.

• (2055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, surely to goodness members of the Conservative Party would recognize their hypocrisy in dealing with legislation. The member talks about how the Conservatives want to make sure that there is ample debate time, endless debate time on all legislation. However, when they were in government, they brought in time allocation over 125 times. Where were those types of comments back when they had a majority government?

The Conservatives also talk about criticizing the legislation because the government is not passing it, even though it is the Conservatives who are preventing it from passing. For example, in the amendment we are talking about today, the Conservatives want to delete the short title, "Public Complaints and Review Commission Act". That is what we are actually debating today. It is a nonsense amendment meant to prevent the legislation from passing.

Why do members of the Conservative Party continually contradict themselves? They vote in favour of the legislation. They say they want it passed, yet they continue to filibuster endlessly.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I have been here quite some time, as has the member who was speaking, so I have seen the same types of procedures from the members opposite when they were in opposition. I have seen those things even happen with regard to bills. If we recall back in 2018, with regard to Bill C-87, the same type of thing was done. This is not something unique, but it gives

us an opportunity to put something on notice. I know that amendments draw criticism from my colleagues across the aisle. It is no different from the novel tactics that the Liberals have used. It is something that I have seen happen very often. I am sure that, if there are people in the House that are left in opposition in a few years' time, they will try the same thing.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it seems as though the member intends to support this bill. Although I am not a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, it is my understanding that the Conservatives filibustered during the study of Bill C-20.

That being said, I would like to ask my colleague whether his party really intends to make this issue a priority. If his party does take office in the next election a year and a half from now, can we expect the Conservatives to make this issue a priority? Will they make the proposed amendments to Bill C-20 and will they allocate the necessary funding to ensure that investigations can be conducted and completed in a timely manner?

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to a matter of any type of organization that has been tasked with helping the public, it certainly does need to come with the funding that is available. That is the first comment I have. The question of which one of the badger holes we are going to have to fill in the pasture once the time comes that we are in government, I am not sure just exactly how we will be able to manage that. There is going to be a lot of work to do to bring the nation back to its level of greatness.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Conservatives like to pride themselves on being the law and order party, the ones who stand up for police, but I just want to talk about Coutts, Alberta. Two of the four men charged with conspiracy to commit murder at the Coutts border blockade in southern Alberta have now been released from custody. There were arrests, and there were crimes committed.

Can we guess who was supporting the convoy protesters at Coutts? It was members of the Conservative Party. There is heckling, but it is in the news.

When do they decide to support people in positions of authority and when do they not, with freedom for some and not for others?

• (2100)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, of course, the situation at Coutts was entirely different from the issues where there were some members of our party who were looking at the freedoms that others have indicated here in Ottawa. I think that is the relationship that the member is trying to portray. Yes, we are a law and order party; we also believe that there needs to be respect all the way through the system.

[Translation]

Hon. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

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Still before us we have Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission. As my hon. colleagues know, this bill is of the utmost importance to Canadians. It establishes an independent review body for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, and for the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA.

Members of the public, including members of indigenous and racialized communities, can turn to this body, the public complaints and review commission, if they have comments or complaints about their dealings with the RCMP or the CBSA. A robust civilian review system for both the RCMP and the CBSA is vital to ensure balance in our system between security and equity.

Bill C-20 has been extensively discussed, and relevant recommendations have been made. The government has taken these recommendations into consideration and is grateful for them. Since it was introduced in the House, the bill and the proposed new commission have been considerably improved.

I want to commend the work of my colleagues at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. In preparing this bill and adopting the changes contained in the version that is before us, the government and the committee have taken note of the opinions from indigenous organizations, civil liberties associations, police and customs unions, as well as universities.

Although the partners and stakeholders presented different viewpoints in committee, they were united in their desire to strengthen the accountability regime. I thank them all for taking the time to contribute to these important discussions and legislative provisions. Their points of view allowed the committee to build on the solid civilian review and complaints system that Bill C-20 will create.

The committee adopted 46 amendments to the bill, based on what the committee heard from these stakeholders. These amendments addressed some key priorities for our government, such as diversity and inclusion, accountability, common sense and practical considerations.

Specifically, the committee made changes that respond to the recommendations made in the committee's report on systemic racism in policing. In particular, I would like to point out an amendment adopted to expand the commission's ability to collect demographic and race-based data on complainants so that the commission, and Parliament, more broadly, can identify incidents of systemic racism.

Although the bill already proposed that the commission be authorized to collect race-based data, the committee expanded on this proposal by ensuring that other demographic data would also be collected. This recognizes that the nature of systemic issues can be complex and change over time, and that it can be linked to a wide range of social, cultural and other factors. By gathering additional information on complainants, we will have a more complete picture of any potential systemic issues arising from the public's interaction with the RCMP or the CBSA.

• (2105)

This new power will also enable the commission to identify systemic problems in the application of the act and develop recommendations to respond to them. What is more, one amendment

specifies that third parties can file a complaint with the commission on behalf of someone else. Bill C-20 already provided for the possibility of third parties filing complaints with the commission, but additional clarifications were made to eliminate any confusion about the possibility of filing a complaint on behalf of someone else.

This provision will also make it possible to ensure that complainants know that they can get help from people they trust when they have concerns. The RCMP and the CBSA often interact with vulnerable people, particularly people from indigenous or racialized communities, asylum seekers, people with disabilities and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. For reasons that include language barriers and distrust of law enforcement agencies, many of these individuals may be reluctant to file a complaint. In some cases, they may even be unable to proceed with the complaint process. In other words, with the additional clarifications, someone who is reluctant to file a complaint or who encounters problems that prevent them from following through with the process can have a third person file the complaint on their behalf.

Another change to the bill is that stakeholders can now ask the PCRC to conduct a specified activity review, or SAR. Also called systemic investigations, SARs are a second type of activity that the PCRC will undertake as part of its mandate. SARs will allow the PCRC to determine whether RCMP and CBSA policies, procedures and guidelines are adequate and appropriate. They can also help determine whether the agencies are operating in accordance with the legislation or ministerial directions. These reviews are essential because they help address systemic problems within the organization and help make positive changes by contributing to fair and equitable treatment for all.

By specifying that third parties can request SARs from the PCRC, the bill guarantees that the PCRC will be aware of their concerns about systemic problems in law enforcement. The government's goal is always to provide exemplary law enforcement services and border services. It expects all misconduct to be reviewed and handled appropriately by an independent civilian authority in a timely manner.

To sum up, Canada must offer uniform, fair and equitable treatment as well as an effective accountability mechanism, if applicable, for people who interact with the RCMP and the CBSA.

I encourage the House to move this bill through quickly. People need this treatment.

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• (2110)

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just as many have said before me this evening, this is the third time we have seen this bill. I wonder if my colleague, in her answer to me, could let me know her thoughts as to why the Liberals did not pass it before the 2021 election and why they did not pass it the first time they had it up.

Hon. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, the excellent work of the various parties in this Parliament to bring their ideas forward, to discuss and debate them and to finally come forward with a consensus on this bill, as it is at present, is exactly what Parliament is all about. The committee has also done its work to bring people together to explore challenges and make improvements to the bill, so I am pleased to see it here today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. She spoke exclusively in French, and I thank her for that. I should mention in passing that her French was excellent. It was very kind of her.

My question is actually about language skills. I would like to know if there were any discussions in committee about the need to ensure that there are bilingual commissioners so that complaints can be received in both languages. We know that the appointment of bilingual judges and commissioners was a challenge for the miscarriage of justice review commission. Was this a discussion that took place in committee? Were any recommendations made on this subject?

Hon. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, to be honest, I was not on the committee and I am not aware of all the discussions that took place in committee. I can say that Canada is a bilingual country; the work of Parliament must be done in both official languages, and federal organizations that serve the public must be able to serve people in both official languages.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I understand that with Bill C-20, amendments were required to ensure that there were provisions related to the reconciliation process with indigenous peoples. I wonder if the member could respond to why it took amendments and why that process was not there when Bill C-20 was originally introduced. Why did it take NDP amendments to make sure they were included?

Hon. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the question because it gives me an opportunity to confirm my appreciation for all the work the member does in the chamber and to state our government's absolute commitment to reconciliation. We have shown that through laws reflecting UNDRIP and in how we operate as a government. As a society, we are still on the voyage to fully acknowledging and correcting historic injustices. That is what reconciliation is all about.

The fact that this was identified as a weakness in this bill and was corrected shows the very process that is under way in so many aspects of our society and our parliamentary affairs. I am happy that this was caught and improved, and we will continue to do our best to do better.

• (2115)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see my Conservative colleagues clapping for me. That is really quite thoughtful.

I am very pleased to be rising in the House today to speak to Bill C-20 at its report stage. I just want to note that when this Parliament started, the 44th Parliament, I was appointed as the critic for public safety. Of course, this was one of the first pieces of legislation that I got to deal with as the critic and that was handled by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

I just want to remind the House and the people watching this debate, that this bill has been a long time coming, not only in this Parliament but also in previous Parliaments. Just to give a sense of the timeline involved, this bill was first introduced way back on May 19, 2022. It received its second reading on November 25, 2022. However, it was not until November 9, 2023, a full year later, that the public safety committee completed its study of the bill and reported it back to the House. Here we are, on June 4, trying to get through the report stage of this bill, Bill C-20.

That needs to be noted because this bill, of course, is the result of many different people talking about the shortcomings of both the RCMP and the CBSA, is not only their shortcomings, but also the lack of an effective oversight and accountability mechanism. That has nowhere been more true than with the indigenous people who live in this land called Canada.

I first want to note that the riding I represent, Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, is served entirely by the RCMP. In my time as the member of Parliament for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, which I have been fortunate to hold since 2015, I have developed a good working relationship with the RCMP, the North Cowichan/Duncan detachment and the West Shore. I know that the people who serve those detachments are doing it out of love for the communities, and I know they are going out and doing their best every single day. I know they are dealing with some very difficult circumstances.

Like many communities across Canada, my riding has not been untouched by the opioids crisis. We have a mental health crisis. I know that many of the RCMP officers are not only responding to those incidents as police, but also, often as the first responder, dealing with a mental health crisis or with someone who is close to an overdose. I do want to recognize the good work that they are doing.

I want to also recognize the good work of the people who staff the Canada Border Services Agency, who, right now, are involved in some very difficult negotiations with the Government of Canada regarding their hours of work and their pensions. Of course, these are the people who keep the borders of Canada safe. They do important work.

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The public safety committee has been doing a big study on car thefts. The CBSA has an incredibly important role not only to examine the cargo coming in and going out of Canada, but also to screen the people coming here to make sure that everyone is a verifiable visitor and is here for the right reasons.

That being said, I do need to take note of something. My riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford is home to several indigenous communities. We really need to highlight that and need to underline it when we are talking about this bill, Bill C-20, because it is well known, in the history of this land called Canada, that indigenous people on this land have had a very troubled relationship with the RCMP. Just saying that sentence would, in fact, probably be a gross understatement. We have to keep that in mind.

I also want to recognize that, as a member of the NDP caucus, I am incredibly privileged to serve with three incredible and outstanding indigenous members: the member for Edmonton Griesbach, the member for Nunavut and the member for Winnipeg Centre. I want them to know that I rely on their counsel and their wisdom quite heavily. I also rely on the wisdom and the counsel of the indigenous people who live in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. They not only inform me as a person, but also inform me in the work I do as their member of Parliament.

• (2120)

It is important that we underline those concerns because I think that forms a very important basis of why Bill C-20 exists and why the House of Commons is finally reaching a point where we are giving it consideration and hopefully sending it on its way to the Senate and soon to royal assent.

Of course, my riding has been no stranger to controversy. I have been its MP since 2015, and I would say that probably the biggest flashpoint between the RCMP and a number of protesters, many of them indigenous, happened in the summer of 2021 at Fairy Creek, which is one of the last untouched, old-growth reserves on Vancouver Island. People are quite rightly concerned with logging practices in the province of British Columbia and with the preservation of old growth, but there were some very serious concerns raised about the conduct of the RCMP during the protests at Fairy Creek. Given the reviews that happened after the fact, it makes a bill like Bill C-20 all that much more important. In fact, none other than the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that the RCMP's media exclusion zones and checkpoints at that time were unlawful, given that they unreasonably limited press freedoms and that the principal purpose of the injunction is to maintain public access to roads in the injunction area. Again, a lot of the conduct there was very questionable, and certainly for people who were on the receiving end, it was described as quite brutal.

However, this is now my third Parliament, and this has been an issue that has crossed all three of those Parliaments. I want to read from the report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security from the previous Parliament when it did its deep dive into systemic racism in policing. It reads:

Given the pervasive nature of systemic racism in policing in Canada, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security...has concluded that a transformative national effort is required to ensure that all Indigenous, Black and other racialized people in Canada are not subject to the discrimination and injustice that is inherent in the system as it exists today....

The Committee was told that accountability, oversight and transparency are critical to restore trust with Indigenous and racialized communities subject to systemic racism. Witnesses also emphasized the need for the collection of disaggregated race-based data to provide Canadians with an accurate picture of the impact of police practices and policies on Indigenous and racialized people.

I gave a pretty thorough speech on this bill at second reading, and I do not want to repeat the points I made at that time. However, I do want to note the important work that the public safety committee did on the bill and particularly on the important NDP amendments that were passed by the committee. I will quickly read through a number of them. They are: to ensure that there is proper union representation; to increase transparency and accountability; to ensure a reconciliation process with indigenous peoples; to expand the PCRC's investigative power; to increase transparency, to allow complainants a longer period to come forward to make a complaint; to ban the use of non-disclosure agreements to silence victims, to avoid intimidation and to allow the PCRC to know why complaints are being withdrawn, and so on and so forth.

I want to emphasize that this bill is incredibly important. We have heard repeatedly that the existing complaints process is not working and that we need something that exists outside the confines of the RCMP Act. Finally, for the CBSA, the remaining law enforcement agency that is under federal jurisdiction, we need to bring those two important agencies under the jurisdiction of this new PCRC.

To conclude, we are happy to offer our support to Bill C-20. It is about time that we got this bill across the finish line for important transparency and accountability for the people of Canada. I hope the Senate treats this bill with the urgency that the people demand of it.

• (2125)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member raises a lot of good reasons as to why it is important that this legislation ultimately passes. I know he is very familiar with the rules and procedures, in terms of what actually takes place. There is a significant number of pieces of legislation, not to mention other government motions and so forth. It would have been nice to have been able to see this passed, given that all members seem to be supporting this legislation, including the Conservatives, yet it has been difficult to get it passed, and without the support of the NDP on time allocation, this bill would not pass.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to why it was important that we bring in the time allocation in order to get the bill passed.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to let the Liberals off the hook there.

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I do want to note that there was an incredible gap, not only between the second reading and when the public safety committee reported the bill back to the House, but also between that date and where we are today. Absolutely, the NDP agrees that it is an important bill. That is why we are happy to support time allocation, but again, the government has great power in this place in terms of how it schedules orders of the day, and we agree that there were some very important pieces of legislation that we wanted to see passed, but I do not think there is much of an excuse to the people who are directly affected by the proposed bill to see the delays that were put in existence by the government.

As such, I am not going to explain that away. I think the Liberals owe an explanation, not only to Black racialized Canadians, but also to the indigenous people who live in this place called Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about the whole issue of systemic discrimination. Before the commission was created, complaints were handled on a more individual basis, making it impossible to see the big picture. We can only hope that the new commission will be able to identify trends and make reports and recommendations to prevent systemic inappropriate behaviour from happening in the future.

Does my colleague believe that this will really have such a positive impact? Is there anything that could have been added to ensure that this big-picture vision actually leads to recommendations on needs and on corrective action when necessary?

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I agree. I think that this is a real opportunity to collect that macrodata because I ultimately think that all good government policy has to be informed by good, solid data. That is not to say that we are not unaware of the complaints that have existed with both the RCMP and the CBSA. I think those are both very well documented, but again, I think through the formation of this commission, through the proposed act of Parliament, we would have that formal legislative body that sits above both of those agencies and would have those formal legislative powers that we, in the House of Commons and in the Senate, have given it to actually go further than what we already know by anecdotes and media reports, and the existing complaint mechanism.

I would agree with that member. I think there is a real opportunity. I think the legislation would allow us to collect that better data to inform better government policy going forward.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my fellow colleague for giving a speech in which he appropriately holds the government to account, and he did not mention the official opposition once, but he appropriately placed relevant criticism at the feet of the government for its delay in bringing the bill forward.

As such, I do not have much of a question, but I have more or less a comment to thank the hon. member for appropriately holding the government to account for its negligence in waiting so long to bring the bill forward.

• (2130)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that comment. It goes to show the nimbleness and power of the NDP. On the one hand, we are able to force the Liberal government to bring in things such as dental care and pharmaceutical care, but at the same time we can hold it to account for its shortcomings on legislation like this. I am glad my Conservative friend can finally see that and show it publicly here in the House.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a bittersweet moment for me to rise on this important legislation.

It is not a secret that in indigenous communities particularly there is a need for accountability when it comes to the dramatic actions of the RCMP and its direct negligence of its purpose to ensure peace and security for so many, which oftentimes fails indigenous people.

The most important piece to this legislation in the minds of many indigenous people is the aspect that would replace the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, or the CRCC, for the RCMP and establish a new stand-alone and independent commission. This is an incredible testament to the immense work of indigenous people and advocates, including that of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry, which had its five-year anniversary just yesterday. Its report was blunt in its assessment, stating, "The RCMP have not proven to Canada that they are capable of holding themselves to account".

This opportunity has been a long time coming, and I am very honoured to rise to speak to this issue, but also to highlight the stories of survivors who have had to endure pain and suffering inflicted upon them by the RCMP. It is my hope that, through this legislation and the implementation of this independent review committee, we would see the systemic change that is so desperately required for the victims who have had the immense courage to come forward. Members can imagine being attacked by a police officer, then overcoming the immense difficulty of telling that story, to oftentimes be met with a recommendation that goes nowhere. The report is put on a shelf, gathers dust and more pain grows. When we see no action or accountability for those who do harm, it creates an injustice. That injustice, in turn, creates a massive failure not only of policy-makers, but also of society.

In a 2013, a Human Rights Watch report entitled, “Those Who Take Us Away”, examined 10 towns across the north of British Columbia and documented numerous reports of RCMP officers violently assaulting indigenous women and girls, or arresting them when they called for help. I ask members to imagine that for a moment: calling out for help and being met with an arrest. These reports included attacks by police dogs, strip searches by male RCMP members, violent punches and attacks, and the use of pepper spray and tasers, which eventually injured them during these arrests. I would remind members that these were people who were calling the RCMP for help. Particularly disturbing are the numerous accounts of rape and sexual assault by RCMP members. In response to an investigation into this, women reported that officers had told them “no one will believe you”.

It was not that long ago in Manitoba where we saw a terrible instance of a police officer by the name of Officer Theriault, who took an indigenous woman out of a cell to “pursue a personal relationship”. His supervisor, in turn, mentioned how wrong it was, but insisted that the officer could do “whatever the [eff]” he wanted with her. This is simply unacceptable.

The time for the RCMP to do what they want in an unfettered fashion is over. I am very honoured and pleased to know that my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford has done the work necessary to make what has been a very difficult journey for so many, particularly indigenous women, possible. I also thank members of all parties, the Bloc Québécois, the Conservative Party and, of course, the Liberals for what I hope to be unanimous support for this bill.

● (2135)

However, I want to mention how important it is to recognize one of the calls for justice brought forward by the national inquiry. Call for justice no. 9.1 is “to acknowledge that the historical and current relationship between Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people and the justice system has been largely defined by colonialism, racism, bias, discrimination, and fundamental cultural and societal differences.”

Canada is a young country. We are still reeling from the effects and the ongoing participation of colonization by institutions that were built to do just that. The RCMP was first founded as a paramilitary group in recognition of the paramilitary group created in Ireland to attack the Irish people. It was replicated here in North America as a way to clear the plains when Sir John A. Macdonald so infamously wanted to bind this country together with two bands of steel, albeit bloody ones.

The RCMP, formerly known as the North-West Mounted Police, was charged with the very difficult, but also sad, job to displace so many people, and they used the immense tools of genocide to do it. We know this from accounts of survivors, particularly a member of the Métis community, a famous elder known as Maria Campbell. It is very difficult for me to mention this story because she is quite a revered elder and someone many Métis people and many indigenous people across the Prairies look up to. She revealed just a few years ago that she was forced by her publisher to edit out her recounting of being raped by an RCMP officer at the age of 14. He had simply dragged her into the bedroom of her own house, where

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a few RCMP members had come to hassle the family about alleged poaching.

It is very clear: RCMP sexual abuse of indigenous women and girls is an open and well-known secret across indigenous communities, still today. Even a 2014 Public Safety Canada report acknowledged this problem, when one service organization reported that the police “either rape you or arrest you. The cause is racism and discrimination.”

These are the stories of indigenous women who have long stewarded our nation. They are proud women who carry our stories, our languages and our traditions for thousands of years in this place. To be met with such violence and indignity is a shame and one that must be rectified. Albeit, this bill would do a very small part, but a necessary part, in making that a reality.

In my home province of Alberta, just a few months ago, in the small community of St. Paul, where my niece goes to school, a 33-year-old constable with the RCMP detachment, stationed in the northeast community, was arrested and charged with child sexual exploitation offences. He was suspended with pay.

This is not justice. This is not the kind of Canada that so many labour for. This is not the kind of Canada that so many people do everything they possibly can for their children to be raised in a safe environment, knowing that these atrocities continue and it could be them next. It scares me.

I should mention that it is not every day that this chamber is unanimous in support for doing what is right, but I am so pleased to know that today it is. I am proud to know that New Democrats will be voting in favour of this bill to bring in a much-needed level of civilian accountability and to bring justice to the many victims who deserve it.

● (2140)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my hon. friend's speech and he recounted some truly horrifying instances of abusive action by police officers against individuals, in particular individuals from marginalized communities. I want to affirm the importance of noting and reflecting on those instances of abuse.

I would also contend that I think it is important to include, as part of this conversation, that the vast majority of police officers go to work every day with good intentions to protect our communities. Indeed, the role of police officers is important in protecting all of us, particularly in protecting marginalized communities that would otherwise be at greater risk of violence. Further, I would say that efforts to defund the police undermine the role of police in our society and have made people less safe and have made marginalized communities, in particular, less safe.

Does the member agree with me that, in confronting these instances of abuse, we also need to affirm the work that the vast majority of officers are doing, which is working hard to keep all of us safe?

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Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, systemic racism is a dangerous, evil and illicit creature. It is one that compels those of any institution, including this institution, which can have people of good nature, good will and good spirit, and I know many members here have those qualities, but the institution can still do harm.

We witness that every single day. The RCMP is an institution, one that has structures and that is very different than being a person. It lacks spirit or quality of judgment. It has no morality, and it can force or compel those persons in it to create bad actions or to allow others to not be held accountable for their bad actions.

There are many good members of the RCMP. There are many good members of our public safety community that do good work every single day. However, the system they operate in is one that does not hold true allegiance to the principles that they may have. It is important that we recognize that difference.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and acknowledge his passionate advocacy for indigenous issues. This issue has been raised in many studies by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. It came up often during a study on the impact of resource development on indigenous women and during the red dress alert study.

In short, we see the matter of trust in authorities, the CBSA and the RCMP crop up in connection with various issues surrounding the safety of indigenous women and girls. It also emerges in relation to the issue of human trafficking of women and girls, something that disproportionately affects indigenous women and girls. We hear it all the time. How can we restore this relationship of trust, and how can this bill contribute to that end, or not?

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, it is true that Canada has undertaken an illicit program to dehumanize indigenous people. When one dehumanizes a population, it quickly becomes relevant and real that the population then suffers qualities of not being human, such as lack of clean water, lack of housing, lack of infrastructure and, ultimately, eventually, outright attacks on and negligence of the people themselves, in this case women.

We see across the globe that, in conflicts, women often face the brunt, the full force, of a violent regime that seeks to take away their individual autonomy, their individual rights and their humanity. When we remove humanity and our quality of being human, and we no longer see them as such, it becomes okay to harm them. It becomes okay to not hold those perpetrators accountable, and then it becomes normalized.

What we are seeing in Canada, particularly for indigenous women, is a crisis that deserves true accountability and deserves true work to see justice done.

• (2145)

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise tonight to speak to Bill C-20, which is an act that would establish the public complaints and review commission. It would essentially replace the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP by creating an external body and then combining it with the Canada Border Services Agency, which

at the moment does not have an independent review system at all. The bill would create a new review commission for both of those organizations. It would have certain rules, tools and procedures to deal with the issues that would typically come up in a review body.

There are many different things that can come up. For example, just a few years ago in Saskatchewan, there was a terrible, tragic incident on the James Smith Cree Nation, where Myles Sanderson murdered 11 people on that reserve just north of Saskatoon. A coroner's inquest was held, which, in the future, could be done by a commission like the one we are talking about tonight. In this case, it was done by a provincial coroner's inquest. The inquest was completed in January of this year, and I want to highlight a couple of the things it found.

For example, one of the findings was that the RCMP gives patrol officers access to the most current photos of people. In addition, the enforcement and suppression team provides a list of its 60 most-wanted targets to all Saskatchewan RCMP detachments. When a most-wanted person is affiliated with or is a member of a first nation, RCMP detachment commanders work with the first nation's leadership to advise them of the individual's wanted status. That is an example of the kinds of findings and outcomes that could come from a commission like the PCRC. This is important and useful work that is done when there are complaints.

One of the interesting things in that particular incident was that the perpetrator, Myles Sanderson, had a history of violent offences and had been recently released on parole, despite the prediction by the parole board that he was likely to reoffend regardless of his racial background. This is really important because a lot of the work that commissions like the proposed one end up doing comes from a lot of the crime that is happening, obviously. The tragedy that occurred because of someone who was released on parole but maybe should not have been is an example of the soft-on-crime Liberal policies that we are seeing in Canada these days.

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In 2021, the Liberal government introduced Bill C-5, which essentially removed mandatory minimum sentences from all Criminal Code offences committed with a firearm, such as robbery, assault, break and enter and extortion, as well as drug crimes such as trafficking, production and selling. In addition, Bill C-5 replaced prison sentences with conditional sentences, which is house arrest, for crimes like sexual assault, kidnapping, arson for fraudulent purposes, assault causing bodily harm with a weapon and assaulting a peace officer causing bodily harm or with a weapon. Those are just some examples of types of offences for which prison was removed and conditional sentencing, or house arrest, was granted.

In 2018, Bill C-75 was introduced by the Liberal government. Essentially, it made it much harder to put someone in jail and, conversely, much easier to get out. That is the essence of Bill C-75. The problem with that, and what leads to much of the crime we are seeing, is that it takes away the consequences in many cases for criminals, so they lose their fear of punishment. I will give an example. Imagine a youth who is struggling and is a little down on his luck. We could talk about how the government has made life so expensive with its reckless spending that has caused inflation and its carbon tax that has caused grocery prices to get more expensive, but that is another conversation.

Imagine this youth who is struggling to put food on the table. He may live with five or more other people in a two-bedroom apartment. Again, the policies of the government have caused housing to be so expensive. Now imagine that a gang member or somebody in a criminal organization asks him if he wants to make \$500 by stealing a car, and tells him he will never go to go to jail and that the worst case scenario is that he will get arrested and be released back into the community, but that there are really no consequences.

• (2150)

What is that youth going to do? There is a good chance they are going to take the opportunity because they need the money. This is a problem in our culture today, that the consequences of their actions, the punishment for doing crimes, has been lessened so much that it becomes a viable option for a person like the one in the example I have given. What do we see in our country? We see that violent crime is up. Since 2015, when house arrest, which I mentioned in the examples I gave, was brought in, violent crimes are up 32% nationally.

Now, just to focus in on Saskatoon a little, in 2023 there were 12 murders in Saskatoon, 10 of which, by the way, were in the riding I represent, Saskatoon West, where I live and work. I have lived there for a period of time, and I have experienced many of the things that people experience on the west side of Saskatoon, including having my bike stolen, having to deal with people outside my home and things like that. These are things that we get used to and put up with.

As I said, in 2023 there were 12 murders in total in Saskatoon. So far this year, up to the end of May, there have been 10 murders, all of them in the riding I represent. I will look at a few other numbers on arrests, and this is quite concerning. In Saskatoon in the first five months of this year, there have been 830 assaults, versus 742 all last year. Sexual assaults so far this year are at 120, versus 84 all last year. Weapons charges are at 250, versus 256 all last

year. Abductions so far are at 17, versus 14 all last year. Robberies are at 147, versus 131 all last year. Break and enters are at 500 so far, versus 600 all last year. Vehicles broken into or stolen so far this year are at 1,000, versus 1,200 last year.

We are not bad people on the west side of Saskatoon, far from it, and it is not a bad place to live. It is a beautiful area. There are lots of nice houses and lots of nice neighbourhoods. However, because of the soft-on-crime policies that we are seeing from the government—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I must interrupt the hon. member because the hon. member for Saint-Jean is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding relevance. My colleague has been speaking for about eight minutes. I would be curious to know his position on Bill C-20 because, unless I am mistaken, he has not yet spoken about the bill itself. I believe he has two minutes left to do so.

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

[*English*]

I will remind the hon. member for Saskatoon West to bring it back to the subject at hand.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, what I am getting at with all of the crime that I am discussing and all of the soft-on-crime policies that the Liberal government has put in place is the fact of the workload that is on the RCMP and other police forces, which then leads to issues that would have to be investigated by the new commission that we are talking about.

Part of the answer is to fix the underlying problem in our laws so that we could reduce the crime we are seeing on our streets, make sure that appropriate punishments are being given to people who deserve to be punished, and ensure that appropriate treatment policies and other things are there. That is how we could make sure that the work of the new commission would be minimized.

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I just want to mention the CBSA briefly. The CBSA does need oversight. We know it is having a very difficult time managing auto theft, and that is another huge problem. I have heard stories, for example, of people who are installing bollards in their driveway. For people who do not know what those are, people pull their car into the driveway and push a button, and steel columns come up to surround their vehicle so it cannot actually be removed, in any way, from their property. That is something we should not have to do in Canada, but people are doing it. It costs tens of thousands of dollars to install those in a driveway, yet people are being forced to do it.

As I wrap up, I want to take a moment to thank our RCMP officers, our local police officers and our CBSA officers. These individuals do tremendous work on behalf of Canadians. They keep our country safe. They keep our cities safe. They have a thankless job. They do not often get credit for what they do, so I just want to make sure to acknowledge that work and acknowledge that we in the House, and all Canadians as well, are thankful for the work that they do.

I am looking forward to the public review commission. I do support the idea. It is unfortunate that it has taken so long for it to get to this point and that it has been such a low priority for the government. I look forward to further discussion on it. Maybe this time, as the third time is the charm, it might actually get passed. We are going to make sure to stop the crime.

• (2155)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the only reason it would pass is that the government has been able to bring in time allocation, as the Conservatives made it very clear they do not want government legislation to pass. That is why, on this particular piece of legislation, the Conservatives moved a nonsense amendment to delete the short title, public complaints and review commission act. That is the reason we continue to debate it. There is a limit; we will debate it for five hours, and then it will come to a vote. If it were not for that, the legislation would not pass. That was more of a comment than a question.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, a comment related to that as well is that this started four years ago, and I believe the government decided to prorogue Parliament because it was trying to hide other issues. It was trying to stop people from looking at scandals that were coming up. The second time. I believe it was the election that was called unnecessarily to hide the WE scandal that was happening, to try to prevent it from being known. This is now the third time. I do not think one can accuse members of the opposition of being the problem here. It is clear the government is in control of the agenda. The government can pull things and make them happen, so—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, there was a terribly erroneous link in my colleague's speech between the crime rates in Canada and what the bill is actually about. Let me be very clear that the legislation is here because of complaints of Black, racialized and indigenous people who had interactions with the police not because of what

they did but because of who they are, what they look like and what their background is.

I would like to give my hon. colleague a chance to speak about that, not about the crime rate in Canada but about people's interactions with both the RCMP and the CBSA because of their indigenous background, because they were Black and because they were racialized, not because they did anything wrong but because they were profiled. That is why we are here. That is what we need to hear from the Conservatives about.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to have a review board that can look into allegations and complaints that are received publicly. It does not matter who they come from. It is important, though, that there be a mechanism in place, which is why the legislation is being supported, why it is moving forward and ultimately why it would do much good in our country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, there have been some suggestions about what my colleague's speech could have focused on, but normally the way speeches proceed in the House is that members choose particular themes that relate to what they are hearing from their constituents. Certainly, the rise in crime that has occurred under the NDP-Liberal government over the last nine years is a major topic of concern in constituencies across the country and is affecting many of the country's most vulnerable communities to a greater extent. People who do not have the means to protect themselves or secure their property in other ways are more vulnerable as a result of the rise in crime that has been driven by the failed policies of the NDP-Liberal government.

I wonder whether my colleague can share a bit more in particular about what he is hearing from people in his community about the negative impacts of the government's policies, the way that as soon as it took office there was a change in the trajectory of crime, with it dropping under the previous government and rising again under the now nine-year-old NDP-Liberal government.

• (2200)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, there is no question that since the NDP-Liberal government has been in place, crime has gone up in Canada. I gave some statistics, and in my riding it has gone up significantly. People I speak to in Saskatoon, particularly in my riding, are very concerned about this. It is causing many, many problems. Keep in mind that in Saskatoon there are all kinds of people. There are indigenous people, Métis people and immigrant people from all kinds of backgrounds. There is a wide variety of people who live in Saskatoon West, who are all impacted to a great degree by the crime happening. It is critical we get a handle on this and start to put in place laws that put back punishment for crimes and that will help us get crimes back on a downward trajectory to make our community safer and make Saskatoon a safer place.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is such an honour to rise and talk about this subject matter, as much of what is happening with Bill C-20 relates to the calls for justice that came out of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Before I start, I have to honour the work of the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who is a true diplomat. He is able to work across party lines, even with parties that are not co-operative, to make things better for people. The member has been an ally for indigenous people and BIPOC people, who have formed the basis for the need for this piece of legislation.

I was not shocked when we heard stories from the member for Edmonton Griesbach. He spoke of the assault of a 10-year-old by the RCMP. The member for Edmonton Griesbach spoke about an incident in Manitoba where an indigenous woman was taken to a home to pursue a relationship, with the permission of the sergeant on duty. This is unconscionable. Also, although not the RCMP, the City of Winnipeg is under investigation for several deaths of mostly indigenous and Black people in Winnipeg. When people have that much power without oversight, there is a problem.

Let us not forget the history of the RCMP. Historically, the RCMP's purpose was to apprehend little children from their communities and ship them to and incarcerate them in residential schools. The whole history of the RCMP's relationship with indigenous peoples in this country has been marked with violence. In particular, indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people have experienced excessive force, rape, beatings and sometimes death at the hands of the RCMP.

I find it shocking that the member for Saskatoon West, who has a high indigenous population in his area, is not standing up for his constituents. Turning a blind eye to systemic racism has resulted in the ongoing crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. There are often reports of total neglect and either overpolicing or underpolicing by police forces, as noted in calls for justice 9.1 to 9.11.

I have hope because I sit on the FEWO committee with women from across party lines who listen openly, can work through differences and spend time learning about matters that do not personally affect them. The fact that there are members of this House who do not see a need to protect all people in their community speaks to systemic racism and the racism even in the House of Commons.

I am glad that all members in the House are voting in favour of this bill, although games were played when members tried stalling and changing the short title. Supporting this bill is necessary.

● (2205)

I want to read comments from the Feminist Alliance for International Action about the RCMP. It said:

The evidence of systemic discrimination and violence against women perpetrated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is shocking, and it is growing. The RCMP's culture of misogyny, racism and homophobia, identified by the Honourable Michel Bastarache in his report *Broken Dreams, Broken Lives*, affects not only the treatment of women who are employed by the RCMP, but also the treatment of the women whom the RCMP is intended to serve.

Canada cannot have a credible National Action Plan on Violence against Women, or a credible National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

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and Girls, until we confront the deeply entrenched misogyny and racism in the culture of the RCMP.

An independent, external review of the RCMP, its practices, structure and future, is needed now.

Some members do not see the urgency here, even though all members of this House have agreed to implement all the calls for justice, many of which relate to policing and the failure of police to act. Those were not my words. Those words came out of the Feminist Alliance for International Action.

I can tell members, as I am an indigenous woman in this country, that growing up, we were not taught that police were a safe place to go. We were not taught, should a loved one go missing, experience violence or be in situations of violence, that going to the police was safe. It is no wonder that in our study at FEWO about what is needed to implement a red dress alert system, one of the biggest calls is for overall oversight that is led by indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. That includes police services. When we go missing, nobody looks for us, but certainly the RCMP officer in northern Manitoba looked for an indigenous woman in her jail cell, took her home and assaulted her. He found her there. That is why we need oversight.

Arguments about some good apples and some bad apples are not relevant. This system is not working the same for all people, particularly BIPOC individuals: Black, indigenous and people of colour. We deserve to be treated with respect by systems that have been put in place to protect us. However, the very systems that have been put in place to protect us perpetrate violence against us on our spirits, on our bodies and in the erasure of our lives when our loved ones go missing.

How can we see change? I am talking about “we” as an indigenous woman. How can we feel safe if the very systems that are supposed to be there to protect us instead rape us, hurt us, ignore us and disregard us? Whether it is on the front lines peacefully assembling with axes, chainsaws and guard dogs; walking in the streets going to our jobs; or being harassed and sexually harassed by police officers, we need oversight. I have experienced this, with police officers scoping me out on Facebook after I reported a car incident.

I am glad everybody in the House is supporting this bill. I want to thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford once again for his leadership and diplomacy in making sure that all people are treated with dignity and safety in this country.

● (2210)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her impassioned speech highlighting ongoing instances of racism and injustice in our country and within our institutions.

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One instance where I see this happening is with the destruction of cultural property in indigenous communities. That has not been treated with nearly the level of seriousness that it deserves. I was just reading a report saying, for instance, that a significant amount of cultural and religious property, in this particular case churches, has been destroyed in indigenous communities. I think this required a stronger response from leaders at all levels.

I have asked the member twice whether she would condemn this destruction of cultural property in indigenous communities. I asked her twice during a debate in February, and she chose not to answer at that time. I wonder if this time, a third time, she would join me in condemning the destruction of churches and other cultural property that has occurred in indigenous communities and call for a stronger response to that destruction.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, this is not surprising coming from the member. We are talking about violence against indigenous people, and it is clear that there are residential school denialists in his party. I am assuming he is one of them. One of the last speeches he gave—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is there a point of order here? I do not know. The member made a claim, but she did not call anybody any names.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member made an outrageous, unfounded and obviously false claim in the House, and I think she should be called to order for that. She did not even claim she had any evidence for her statement. She just said that she suspected that I may have particular views that I have never stated. Come on.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are starting to get into debate, and unfounded accusations go around quite often in this chamber. I do advise members to be very judicious with the words they choose.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I know the member has very big feelings about indigenous people. I know he has a history of disregarding any discussions on indigenous people. I have articles and facts about what else the Conservatives said was a false claim. I would be very happy to quote articles with residential school denialism comments that came from the member for Carleton, the leader of their party.

I know the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, as I have said before, has trouble controlling his toxic masculinity and often heckles in the House, as he is doing right now, but I welcome the member to read the paper. I welcome the member to learn about the history of this country and maybe explore some of his cultural biases and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have gone way beyond the time for the question and answer.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, very respectfully to the member, I asked a simple question and the member did not want to answer it. I had asked her twice previously. I guess I will have a

chance to ask her twice tonight. It is not a trick question; it is a very sincere question. The question is, for the fourth time, will the member condemn the destruction of churches and other cultural property that has occurred? I see this as a form of violence and racism against indigenous communities. There have been many instances of destruction of churches and other cultural property. If the member had condemned it, I would not have asked the question a second time. Will the member condemn this?

• (2215)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I know the member has trouble talking about the bill because it has to do with dealing with systemic racism and addressing systemic racism in policing for Black people, indigenous people and people of colour. It is unfortunate that at a time when we are talking about making systems better, the member consistently chooses to talk about things that have no relevance to the discussion, as he has in other debates.

I would invite the member to learn about the residential school system in Canada. I would be happy to go for coffee with him. Then maybe we could work through some of the colonial violence that he regularly perpetuates in the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Those accusations are really beyond what is acceptable and an apology would be appreciated, because we are accusing other members of perpetrating colonial violence, which is pretty strong wording. I would be very grateful if there was measure in what is said.

The hon. member for Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, civilian oversight is particularly important in the bill and the member spoke eloquently about why. Children were taken away from first nations. Métis and Inuit children were taken away from their loving families, from their loving environments. They were thriving and the RCMP were used to take these children to go to residential schools, to environments of hate, environments of violence, environments where they had to be exposed to traumatic experiences that continue to this date.

Can the member explain why this civilian oversight commission is going to be so important to continue to address these systemic, racist, genocidal policies that will help to address and move toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, absolutely, we need oversight to deal with systemic racism in policing, as well as other systems. I know that there is concern about me talking about colonial violence but there is a lot of racism, with all due respect, that persists in the House, an erasure of history. There is the fact that we are talking about residential schools and people are chuckling on that side of the House, including the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

I will not refrain—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have no more time.

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The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for all members in the House. I think I tried to ask a civil, serious question a couple of times. I would like you to clarify your ruling, because the member accused me of regularly perpetrating colonial violence inside the House of Commons.

I do not think any reasonable person would consider that a remotely plausible accusation. Did you or did you not direct the member to withdraw and apologize?

Is she going to respect the authority of the Chair, or is she going to defy the Chair?

If that was your ruling, then those are the choices: respect the Chair or defy the Chair.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I did ask the hon. member to be more judicious in her choice of words and to apologize for that specific comment, yes. The hon. member can do it right now or later if she so chooses.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I will not apologize. With all due respect to you, I will not apologize for telling the truth about this place.

• (2220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I really appreciate the opportunity to rise in this place. I was telling people recently what an honour it is to be just a kid from North Kamloops rising in the House of Commons as the child of immigrants. I know that some of the Assistant Deputy Speaker's heritage is from Europe, just as mine is. There was a flag-raising just today recognizing my Italian heritage, which I am incredibly proud of. Unfortunately, I was elsewhere this morning dealing with the Auditor General's report, but I do recognize that.

One of the things that I am always mindful of is the people I grew up with, and someone I grew up with is Jackie Fouillard, or Jacqueline. Her mom, Clara Fouillard, passed away recently. I just read about the obituary tonight, so I want to extend my deepest condolences to Jacqueline and her brother Desmond on the passing of Clara. May perpetual light shine upon her.

I also want to recognize the life of Bernard “Bernie” Worsfold. He is the grandfather to my nephew, and he recently passed away after a long battle with Alzheimer's. Obviously, this is very difficult. It is a difficult disease. I was just at the walk for Alzheimer's. My condolences go to Bernie's family. May perpetual light shine upon him.

As to Bill C-20, which is what we are here to discuss, the bill started in the 42nd Parliament, wherein it died, languishing in the Senate. It was again introduced in the last Parliament as Bill C-3. We had a prorogation. There was a prorogation that was obviously

before my time, and I know the Liberals have made a lot of noise about the fact that the previous Harper government prorogued.

Interestingly enough, in this case, when it comes to electoral manoeuvres, the Liberals called what I would call a vanity election, though some people called it a pandemic election, hoping for the majority that they so ardently desired. Obviously, that did not work out. Now, unfortunately, we do have the NDP, in its confidence and supply agreement, that has supported them, which brings us here to today in the 44th Parliament, nine years after this promise was made.

Like with so many bills we debate in this House, and it is unfortunate, we deal with things that go wrong. Sometimes we will have motions and those motions will say, “we exhort the government to do this” or “we are establishing a strategy to do this”, and that is something positive, but so often here we are dealing with negative things. This is when things go wrong, and tonight is obviously no exception, because we are dealing with alleged misconduct in some cases, or misconduct that has been proven in other cases. It would be great if we never had to deal with this from our frontline peace officers, but the reality is that we do.

Sometimes, simply put, things go poorly. This leads me to question, obviously, what the standards are that we expect from our professionals. I am speaking, namely, of our frontline police officers and our frontline CBSA officers.

I remember when I was teaching a sentencing course not long ago, before I came to Parliament, that I was always struck, whenever the accused person was a peace officer and they had committed a criminal offence, how different the reaction was from the students. I found that my classes were generally very compassionate when it came to sentencing. They were very measured and typically quite fair in their sentencing proposals. Yet one thing that always struck me, especially when it was a peace officer but sometimes when it was somebody who is in authority or a position of privilege, was that the students would often want to really reflect that when much is given much is expected or, in other words, that there should be harsh penalties, and that is something that I have not forgotten.

• (2225)

When we do have people who are in authority, we have to expect the highest order of ethics from them just as we ought to expect that from people in this House, whether it be how they act in the House, how they act outside the House or what they say within this place.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize that so many of our peace officers do a good job in what they do. My experience is that, generally, people do their jobs; generally, they do it without any sort of prejudice and, at the end of the day, most of them just want to get home. They have families, just like many of us do in this place. So often, as a former trial lawyer, I would see how easy it is to dissect a split-second decision. Therefore, I do not envy the position that peace officers are in, but they do have substantial responsibility and substantial accountability.

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With that being said, the CBSA does not yet have an external review commission, which this bill aims to amend. This legislation would rename the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP to the “public complaints and review commission”. This commission would also be responsible for reviewing civilian complaints against the CBSA. As I understand it, this commission would have five members, which would include a chair, a vice-chair and three other members, and my hope is that these would not be just typical patronage appointments. One of my greatest criticisms of the current government has been that so frequently, when it establishes a commission or a board or something like that, the government just gets bigger and bigger. I see that it would have only five members and I really urge the government here to not simply appoint people who have had long-term Liberal memberships and have donated to the Liberal Party, as we have so often seen.

One of the things that I noticed in this bill are the codified timelines for responses. Now, the Jordan decision came out almost a decade ago now, which is hard to believe. That was a case that interpreted the charter right to trial within a reasonable time. Therefore, I am happy to see, if memory serves, that the reasonable time for a complaint made under this proposed piece of legislation would be six months. In my view, that is eminently reasonable, given the circumstances. It would be wonderful if it could be down to one to two months, but that is not always going to be the case.

One other thing that I believe this bill gets right is the informal resolution process. One thing I can recall, as a former lawyer, is that people often are angry. They might be angry with their lawyer or their accountant or, in this case, with the way somebody treated them for a variety of different reasons. We have spoken a lot tonight about racism, in this House. What I have found is that people generally want to be heard. They want their complaint to be heard. They want their feelings to be listened to and to be validated. What I have seen, in my experience anyway, is that a lot of these complaints can be informally resolved. That is why I was happy to see that clause 43 of this legislation has an informal complaint resolution process.

I also see at clause 46 that the commission could take over and prevent any agency or police force from continuing on investigating a complaint, in which case perhaps other people have used a hybrid method. We were talking at SECU today about the proposed commissioner for transparency for foreign interference and the transparency registry and the importance of having independence in that regard. I really do reiterate how important that independence is. It would require that the complaints commission institute an investigation if it is in the public interest to do so. I know that sometimes reasonable people can disagree on what that is, but my hope is that the government would appoint the appropriate people to the commission, who would serve the public well in determining when that public interest is there. We expect a lot from our professionals and as a result we need independence.

• (2230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments that the member has put on the record. I too look at the outstanding work, for the most part, that is done by Canada border control and law enforcement of-

ficers. However, there is a need to have this oversight and to ensure that there is an independent review committee. This is progressive legislation that would do just that, among other things. I am glad that we are finally able to get a consensus through time allocation, which will now see the legislation pass.

Would the member not agree, given that the Conservatives are voting in favour of the legislation, that, indeed, the sooner the legislation becomes law, the better?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, the reality is that we do expect a lot from our people, and we should expect it every single day. Frankly, we should expect it with or without the legislation.

It sounds as though the legislation has been contemplated for nine years. I get that people can take different approaches and say someone has done this or that at committee. It sounds to me that it has taken a really long time for the bill to come. Obviously, the government has the prerogative to advance and prioritize legislation. It is going to be voted on soon, so the member will have his wish come true.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, we hear the member say he does not agree with how long it has taken the Liberals to get Bill C-20 to the table, yet we heard about how much the Conservatives filibustered, including having submitted 33 amendments at committee and withdrawing 75% of the amendments they themselves had submitted.

What was the Conservatives' tactic behind filibustering on this important bill? Why are they now agreeing to make sure it gets passed, so it becomes law during this sitting?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I only recently started sitting on SECU, for those watching at home, namely, my mother. She is probably the only one who watches CPAC.

I know there was a very contentious issue at the time, and it remains contentious; this goes to part of the member's question in terms of what was happening at committee at the time. If I understand correctly, this was when the Bernardo and Magnotta transfers were being debated, particularly the Bernardo transfer. Conservatives stand for victims and will always stand with victims. Things can be somewhat acrimonious at committee, but, at the end of the day, we are here to discuss this.

Again, as I said earlier, we can say people delayed this or that. There have been times in the past when New Democrats have suggested a number of amendments. All parties have done it. However, I am glad we are debating the bill at report stage; it sounds as though most of us agree on it.

• (2235)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak tonight to Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission.

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As we have heard, the bill seeks to establish a stand-alone statute to create the public complaints and review commission, the PCRC, to serve as a robust independent review body for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canada Border Services Agency. It proposes to build on the expertise of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, which currently serves as the complaints and review body for the RCMP. This work would continue under the PCRC. It would increase transparency and accountability on the review body's mandate, which will also be extended to the Canada Border Services Agency.

Bill C-20 responds to a long-standing gap in the public safety civilian review framework by ensuring an external review process for the CBSA, as there is currently no mechanism to request an independent review of public complaints against the agency.

We have before us a much-improved bill that raises the bar of the quality of law enforcement review in Canada. This is due in no small part to the quality of the interventions by members and witnesses at committee.

During its study of Bill C-20, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security heard from various stakeholders, including indigenous leaders, union representatives, academics, and civil rights and society organizations. I am pleased to note that all were generally supportive of this initiative. I therefore take this opportunity to thank the members of SECU, witnesses and stakeholders, who all contributed to advancing this important legislation.

In particular, I would like to thank Heather Campbell, a commissioner with the Calgary Police Commission, who spoke to the need for improved data collection and analysis in policing. Data is key to identifying and developing responses to systemic issues in Canadian law enforcement.

I also wish to highlight the testimony of members of the Association québécoise des avocats et avocates en droit de l'immigration. Their testimony highlighted the need to ensure that third parties can submit complaints to the PCRC and to guarantee that information shared with complainants is also shared with legal representatives.

Aided by these testimonies, the committee made several amendments that improved Bill C-20, strengthening the complaints and review process through increased accountability and transparency, as well as providing further clarity to make it more accessible to all.

I would now like to highlight some of the most impactful changes made to the proposed legislation by the committee.

To build further trust in federal law enforcement, it is imperative that complainants be able to recognize themselves and their communities in the PCRC, including among members of the commission. Thus, it bears repeating that one of the committee's main contributions is the inclusion of a clause that would require the Minister of Public Safety to take into account the diversity of Canadian society when he or she recommends to the Governor in Council the appointment of a PCRC member.

The committee also made amendments to increase transparency around the complaints and review process by requiring the PCRC to incorporate additional elements in its annual report, such as demographic data on complainants. This amendment will be key to

supporting our efforts to identify and respond to issues of systemic racism within law enforcement, as well as boosting public confidence in our institution.

A third amendment that received strong support from all committee members is one that would provide the PCRC with the autonomy to best determine how it should fulfill its complaints and review mandates. More specifically, this amendment removed a PCRC obligation to consider whether it has sufficient resources to conduct a specified activity review, also known as a systemic investigation.

● (2240)

I will quickly remind my hon. colleagues of what the two main activities of the PCRC would be. Members of the public, be they Canadians or not, would be able to make a complaint against an employee of the RCMP or the CBSA regarding their conduct or level of service. Should a complainant not be satisfied with the RCMP's or the CBSA's investigation at first instance, they would have the right to request that the PCRC examine the organization's findings regarding their complaint.

In addition to the review of complaints, the commission would also conduct systemic investigations of non-national security RCMP and CBSA activities to ensure that those activities are in line with legislation, policies, guidelines and procedures.

These specified activity reviews are essential. They would allow the PCRC to identify and investigate systemic issues that exist within these organizations, such as use of force and harassment, and to develop recommendations for the RCMP and the CBSA. These recommendations would also support the development of solutions to systemic matters and could contribute to cultural changes within our law enforcement.

These amendments would give the PCRC increased flexibility to identify and develop recommendations around broader, more systemic issues within the RCMP and the CBSA. Giving the PCRC more autonomy on how to fulfill its mandate also aligns with other review bodies, such as the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA.

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A fourth amendment made by SECU, or the committee, would improve co-operation between the PCRC and review bodies such as NSIRA. Indeed, the committee voted in favour of government-introduced amendments that would allow the Minister of Public Safety to create regulations around the sharing of information, referral of complaints and joint proceedings between federal entities. These regulations could be made to improve work between review bodies and to ensure no complaint is misplaced.

The committee also adopted amendments that would leave no ambiguity about who can make a complaint, as well as ensuring that the process remains accessible to both members of the public and stakeholders. More specifically, Bill C-20 now clarifies that third parties can submit complaints and request that the PCRC initiate a specified activity review.

I know that hon. members on the other side want to hear about this. The committee made an amendment to clarify that the information related to the handling of complaints can also be shared with the legal representatives of complainants.

Again, I commend the important improvements made by the hon. members of the committee. They have listened to concerns from stakeholders and have contributed to improving on what is already a robust transparency and accountability mechanism.

Let us not forget why the bill is so crucial. The CBSA is the only agency under the public safety portfolio that is not subject to an external, independent complaints and review mechanism. The legislation fulfills our government's commitment to establish an independent review body for the CBSA; it would respond to important transparency and accountability gaps and increase public confidence in the RCMP and the CBSA.

Furthermore, this initiative also responds to several recommendations, notably those made in the Mass Casualty Commission's report and SECU's report on systemic racism in policing.

In my belief, not only would the bill have a positive impact on public interactions with our law enforcement agencies, including at the border, but it is also essential to public trust and the rule of law.

I note that my hon. colleagues on both sides of the House have demonstrated their support for the legislation. I therefore urge them to vote with me in favour of this important bill.

• (2245)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and I served several years together on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, and it is nice to be in the House debating with him. I appreciate his comments, especially around the makeup of the PCRC, and I tease him about all the acronyms used. I am wondering if he could explain the PCRC. He talked about appointments representing our wide diversity in Canada, but how would it be looked at from a geographic perspective? CBSA issues and RCMP issues in Alberta are very different than in downtown Toronto and across the country. How is the bill set up so the PCRC would properly be representing those differences?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, we are here tonight because we are debating an amendment from the Conservative Party

on the title of a bill. That is why we are here tonight. We are not here to debate the content of the bill. We are seriously here to debate the title of a bill.

I am going to ask my hon. colleague whether he thinks it is valuable time to debate the title of a bill and whether the Conservative Party thought it was a really good idea to debate the title of the bill tonight.

I will answer his question. Diversity is diversified across the country. Obviously, the government would take into account the diversity of British Columbia, Alberta and all provinces across the country. Again, I would ask my hon. colleague why we are debating the title of a bill tonight.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague who gave the speech was supposed to respond to a question but asked a question instead. I will challenge him on that, because the real nature of asking a question is to get a response and an answer to the question asked.

I will push back on his question about regional representation, because his government has been sorely lacking in getting input from the provinces in this country in all the legislation it has put forth thus far. It is an autocratic system that it is pushing upon the provinces.

We have a Constitution, where we have a federation of powers between the provinces and the federal government. The government continues to ignore that federal arrangement and act in its own interest all the time. I challenge the member on whether he is actually serious about his words when he says the government is going to get input from the regions of the country.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, we are at report stage in the House. If those arguments were brought at committee, they would have been taken seriously, but obviously it is just about delaying time in the House. I get it. The opposition wants to delay time from the budget implementation act. The Conservatives do not want to talk about pharmacare. They do not want to talk about the importance of the budget, which would impact millennials, my generation and the next generation. Of course, it is just about wasting time in the House. Again, the biggest thing they chose to argue about was the title of the bill. How silly is that?

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, obviously we are here to debate the substance of the bill, although I will say that we see so much entitlement from the Liberal government, entitlement to something we certainly see as being in the public interest to discuss.

Behind this bill also, as my colleagues have talked about, is the reality that we see increasing crime in this country, and this informs the context of this bill and of the provisions that would be put in place around complaints and the adjudication of those complaints.

I wonder if the member will acknowledge how, following the change in government in 2015, the trajectory of violent crime in this country changed dramatically and how violent crime was dropping when Stephen Harper was Prime Minister and violent crime has gone up dramatically. So much of it is because the same criminals are committing crimes over and over again, and under the Liberals it is bail, not jail. Conservatives would bring in jail, not bail, for repeat violent offenders.

I wonder if, after nine years of failure, the member is prepared to acknowledge that his government's decisions have had a negative impact on public safety in this country.

• (2250)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I really respect my hon. colleague on the other side, but again, Conservatives, and Conservatives only, chose to debate the title of a bill, which is “Public Complaints and Review Commission Act”, which they want to strike from debate. They had the opportunity to bring this at committee, and they did not. They had the opportunity to bring this at second reading in the House before this, and they did not. Now, suddenly, they are waking up and want to debate this particular title—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, right out of the starting blocks, I will say that I will be supporting the bill, as my Conservative colleagues will be.

There may be those who think it is our duty as an official opposition to oppose all legislation put forward by the costly Liberal-NDP coalition, that it is our duty to vote against it. We do that with the majority of their bills. After nine years of the Prime Minister, crime, chaos, drugs and disorder reign in so many of our streets and communities. The coalition government has dragged our country down: The cost of living has soared, housing costs have doubled and Canadians are struggling. An election cannot come soon enough. The longer the NDP and the Liberals are in power, the worse off Canadians will become.

There is a good reason why we vote against most of the Liberal government's bills, and that is for the good of Canadians. However, this bill, to establish a public complaints and review commission, is not one of them. It is not perfect, but it is a good bill that has the support of the parties in the House. That begs the question: Why has it taken so long for the bill to get through the legislative process and become law?

An hon. member: Oh, I know.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, let us talk about that. I know that members on the other side of the House are eager to jump into this right now, but the fact of the matter is that the Liberals promised it. They promised to introduce a more effective oversight of federal law enforcement agencies in, drum roll, 2015. That is right. Nine years ago, they were hot to trot and decided to intro-

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duce Bill C-98, an act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act. However, when did they introduce it? It was not 2015, not 2016, not 2017 and not 2018. It was 2019, in May. What was May 2019 about? That was the end of their first mandate. They decided in May 2019 to introduce it and an election was called. They had to have an election. Then what happened? That legislation fell through.

They obviously were not very serious about this law, as it fell through in 2019. Then they decided they were going to bring it up again in January 2020, a few months later. They went through some of the processes, and actually, the Conservatives voted for the bill all the way through. However, the Liberals did not give themselves enough time, and even more than that, they decided to take the opportunity to have a COVID election, something they said they were not going to do but did. Then guess what happened to this bill. It tanked. It died.

Here we are again, and it is at the very end of the session. It is not May, though. It is June, and the Liberals have decided to bring it forward again, rushing it through because of their disorganization and ramming it through with time allocation. We are approaching the pumpkin hour debating Bill C-20, and my question is, are they even serious about having this bill pass? One must wonder. Maybe it is a good bill, and they are not used to having a good bill. The fact of the matter is that we want it passed. However, we do believe in debating it. We do believe in speaking to it. I think that is important.

• (2255)

The bill before us deals with specific complaints made by the public about the RCMP or the Canada Border Services Agency. It is about how these complaints would be investigated. Currently, the CBSA and the RCMP investigate most of the complaints filed. While both of these agencies, the RCMP and CBSA, are very professional, there is, nonetheless, concern about police investigating police. There is a risk of bias or perceived bias, which can undermine public trust, and an internal investigation process may lack transparency and public accountability, leading to doubts about fairness.

Before I go any further, I want to express my deep appreciation for the work and service of RCMP officers, police overall, and our Canadian border services personnel for the public security and safety they provide. They place their lives on the line, day in and day out. I think of Constable Rick O'Brien, who was a constable in my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge. He was at a drug bust when he was shot at through the door from the other side and killed. His widow is Nicole, and he had six children. He was a real example of a person who just gave his all in community engagement, especially with youth. He became an officer later in his life, probably in his forties, but it was his dream. However, he laid down his life.

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Bill C-20 is not an anti-police or anti-border agency bill, but I just want to say that, as Conservatives, we support our protective services, and they know that. As a matter of fact, I can think of maybe one person who is a police officer who has said that she may not vote for me. I mean, there may be a police officer who is not voting for Conservatives, but they see that we stand for order, safety, security and sanity, as opposed to the disorder, insanity and chaos of the other side. We are living in a dangerous society, and our CBSA also faces risks. To them all, I say thank you.

Public complaints do occur, justified or unjustified, and it is important that the complaints be dealt with expeditiously with as little red tape as possible. However, the Liberals and the NDP are red tape proponents, and it just causes delays and increased expenses. Even though they have added 100,000 new bureaucrats, things have gotten a lot worse. We believe in being expeditious. We support an amendment for the PCRC, which would be the public complaints review commission, to direct the RCMP to conduct informal resolutions. It would just be informal.

According to the National Police Federation, most complaints can be resolved with a phone call, and they can conduct information resolutions to address long delays of complaints. It is important that we get things moving. We do believe that there needs to be timelines, that it cannot just go on and on. Things must move along so that justice and people's concerns are addressed. We also believe that timelines begin at the top, and it really falls on the Liberal government, with its cabinet ministers who do not take control of the bureaucracy, and that just goes right down. We believe in having more efficiency, which is important for the taxpayers.

Conservatives also support the unions that represent workers during the hearings. We believe in fair processes that support union agreements, and an automatic back pay process for unfounded complaints because, when someone, such as agents, security personnel or police, is being investigated, it can be without pay. It is important that, if the complaint is unfounded, they would automatically receive their back pay.

• (2300)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one has to admit it is truly amazing when we get Conservative after Conservative standing up, saying they support the legislation and want to pass the legislation, but then go out of their way to actually prevent the legislation from passing.

The only reason the bill is going to pass is that we were able to finally get it time allocated. If we did not get it time allocated, the Conservatives would continue debating it endlessly. There are only a limited number of days that the House actually sits. We have to get 70-plus pieces of legislation across. They should do the basic math. All the Conservatives want to do, even if they support legislation, is cause it to fail and prevent it from passing. Thank goodness we have a tool called time allocation. Otherwise, no matter who is in government, they cannot get legislation passed with the Reform Party across the way.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I think the member is having a memory lapse. I went through the process about how the Liberals let it all flounder. This is nine years down the road. I know

right now the Liberals are doing lots of other promises, nine years down the road, saying that they are going to do this, they are going to do that. Well, it is nine years right now. When we go to an election, it is not going to be based upon their promises, which do not get accomplished, but upon what they actually do.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, and I appreciated my colleague's intervention. We really got to see his teaching background come through there. It was as though he were giving a pop quiz that the Conservatives knew the answers to, but the Liberals had somehow not done their homework when it came to their past attempts at filibustering and changing the names of short titles and things like that, which I know will be brought up later tonight.

If the member could deliver one message, one line, to the Liberals based on their inability to get things done when they say they are going to get done, budgets will balance themselves and modest deficits, what would that line be, based on his experience with this bill?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I do not need a line; I need a word. It is called "misery". What Canadians are feeling right now is misery. The standard of living is going down, nothing is getting done, nothing is getting built and it is just time for a change.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have heard this ridiculous conversation around bringing forward amendments to change the short title of a piece of legislation. Would the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge have any other examples of perhaps other parties putting forward amendments that would change the short title? This is not a very uncommon thing. Perhaps, even the government itself, the NDP-Liberal government, has done it also.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, that is an amazing question because I do have the answers. Let us give a few little examples. Let me see. The Liberals did it as well. For example, in the notice paper on November 26, 2018, a notice of a motion deleting the short title for Bill C-87 happened. That was interesting.

Again, on March 6 of the year before, the parliamentary secretary put a motion to delete the short title of Bill C-22. Yes, that was two, but we have to give three, right?

The third is on June 6, 2018. We need to mix things up a little bit. The NDP member for Victoria seconded an amendment by the BQ member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert to delete the short title of Bill C-218.

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• (2305)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, there is some housekeeping. Of course, it is 11:05 p.m. on June 4, and we are here in the House debating a bill, but first of all, June 4 is a very important date in my household. June 4 is my anniversary with my wife of our marriage 13 years ago. Members who have met my wife know that I am a pretty lucky man, and I thank her for all the years and all the joy she has added to my life. My life is full because of her.

Let me get to the matter at hand here. My constituents will know that we start work the same time as they do, 8 a.m., here in Ottawa. Here we are at 11 p.m., and that is because of mismanagement of the government's agenda. There is a lot on the agenda here, but the things we were talking about last week and the week before are all a matter of not being able to manage the time in this House, and that is on the government's side.

However, tonight we are here debating Bill C-20, which is an act establishing the public complaints and review commission. It is an act that would actually take what was previously the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission and update it. It has been debated in the House by the government a number of times, in three different Parliaments, starting as a promise in 2015, and then it expired. Then, of course, it came back, and it came back again. It is back in front of this Parliament this time, and I will have people note that the first time the bill was read in this Parliament for first reading, as we call it, was on May 19, 2022. Over two years ago, the bill was brought before the House of Commons.

Then, of course, the process in the House of Commons is that we go to a second reading. The second reading, in this government's allocation of its timeline, happened on November 25, 2022, so about six months later, the House got it through to a second reading, which is where we debate in the House of Commons, much like we are doing here tonight, although we usually do it before supper.

Then, of course, it goes to committee. It gets consideration in committee, and that took, for some reason, a full year. People need to know that when a bill goes to committee, it has precedence over everything else that is happening in the committee, over all the reports and everything else, and legislation jumps to the front of that. It is not like it is waiting behind a whole bunch of things to get done. The minute it goes to committee, it gets considered, but for some reason, the government did not want to put it there and get it passed until November 2023, a full year after second reading in the House of Commons. That is too long. Again, it is mismanagement, not on the opposition side, but on the government side.

The government does not know how to get its legislation through the House, and it was not always this way. Governments used to get things done in this place. They did not have to sit until midnight to go through an agenda to get things done. They actually got things done in the allocated time, and that took some co-operation with the other parties in the House of Commons. I wish the current government could learn co-operation and could learn how to actually make bills better in committee and on the floor of the House of Commons. However, it is acting repeatedly in an autocratic sense, and as a result, here we are. Here we are at almost midnight, 11:09, as I see right now on the clock.

We are debating Bill C-20, and it is not a bad bill, but it is a bill that we need to take a good look at because it would impact so much. It is about public trust, at the end of the day, to reinforce the government's intent to build that public trust in oversight of law enforcement for accountability and responsibility.

I am not sure I am allowed to do this, so I hope the Speaker pays attention to what I am saying. The bill was introduced in the House of Commons by the then minister of public safety. That former minister is no longer in cabinet for some good reasons. That former minister used to mislead this Parliament on a daily basis. He would come up in question period, and for every response to any question he gave, he would say the talking lines, even if they were so remote from reality that they stunk, quite frankly. I remember a journalist in the paper actually said that this man knows how to “fluff their putts” like nobody else. Yes, the remoteness from the truth was something that was very off his agenda at that point in time.

• (2310)

This is a bill about trust. That is pertinent because the people introducing bills have to be people Canadians can trust. To actually have trust in the House of Commons, we have to make sure people are always representing themselves as honest people. That is what we need. It is about honourability in the House of Commons. We have seen the results of that.

The bill is about an imbalance of power, if we think about it. If somebody is going to make a complaint in front of a public review committee and it is the police that they are complaining about, or the Border Services Agency, to go to the committee and tell it that they have a complaint about somebody in the organization creates a bit of a problem, particularly, if I can talk about it, with new Canadians. In Canada, we have a robust system of justice, a robust system of reporting and a robust parliamentary democracy, which is being mismanaged right now, but it is still a tradition of democracy.

Many Canadians come here from other regimes where they do not have that. The trust in the police is not there. New Canadians represent a substantial percentage of Canadians. They do not necessarily have trust in the institutions in their prior countries. The imbalance of power they sense would be much more than that of a complainant who was born and raised here and who has experienced their own interactions with police. There is that extra consideration we need to give in the bill to make sure that we are not looking at something and visiting it unfairly.

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I would like to talk to the government, of course, about bias and conflict of interest, because the bill is all about conflict of interest and setting up a new body to make sure that other bodies are not looking after their own business at the end of the day. Setting up a separate civilian body to look after the police has been a long time coming. Roping in the Canada Border Services Agency is also something that needs to be done. It would elevate the organization as well. However, conflicts of interest are about the confidence, credibility and objectivity of the complaint process that would have to be undertaken.

Let me talk about something here, because I remembered that the former governor general was the special rapporteur on foreign interference in Canadian elections. I looked at it. I had great respect for the former governor general when he was the governor general. It is almost as if I wanted to scream across the airwaves to him that he was in a conflict of interest, with respect to what he would be reporting to on foreign elections interference. Not knowing one has a conflict of interest, even though one has an interest, is the definition of conflict of interest.

We have to understand that being involved in something means one has a perspective that does not make them objective. That is what the nature of the legislation before us actually would do; it would move the reporting relationship one step further than the people who might have been directly involved, one step away from what was involved in the complaint that happened in the first place. That is a necessity. That is the imperative that has to happen here. From what I have seen from the members on the other side, they have to get back to the basics of understanding what the whole nature of a conflict of interest is about.

I tuned in for a while to the Auditor General this morning. I can tell the House that she spoke repeatedly about conflict of interest, particularly with respect to the SDTC and how many of its directors appointed by the current government have put themselves in a position of conflict of interest. Clearly there is a misunderstanding among the government, and its friends, about how it has to report its interests, its financial interest in that case. However, interests are interests. We have to make sure that they are balanced appropriately and that everybody has the opportunity for objectivity.

There is a quantity that we are looking at. I appreciate that the minister has put forward what the bill would cost Canadians. It is about \$120 million over the first six years, and then about \$20 million per year after that, so even now, \$20 million to set up an organization of arm's-length people to make sure that there would be a complaints process. Canadians need to know that, but I am hoping the government in this case can actually stick to a number, because it has not stuck to a budget yet that it has put forward on the floor of the House of Commons. That too is a matter of accountability that it has delivered nothing on at this point in time.

● (2315)

One thing I want to say before I close is that some input came in through committee from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. I will shorten the quote, knowing I am out of time. It states:

Unfortunately, Bill C-20 ignores these types of recommendations as well as the criticisms of the RCMP's existing inadequate complaints investigation structure. Instead of putting in place truly independent, civilian investigation of police and secu-

riety agency misconduct, it retains the limited powers in the current police complaints system and extends the CRCC's flawed oversight model to the CBSA.

I wish—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will have to move on to questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, interestingly enough, I was actually here during the four-year majority government of Stephen Harper. During that period of time, in standing committees, I cannot recall Stephen Harper's Conservative Party ever supporting an opposition amendment. I could be wrong on that. The Conservatives might have accepted one or two amendments, but I cannot recall any. We can contrast that to this government.

When we think of the number of times the Conservatives brought in time allocation, it must have been 125 times. Do we want to talk about a majority government and dominant rule? Do we want to do a comparison with the Liberals and the four years of a minority situation in terms of how much legislation we have been able to get through and how much legislation we have been able to build consensus on? Our legislative agenda and our performance far surpass whatever Stephen Harper did. I can assure members of that.

I can sense a little remorse on that side. The Conservatives are feeling a little guilty because of the stupid amendment they brought forward.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I retract the word “stupid”, so the members can calm down.

Having said that, surely the Conservatives realize that this is something that could have passed. They support the legislation. Why the ongoing filibuster?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I know it is getting late and I know the member seems a little cranky at this hour. It has gotten a little testy, but I will challenge him on the veracity of everything he is saying here.

When we come to Parliament, and I am not as long in the tooth in Parliament as he is, Canadians expect us to be able to work together and actually make legislation together. After everything I have seen, at every one of the committees I have been at, when the government says it is going to do something, it will just go through the process, get done what it wants, and forget about what everyone else is saying because it does not matter.

Co-operation needs to happen here, and the government does not put enough effort into that co-operation.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the use of the word “co-operation”. We heard it from the member for Calgary Centre—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member does not have a tie; the hon. member cannot speak.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is justice in this place after all.

I want to thank my colleague for his excellent speech. He talked about legislative mismanagement on behalf of the Liberals. There is a serious case of legislative mismanagement as it pertains to the budget. The Liberals brought in a budget that was going to give Canadians until June 25 to sell their assets so they can lock in at the lower capital gains inclusion rate. Then, when the budget bill came, there was nothing. It was not there. They still have not tabled legislation.

Is this not extremely dangerous and unfair to taxpayers, who are being forced into a situation where they do not know what the rules are?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, in my speech, I talked about accountability and responsibility. I can tell members there is no accountability in this budget to the Canadians who might be affected by the government's legislation. The government is going to increase taxation on Canadians, but it has not identified exactly who those Canadians are.

All those Canadians are calling their financial advisers and their accountants. They are saying they are not sure if they are captured by this, and the accountants do not know either, because the government will not tell them. It is a serious oversight of the government to put forward legislation to increase taxes without clearly delineating exactly who is going to be affected.

• (2320)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated the words from the member for Calgary Centre in speaking about the need for co-operation in this place. If there was a day when the member was in the party that was governing at that time, could he share with us what productive co-operation would look like in this place from a governing party?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, Canadians have a vision of this Parliament being a place where they elect people from across the country, and they choose which candidate is going to represent them the best to go and sit in Parliament. Then it is our job to bring our skills together and actually build better legislation.

I know a lot of it comes with bureaucracy, but I think we also have to use the skills we see in every party here, and every person who comes to committee, to ask how can we make that bill better so it serves the needs of Canadians, not just those ones who talk to me but those Canadians all the way across the country, because we do not know everything.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak to this bill in Parliament. Third time lucky, maybe.

Now it is called Bill C-20. It was Bill C-98, when it was brought to the House in May of 2019. Then it was dropped because of the writ in September. Then the Liberals brought it back again as Bill C-3. It was brought back in January of 2020, and then it died in August when the Liberals prorogued Parliament.

Here we are, maybe third time lucky, for Bill C-20. We will see what happens here. It is an act establishing the public complaints and review commission, something that I think is actually deeply needed in this country. I am going to talk about that in a moment.

The legislation, right now, would rename the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the public complaints and review commission. Under its new name, the commission would also be responsible for reviewing civilian complaints against the Canada Border Services Agency.

This bill follows through on a Liberal election promise. I remember running in 2015 for the first time, and that was one of the bills the Liberals talked about. Then, as I mentioned, in 2015, the Liberals got elected with a majority. Finally, they brought this bill out four years after that. Now we are at another four to five years, and maybe we will get Bill C-20 passed in the House.

I am going to talk about it a little, because there is no question a civilian review commission would improve the oversight and help the CBSA be an even more effective agency in its duties and its functions. The public complaints and review commission should end the practice of police investigating police. There is nothing good that comes out of that. There will be a lot of questions, as we have seen over the years.

We want to implement a fully independent model, and I think this is where we are going with Bill C-20. We all know that over the past number of years, we have seen an increase in interest in police activities all through social media. The latest is people with cellphones. I have seen it in my city of Saskatoon, people taking a cellphone out, not to record an accident, but to record the police and what they are doing. This is very dangerous. This is an ongoing thing that we have seen in this country, time and time again.

Now, there is a risk of some bias or perceived bias in investigations that have been conducted by police officers from the same organization. As we all know, this can potentially undermine public trust and confidence in the investigation process. The internal investigation process may lack the transparency and public accountability that could lead to skepticism and doubts about the fairness of all these investigations.

We have seen a lot of that, and I am going to talk about it right now. Some of the groups in my province that seems to be under a lot of pressure with the police, whether it is city police or municipal police or even the RCMP, are the indigenous groups. They feel that being independent from the agency would certainly be more helpful. The community would feel more comfortable filing complaints, knowing that an independent body would review and take action, if appropriate. Everyone understands that all complaints should be resolved in a timely manner. It is in the interest of both the complainant and the employee subject of the complaint.

Government Orders

I am going to go back in time to the James Smith Cree Nation mass killer Myles Sanderson. Unfortunately, he was actually released from custody before killing 11 and injuring 17 others, and that was during the 2022 rampage. The investigation into his statutory release made 14 recommendations for the Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada.

● (2325)

Sanderson had a massive record of violent assaults over a number of years. The killings have raised questions about why he was released. The police really did not know where he was for months. Ten recommendations were directed at the Parole Board, including reviewing scheduling guidelines to allow members more time to prepare for hearings and for writing decisions thereafter.

The community involvement, I feel, in the James Smith Cree Nation mass killing was excluded from this process, and that is something we need to learn from. The RCMP certainly made some mistakes during the mass killing of 2022. I would say there were several mistakes also made by the James Smith Cree Nation. The communication between the reserve and the RCMP detachment in Melfort was spotty at the best of times. I will compliment the provincial government, as it held an inquiry. A coroner, Clive Weighill, who was the former city police chief of Saskatoon, conducted the inquiry for several weeks in Melfort.

The RCMP, as I said, admitted it made mistakes. It was a very emotional inquiry. It went on for weeks in Melfort. It was closely followed by the whole province. This was an event we hope will never happen again. It gave the chance for family members to finally grieve. As I said, 11 passed away; Myles Sanderson killed 11 and injured 17. During this inquiry, the members of the families needed to talk about what they saw and what their family members went through, which was deeply needed. That is the part in question. When the public complaints and review commission is established, we need to hear from the public.

James Smith Cree Nation is only a few kilometres from the city of Melfort, where all the RCMP of the detachment came from. I remember reading the stories. There was a gentleman stabbed in a vehicle. Some say the police should have known. If they had stopped, maybe they could have saved that person. He died later in a hospital. There was a lot of miscommunication between the RCMP and James Smith Cree Nation.

With Bill C-20, I am hoping we could have these public discussions before an event like this happens rather than having it after. As I said, it was a very emotional event. I received texts from all over the world about it. I remember a banquet I held in Delisle with Billy Smith, who was the notorious, great goaltender of the New York Islanders. He texted me right away when that happened because he was that concerned. Chico Resch is from Regina, by the way, and the home of the RCMP depot is Regina—Lewvan. Chico knew right away this was an issue in our province of Saskatchewan between the RCMP and, in this case, James Smith Cree Nation. He just wanted to reach out to see if everybody was fine.

That was one of many texts I received that week, where people were genuine. They knew the issue in our province between the RCMP and indigenous groups, and unfortunately it took an event like this to get this raised.

As I conclude, I am happy that we are talking about this. The mandatory annual reporting by the RCMP and CBSA on actions taken in response to PCRC recommendations is something we desperately need, as well as the mandatory reporting of race-based data by the PCRC. Public education is first and foremost. We all need to get educated on situations like this. This bill going forward, Bill C-20, would help everyone, not only in my province of Saskatchewan, but also in every district in this country.

● (2330)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the legislation is substantive and is very positive. It is something that, whether one is a border control officer, a member of a law agency or a member of the RCMP, is in everyone's best interest. No one questions that. In that sense, even with the Conservatives filibustering, ultimately it is going to pass. I see that as a good thing.

The question I have for the member is a question I posed to others earlier regarding the issue of how one builds public confidence. By having it in an independent fashion, it helps contribute to building the confidence of the two institutions. What are his thoughts on that?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, what I am worried about is that nobody in this country wants to be a police officer anymore. In the city of Saskatoon, recruitment is hard. From RCMP Depot in Regina, officers can be stationed anywhere in this country. It does not matter if one comes from Toronto; one may go to Lac des Îles and have no say in that. When I look at the Toronto area, with all the shootings every night and the killings that have taken place there, I am fearful. Who would want to be a peace officer today in this country? I am really concerned about this, because these are the people who sacrifice everything for us to be safe; right now, it is a very tough job to be a police officer in this country, whether municipal, provincial or RCMP.

Government Orders

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my seatmate hit on a point. I have the honour of representing RCMP Depot in Regina—Lewvan. I have visited there many times. I have gone to a couple of troop graduations and a few sunset ceremonies; I have gotten to know a few of the officers there. He hit the nail on the head. The biggest problem right now with the RCMP is recruitment and retention; RCMP members feel as though they are not supported. I think a bill such as this would bring some civilian oversight, and it would make them feel better because there would be more accountability. However, what they really want is for parliamentarians and provincial leaders to support them and their cause. They are the ones who run into trouble when everyone else runs away from it, and we have to have more people who support them. Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, as the chair of the Saskatchewan caucus, I ask members to guess whom we are going to have coming to caucus tomorrow, in eight hours' time. Members of the police association are coming to the Saskatchewan caucus on Wednesday. Eight and a half hours from now, we will chair it; we are going to hear their stories. We are really concerned in this country about recruitment and retention. Retention is the big issue with these people. They will go on for maybe the first three or four years; then, all of a sudden, there is an incident that may change their life, and they want to move on from it.

• (2335)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about hypocrisy a bit. The member of Parliament for Winnipeg North stands up over and over again and talks about the amount of time the debate is taking, yet he burns up more minutes in the House talking than any other member here. He complains about the Conservative members who stand up to raise concerns from their constituents on important legislation, yet he speaks for more minutes, by multiple times, than every one of the Conservative members he has been complaining about.

Could the member comment on the rights of Conservative members of Parliament to take even a fraction of the time the member for Winnipeg North has in the House to raise concerns brought up by their constituents?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, we have heard some great comments tonight from the Conservative side. I have brought mine from my constituents in Saskatoon. The member for Saskatoon West brought up another issue. On this side, we have issues from all over this country that need to be debated. I know the debate is being shut down, and we have had five hours here, but these are good points that we brought out tonight.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join the debate tonight and follow my friend from Saskatoon—Grasswood, who gave an excellent speech. He mentioned that the police would be coming to the Saskatchewan Conservative caucus meeting tomorrow, which is great news. I wonder if the police will be going to the Liberal caucus meeting tomorrow as well after all the ethical scandals that we have been seeing, but that is to be determined.

I have been listening to the debate tonight and want to start by delving into some of the exchanges that have taken place so far, some more substantive ones and less substantive ones that perhaps

should be commented on. Earlier in the evening, I had the opportunity to have a good exchange with my colleague from Edmonton Griesbach. In his speech, he highlighted, importantly, instances of injustice, abuse and violence through the actions of members of the police. We need to draw attention to those instances of violence, injustice and racism, call them out and put in place the actions to combat them.

I also think it is important to establish a positive discourse about the work being done by police and the positive role that police officers play within our society. That is important because, of course, without a positive message around the contributions that police officers are making in our society, we will struggle to recruit, which other members have commented on the importance of. Moreover, we should be grateful to the vast majority of police officers, who sacrifice and risk their lives and safety every day when they go to work, not knowing what they will encounter or what the outcomes will be and nonetheless working hard to protect their communities.

Are there instances where people in those sorts of positions betray that trust? Absolutely those instances exist. Are there more than just individual instances? Are there cases that we might be able to identify where there are histories or mentalities that contribute to wrong action? Those are legitimate things to discuss and certainly explore, but we need to recognize that, overwhelmingly, police play a positive role in our society, particularly when we have proper oversight, as advanced by this bill. As I and my colleagues have said, we support Bill C-20, but in the context of proper oversight, the commitment and sacrifice of police officers can be harnessed for them to play a dramatic, productive role in our society.

I worry that a discourse that emphasizes the negatives without the positives has led to bad policy outcomes, which are very dangerous for marginalized communities. All the evidence shows us that when we do not have a properly funded, effective police force in place, it is the most vulnerable who suffer. In certain contexts, there may be weaker state institutions, which we see in certain places around the world where the state does not have the capacity to provide the kind of protection from law enforcement that we take for granted generally here in Canada. There, wealthier people are still able to provide for their own protection through other kinds of private means for protecting their security, whereas those who cannot afford these mechanisms are the most vulnerable.

If we push the “defund the police” movement forward, the result is that those who are not able to protect themselves are more vulnerable to violence, while those who have more power and resources within a society are, to a greater extent, able to invest in their own protection. This is why the demonization of police and the movements to defund the police are ultimately deeply destructive, especially to the most vulnerable and marginalized. I would affirm the importance of recognizing injustice, of holding people accountable and of proper oversight, but I would also challenge all members in all parties of this House to recognize the positive contribution of police officers and police forces and establish a discourse that is affirming of their efforts and sacrifices.

Government Orders

● (2340)

I also believe in the importance of individual responsibility. I think when we see bad actions take place, the primary response should be holding the individuals who commit those actions responsible, recognizing that individual action is never rendered inevitable by institutional context, and that regardless of the context in which an individual is, the organization they are a member of, etc., they still bear responsibility for their own choices to act or not to act in a certain way.

Now, I want to respond as well to the exchange that I had with the member for Winnipeg Centre, and this was a perplexing exchange. I rose in response to her speech about violence against indigenous communities to ask a specific question about violence against indigenous communities and the destruction of churches and other cultural property that we have seen. It is a highly pertinent question at this time in Canada when dozens of churches have been not just vandalized but burned to the ground, many historic churches in indigenous communities, and where indigenous leaders have spoken out against these attacks on their communities. I think it is important when we see this rampage of violence against indigenous cultural property, against churches in particular, that leaders at all levels speak out against that violence. Strikingly, there has been a lack of response to these attacks on churches, in particular, on churches in indigenous communities. There has been a stark silence from so many leaders who should be condemning these acts of violence, and who would be quick to condemn acts of violence against other kinds of religious institutions.

The reason I have persisted in asking the member for Winnipeg Centre these questions is because I had asked the questions before and she had refused to condemn these acts of violence against churches. I have now asked the member the same question four times, and her response has been to attack me personally and to make all kinds of absurd, obviously verifiably bizarre allegations and accusations, which she has been told by the Speaker to withdraw. She has refused to withdraw, and I have no doubt that there will be follow-up on that matter. However, the point is that these were serious questions that were ignored. I think we should be clear and consistent in condemning all forms of abuse, all forms of violence against all communities. It is a glaring hole in that pattern of general condemnation to see the lack of response from many politicians to the rampage of destruction that has targeted Christian churches.

Further to the debate that has happened tonight, I want to agree with the comments that have been made by many of my Conservative colleagues about the increase in crime being an important part of the context of this legislation, and about how there was, leading up to 2015, during the tenure of the previous Conservative government, a decline in the rates of violent crime, and there has been a spike in violent crime since this Prime Minister took office. As they say, elections have consequences. When we elect a political party that has an ideology and implements that ideology, we see the results of it. I think we have seen, over the last nine years, the ideological experimentation of this Prime Minister, and we have seen the results: higher rent, higher cost of living, declining reputation in the world and increasing violent crime. The Prime Minister, over the last nine years, has experimented with putting one of the fur-

thest left ideologies we have ever seen in this country into action, and we have seen, over the last nine years, the results of that extreme ideology.

There has also been some discussion tonight of scheduling issues. I think it is clear that this government has wildly mismanaged its legislative agenda, and every time the member for Winnipeg North stands up to speak for 20 minutes about how the opposition should stop talking about bills, yes, I do just shake my head.

We support Bill C-20. We think there are some important provisions in it, and I appreciate the chance to participate in the debate and engage in dialogue with various members about various issues.

● (2345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a little bit tempting to venture into the area of filibustering with the member who just spoke. He is the one who has probably introduced more concurrence motions to prevent the government from being able to debate legislation than any other member. I will avoid commenting on that.

Rather, I would put forward the proposition that this is important legislation. We recognize that it is important for citizens and it would reinforce confidence in the system itself by having that sense of independence. Incorporating the Canada border control would be such a positive thing. I am anxious to ultimately see the legislation pass. I am somewhat grateful that we finally have time allocation on the legislation. I would just like to get the member to provide his thoughts on the benefits of the passage of the legislation itself.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I am not going to allow his comment about concurrence motions to go unanswered. He says the legislation is important. I would just say that I am proud of my record of proposing many important, substantive concurrence motions in the House that are not aimed at blocking government legislation but at advancing serious issues that are important to different communities.

I put forward a concurrence motion to reopen the Lachin corridor, an issue that was critically important to the Armenian community, given the escalating aggression that we have seen. I was pleased to put forward a concurrence motion to call for genuine autonomy for Tibet, affirming the right to democratic self-determination that Tibetans, Uyghurs and all people everywhere enjoy.

I was pleased to, again, put forward a concurrence motion calling on the government to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, a motion that passed unanimously, yet it is one that the government has persistently failed to implement. I think that many of these communities, the Iranian community, the Tibetan community, the Armenian community, which have been deeply invested in the outcome of these concurrence motions, would find it offensive the way this member persistently dismisses the substantive role that concurrence motions have played in advancing issues that are critical to different communities across this country.

Government Orders

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I feel like I have said that a few times tonight.

I really appreciate my colleague's passion. If he could distill his message down, we hear the Liberals and their heckling about different things, saying that we as Conservatives have slowed this down, when they have had nine years to get it right. Can my colleague reflect on that? What would he say to the Liberals who have been quite vocal today about Conservative actions in the House, when they could not get the job done in the last nine years?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member is right. It is quite simple. The Liberals complain about this Sisyphean task of passing legislation, but they are the ones who send the boulder down the hill every time. They bring all this legislation almost to the point of passing, and then they prorogue Parliament or call an early election. They then complain, but we did not make them do it.

That said, we would be prepared to have an early election at this point. Given the disaster we have seen over the last years, if they were to call an election, bring it on. We want to have that carbon tax election, and we have no confidence in the government. Nonetheless, Liberals complain about their own failures to pass legislation when they are the ones that undermine the passage of their own legislation by constantly resetting the clock. It does not make any sense.

• (2350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member could give a clear indication of why the Conservative Party genuinely feels that, for every piece of legislation brought forward by the government, if the government is not prepared to bring in time allocation, there is an endless stream of members from the Conservative Party that would not only like to speak to it but also bring in amendments.

As a bonus, the member opposite, who only listed about four concurrence motions, and I think there is another dozen he could have also made reference to, is a master at filibustering. I will give him that much. Could he just provide some further comment on that master skill he has?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think if we were to put the question to the members present in the House tonight, there would actually be a demand for even more concurrence motions than we have seen previously.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join this debate, and I am looking forward to speaking, then to question and answers. Before I get into the substance of the debate, this is the 10th anniversary of the shooting in Moncton, New Brunswick. Five officers were shot and three were shot fatally. I would just like to read their names into the record, so we should always remember our fallen heroes: Constable Larche, age 40; Constable Ross, age 32; Constable Gevaudan, age 45. Injured in the shooting in Moncton 10 years ago today were Constable Goguen and Constable Eric Dubois. When we are speaking to this bill, we should always keep all those in our mind who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms and for the safety that we enjoy in this country.

Now, we can get to the substance of Bill C-20. The legislation would rename the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the public complaints and review commission, which would also have the ability to accept complaints filed against the Canada Border Services Agency.

First and foremost, I will be continuing to support our men and women in uniform. The RCMP Depot, like I said earlier, is in the heart of Regina—Lewvan. I have been on the grounds many times, and wherever there is an RCMP officer across this beautiful country, that officer was trained in our hometown of Regina and we are very proud. Despite some of the ideas that might be flowing out there, I will fight tooth and nail to ensure that the Depot will stay in Regina—Lewvan for the next 50 years or 100 years, because that is where it deserves to be.

It is with great pride that I represent that area because the RCMP has continued to increase its training every year. I think there is the idea out here in the public that it still trains the way it did in the 1980s and 1990s. However, one can see the new innovation training and the simulators where trainees get to do different situational engagement with the public and the training has evolved so much. They have social workers, and they do so many more things to get ready to have the men and women go out and protect their communities, more than they have ever done before. I have gone through and watched the training facilities, and it is never stagnant. They are always trying to get better. They are always trying to build on what they are doing to make sure that the men and women are ready to face very difficult situations when they are protecting their communities.

I would like to talk a bit about what I asked my good friend and colleague from Saskatoon Grasswoods, and I appreciated his speech. There is a serious deficit when it comes to recruitment and retention of people who want to be in the RCMP or the RPS or the Saskatoon Police Service. I suspect most cities and communities are finding it more and more difficult to find people who want to serve and protect Canadians. That is something we have to take on as leaders in our communities and make sure that we have the support. The police have our support, and I want to put that on the record. All Conservatives will stand with our men and women in uniform always. It is a tag line that we have in Saskatchewan. Our Saskatchewan caucus is 14-strong and we always say we are always on Saskatchewan's side, and that means the men and women who serve across our communities to help keep us safe.

I do have a couple of quotes in favour of this legislation and I want to get into the record. The National Police Federation states:

While there are many advantages to having the police investigate the police, many provincial public complaints bodies have utilized a hybrid investigative model. This model includes the involvement of civilian investigators in the investigative process, with some reliance on experienced police investigators, either retired or serving.

Adjournment Proceedings

The National Police Federation members are in favour of this because they want to have that openness and transparency if something goes wrong. To err is human, and that is what our men and women are who serve. Sometimes, situations arise where officers have to be reviewed and see what happens, and we see that more often than not, now. We have seen that crime has risen across this country over the past nine long years with the NDP-Liberal coalition in power. We want to get back to having safer streets, and that is the commitment that the Conservatives will make. We would bring common sense back to Canada so we can make sure that Canadians have their safe streets again.

● (2355)

With that, I just want to continue to say that I appreciate what our men and women in uniform do. Hopefully, we do not have to talk about anniversaries when our men and women have passed away in the line of duty. It has happened far too often, and we have to make sure that we give them all the tools to be able to come home safe each and every night. That is what we want to make sure that we do by supporting the legislation so that if there is something that does happen that we have to review, the proper processes are in place.

With that, I will take some questions.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I sincerely appreciate that the member for Regina—Lewvan recognized the officers who lost their lives and were injured 10 years ago today. The comments that we are hearing today about the lack of support for the RCMP and difficulty in recruiting and retention come back to incidents such as this. Out of that incident rose a demand for the RCMP to provide proper critical incident response training. We have just found out that, in terms of that requirement, the RCMP has mainly missed its goal: 75% of constables, 37% of those in senior ranks and 50% of sergeants have not received the proper critical incident response training.

Could the member fill us in on what he believes the government's priority is, when it is basically not providing the proper training or the tools for the RCMP.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, those are some damning numbers, and I think they speak to the fact that there are members within the NDP-Liberal coalition who are part of the “defund the police” movement. They may think that they would be better off without the men and women in uniform to protect them. However, when there is something that happens in their house and someone is trying to bust down their door, the first call they make is to the police.

We have to get back to respecting police and making sure that the men and women who serve in uniform and keep our communities safe have that support. I think there are also probably a lot of timing issues, where the government has pushed things down the road and not given the proper resources to the RCMP to ensure that training can take place. I know that the RCMP is always struggling to find opportunities and training opportunities, even at Depot. They have to go and rent out ranges in other areas so that they can keep up with their firearms training.

If they cannot have that training at Depot, then they have to rent that out and it costs more money. Thus, more resources need to be

put into training our RCMP and our police forces. This is something that the government has let fall by the wayside because there are some within that caucus who do not even believe that the police should be funded at all.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (2400)

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, tonight, I am glad to have a chance to continue pressing for badly needed investments in predictable, ongoing and significant investments for deeply affordable housing with a real focus on co-op housing. It is critical because we are in a housing crisis. One of the reasons for that crisis is that Canada has the lowest percentage of deeply affordable social housing stock in the G7. It is about 3%, or just over, of housing stock across the country, or about 650,000 units. Even if we were to double our social housing stock, we would still be the middle of the G7. It is clear that we are not going to solve the housing crisis unless we get more deeply affordable housing built. Co-op housing, of course, is a big part of this.

In the past, we used to do this well. Back in the seventies and the eighties, for example, we got 60,000 co-op homes built. As one example, in 1982, 8% of all rental units constructed across the country were co-ops. It was about 6,500 units that year alone. It is investments like that, every single year, that led to the construction of co-ops such as Brighton Yards in uptown Waterloo, which I lived in for six years. Brighton Yards is deeply affordable, dignified housing with a strong sense of community. There are many others all across Kitchener, including in the riding I represent. There is Asgard Green in Cherry Park, Bread and Roses in downtown Kitchener, and Willowside Co-op on Victoria Street.

It is clear we need to get back to building co-ops every single year. Instead, what has happened is that the federal government has stagnated in funding co-ops and, as a result, construction has stagnated also. In 2020, for example, less than 1% of all rental units constructed were co-ops, about 477 units. That is a far cry from the 6,500 built back in 1982.

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It is pretty clear we are going to need to continue to apply more pressure for the government to commit significant annual and predictable investments in co-op housing. The good news is that, because of that pressure from housing advocates across the country, the government did propose a significant new investment in budget 2022 of \$1.5 billion. That funding was announced over two years ago. The government has not actually built any co-ops with that funding yet. The money has yet still to flow. Those funds could have built 6,000 units across the country.

I last asked about this in question period in mid April. Here is what the executive director of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Tim Ross, had to say about the issue: “We have shovel-ready projects at risk of missing the 2025 construction season”. He also said, “Co-op housing is just the type of housing we need more of, to ease the affordability crisis. The federal government needs to launch the program in the coming months, so together we can create more co-op homes.”

Could the parliamentary secretary explain to Canadians what is delaying these funds being rolled out? Could he then go on to answer when these funds will get spent so that these needed co-op homes will get built in my community and across the country?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am always pleased to share information about how the Government of Canada is taking concrete action to help build more homes faster. A key part of our work is to ensure fairness for every generation.

For decades now, co-operative housing has provided affordable housing and caring communities for Canadians. That is why the Government of Canada is supporting the co-operative housing sector to grow and become more resilient. In budget 2024, we proposed a number of measures that will benefit co-operative housing providers and the families that call these communities home.

First, we proposed to enhance the affordable housing fund with an additional \$1-billion top-up. This brings the fund to \$15 billion, and we encourage co-operatives to continue to access it to build units and repair existing ones.

We also proposed to protect and expand affordable housing by creating a new \$1.5-billion Canada rental protection fund. This fund will provide loans and contributions to help housing providers acquire units that will be rented at affordable rates and preserve rents at a stable level for decades to come. It will prevent those units from being redeveloped into out-of-reach condos or luxury rental units.

We also proposed to keep not-for-profits and co-op homes affordable by introducing new flexibilities to the federal community housing initiative. This will ensure eligible housing providers can access funding to maintain affordability for low-income tenants and co-op members.

Finally, our new Canada greener homes affordability program will help housing providers make energy-efficient retrofits that will help them and their tenants.

In addition to these initiatives specifically designed for not-for-profit and co-operative housing, we announced a number of mea-

sures that will make it easier to get affordable housing projects off the ground. For example, the \$400-million top-up to the housing accelerator fund will help more local governments cut red tape and make the changes needed to get more housing built faster.

Our investments to boost the productive capacity of the construction industry will ensure that Canada has the workers and innovative technologies needed to scale up supply. Starting in 2024-25, we plan to invest \$100 million over two years to encourage Canadians to explore careers in the skilled trades and to help create apprenticeship placements. Our new \$6-billion Canada housing infrastructure fund will help communities build the essential infrastructure needed to support more homes and more vibrant and livable neighbourhoods, including with co-operative housing.

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada supports our plan. It said, “We recognize and support the important federal commitments detailed in today’s plan to ensure co-op housing is part of the supply response to this generation’s housing crisis”. While not part of budget 2024, I would also like to note that the housing plan launched just ahead of the budget includes a \$1.5-billion co-operative housing development program developed with the CHFC that will commence this summer. The program will build capacity with the co-op sector and support the sustainability of housing. It is an effective and affordable model that has stood the test of time.

We are there for co-op housing, we are there for Canadians and we will continue to support building co-op housing across Canada.

● (2405)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, at the end of his remarks, got to the question of this investment. The issue is that this investment was committed to two years ago. It has been two years since the government finally announced that it was going to get back into the business of building co-ops, and it has not built any. We are in a housing crisis. This is not a time to be spending two years talking about getting co-ops built. It is time to actually get them built.

Could the parliamentary secretary at least share some explanation with Canadians of what has happened over the last two years? This investment was committed to, but two years later nothing has been built. Even better, can he share when the funding will flow so that my community and others across the country will see new co-ops getting built, which I know is what he wants to happen too?

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Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about the last two years. We have been at the table since 2015, since we came into power. I know for a fact that co-op housing has been a major priority for our government because I have lived it in my own riding. Co-op housing, under the previous government, was on a downward scale. We have increased funding for co-op housing, and I can say for a fact that we have built over 30 units based on co-op housing funding because we chose to invest in housing. We will continue to choose to invest in housing.

We made an announcement, and I would invite my hon. colleague to speak to the minister. I am not sure which project the member is talking about, but a home is not built in two months. There are obviously conditions that come into play. I know that my hon. colleague understands that. I would invite him to contact the minister to talk about his specific project.

• (2410)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, today is an important day in the arrive scam scandal saga, because later today, Minh Doan, who is one of the central figures in this affair, will be testifying before the government operations committee.

He will be testifying for three hours and will be required to answer critical questions about how the decision was made to choose GC Strategies and who was responsible for that decision. He will need to answer questions about significant allegations around the destruction of emails. Since his last appearance before the government operations and committee, there have been revelations in *The Globe and Mail* that note an accusation of unusual steps that he took that led to the destruction of emails at the Canada Border Services Agency.

There is an Auditor General's report on the arrive scam scandal that shows that there are missing records. There are also allegations filed by a CBSA IT employee that were obtained by *The Globe and Mail*, allegations of moving files in an odd way that led to the destruction of emails and other critical documents. This has, of course, as *The Globe and Mail* noted, particular importance given that we are seeking information about what happened with GC Strategies, that is, how it was awarded the contract. One of the deeply suspicious aspects of the arrive scam scandal is that nobody is actually prepared to take responsibility for the decision to choose GC Strategies. There is a flurry of very sharp and public accusations among senior public servants, which speaks to significant and enduring challenges at CBSA.

There are new audits that came out yesterday, new, damning audits from the Auditor General. One issue in particular that we have highlighted has been the government's cosy relationship with McKinsey, the government's constantly funnelling money and contracts to McKinsey, close friends with the government, without the proper processes in place and without demonstrating value for money.

It is another day, another series of corruption scandals and more damning reports from the Auditor General. Whether it is yesterday's Auditor General's report on McKinsey, as well as the green slush fund, or today's hearings that we are going to have with Minh Doan, it is scandal after scandal. After nine years, the Liberal gov-

ernment always wants to blame somebody else. The Liberals always want to say that it is somebody else's responsibility, without any clarity about who is actually going to take responsibility.

After nine years, the Prime Minister bears responsibility. He bears responsibility for a broken contracting system, for the fact that the Auditor General's reports repeatedly emphasize the lack of accountability for the way the government is serving up contracts to its close friends, and for the fact that there is a GC Strategies model. It is not just one company; it is a model that we see growing across government, where a small firm specializes in simply getting government contracts but then subcontracts all of the actual work and takes a big cut along the way.

This is systemic corruption in the procurement process that we have seen in the arrive scam and in multiple other instances. When will the corruption end? Will it be soon, or will it be after the election?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard this before in the House by this particular member, and he has a short memory. I recall procurement processes under the government that he used to work for. They were not perfect. I actually recall—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: We are a lot better.

Mr. Francis Drouin: The member says that they are a lot better, but his government signed a contract with IBM for Phoenix. I would argue that it was not a lot better. He continues to yell, and I get it. He is not happy when we remind him of the Conservatives' record.

Madam Speaker, I do want to thank him for his important question. It is not the first time the member has risen in the House to ask this question. Obviously, as the member is aware, because he was there when I was there, the former minister had no say in this particular contract. It was never brought up for the former minister to sign. The member knows that, but he continues to sling mud in this place, and I really get it. That is all he has.

The CBSA initiated an internal investigation as soon as there were allegations of inappropriate contracting practices. The matter was also referred to the RCMP for investigation. Contracts with three companies involved, including GC Strategies, also had been suspended through a stop work order from PSPC. We expect the procurement processes to be followed properly, and anyone who does not follow contracting rules will face appropriate consequences. This has been, and will always be, the practice of this government.

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The procurement ombudsman's and the Auditor General's reports have identified unacceptable gaps in management processes, roles and controls. Some recommendations have already been implemented, and the CBSA is taking further action to ensure that practices are aligned with policies and meet that they the expectations of Canadians.

Need I remind my hon. colleague of the context in which the app was developed? The CBSA needed to develop and launch this app, as quickly as possible, at the request of the Public Health Agency of Canada, after a global pandemic was declared in March 2020. The CBSA was working as quickly as possible to replace a paper process that was not meeting public health needs and that was also impacting the border with significant wait times that disrupted the essential flow of people and goods.

I wish to point out that the Auditor General did recognize, in her report, that the government improved the speed and quality of information collected at the border by using the ArriveCAN app, rather than the paper-based form. The ArriveCAN app was an essential tool at the time to collect mandatory health information, while facilitating travel and trade. The government is taking steps to ensure that all departments are better positioned to undertake projects of this nature in the future.

In wrapping up my remarks, I want to emphasize that this should not detract from the commendable efforts of frontline border officers and all CBSA personnel who diligently serve and protect Canadian citizens on a daily basis in support of our country's economy. The government remains committed to act on the findings of all audits, reviews and investigations. Obviously, as the minister said, if somebody broke the law, they will face the full consequences of the law.

• (2415)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary addressed the question of ministerial accountability for these scandals. I want to drill down on that.

We have had ministers come to committee. They have not always been forthcoming, and there are many ministers we still need to hear from. However, when we have had ministers at committee, they have always tried to present their role in government as that of a passive bystander, a painting on the wall or a potted plant that is there and that hears things, but it is not actually responsible for anything that happens.

I have asked these questions over a series of procurement ministers, various ministers responsible for CBSA. What did they do? Were they briefed about the problems? Were they briefed about the abuses? I understand that ministers do not take every little individual decision, but as these issues were being raised publicly in Parliament and committee, did they issue directives? Did they take action? The answer is always no. They received briefings. They expected other people to solve the problems.

When will they take responsibility?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, this is coming from a member who worked for Stephen Harper, who sold a bill of goods to Canadians in 2011. He told Canadians that the F-35 project would cost \$10 billion, and later, we found out from the Auditor

General that it would cost \$25 billion. I am not going to take lessons from this guy. He does not know anything about accountability.

If someone broke the law, they will face the full consequences of the law. It is not the member who has the power to condemn these people. The RCMP will get involved, and let the process be the process.

TAXATION

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, as we enter the first week of June, with the school year coming to an end, Canadians are very much looking forward to a well-deserved summer holiday break. Our common-sense Conservative motion last week would have given Canadians a break at the pumps so that many families could afford a modest road trip over the summer, but no, it was voted down by the NDP-Liberal government.

A 23% increase in the carbon tax by the government has driven Canadians to the food bank in record numbers across this country. A jet-set international holiday is certainly not in the budget for most Canadians, but the government would limit those same Canadians from the ability to take what I call a modest Canadiana road trip.

The health minister proclaimed that a reasonable Canadian family road trip would end the planet. As I mentioned last week, we all have fond memories of these road trips, such as "are we there yet?" and playing I spy with my little eye. This is what Canadians remember the most on a family road trip. It is the time spent together playing games, laughing, talking and sharing experiences; it is quality family togetherness time.

However, it is not just during holidays. Every day, Canadians face higher costs because of the carbon tax. Businesses in my province reach out to me daily, telling me that the carbon tax and the GST on the carbon tax are putting a huge burden on their ability to do business. Some, in fact, have had to pack it in. Restaurants, in particular, are really feeling the pressure. Some have closed. Others are scrambling to stay afloat because their operating costs are too high and people's disposable income is too low.

This is a recipe for failure for many restaurants. A local restaurant, which I take my family to quite often, is feeling the pinch, with 37% of its total energy bill being carbon tax. That has to be passed on to us customers. How are Canadians getting that money back?

I will give another example. A concrete and gravel operation in Saskatchewan is spending about \$700,000 in carbon tax per year. This represents an increase of about \$3.50 per unit. That is passed on directly to the customer.

Adjournment Proceedings

The cost goes up for the customer, and the government tells Canadians that the gas tax rebate will make it all even. However, the math simply does not add up. The government will tell us all day long that Canadians are doing fine, but Canadians know the truth. They are struggling in these tough financial times, and they see a government with no compassion for the hardship it is creating day in, day out.

• (2420)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have an almost five-year-old in my household who likes to play I spy with my little eye. When we play, however, he cannot see the South Pole. The savings my hon. colleague is calling for with his motion would have Canadians driving to the South Pole and coming back to the North Pole. We know we cannot get there, but it is just to demonstrate the distance families would have to travel during a summer. I drive a lot in summertime because I represent a big riding. I know my hon. colleague also represents a big riding, but I know for a fact he does not drive over 40,000 kilometres and that no family in Canada drives that in a summertime.

[Translation]

Through our carbon rebate, our government is helping families in these provinces cope with the cost of living while encouraging choices that will help Canada reduce its emissions. In so doing, we are ensuring that eight out of 10 households in these provinces receive more money through quarterly payments of the Canada carbon rebate than they pay through carbon pricing.

As members can see, we are making life more affordable for these families. Thanks to our pollution pricing system, a family of four living in provinces where the fuel tax applies can receive up to \$1,800 under the base carbon tax rebate this year. We are not just fighting climate change, we are also giving money back to Canadians.

I want to make it clear that the federal government retains none of the direct proceeds from the federal pollution pricing system.

• (2425)

[English]

Instead, the government returns the proceeds collected to Canadian households, small and medium-sized businesses, farmers and indigenous governments. As members know, budget 2024 proposes to urgently return over \$2.5 billion in fuel charge proceeds from 2019-20 to 2023-24 to an estimated 600,000 small and medium-sized businesses through a new refundable tax credit. This return will make a huge difference for these businesses, and a welcome difference, I should say.

I would also like to remind my hon. colleague that international experts agree that our pollution price mechanism is an effective way to fight climate change. It is important to realize that we are sending a clear message that pollution has a price. By putting a price on carbon pollution, we are encouraging a reduction across the economy while giving households and businesses the flexibility to decide when and how to make those changes. To achieve this, we need to maintain a price signal that, over the long term, is necessary for carbon pricing to work and bring emissions down. If we were to remove the price signal, we would end up eliminating a powerful incentive to encourage people and businesses to pollute less.

I have not even started talking about carbon adjustment border mechanisms, which Europe is already starting to implement. This will have an impact on jurisdictions that do not have a price on pollution.

On that side of the House, they have no plan to fight climate change. On this side of the House, we have a plan to fight climate change.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, the Auditor General of Canada released a damning report on the taxpayer-funded contracts that the Prime Minister awarded his well-connected friends at McKinsey. Over the last number of years, the Auditor General has discovered that McKinsey had been awarded \$209 million in contracts. Now, 90% of the contracts that the Liberal government awarded McKinsey were given without following the appropriate guidelines. In many cases, it was actually unclear what the purpose of the contract was or if the desired outcome was even achieved. It is a damning report from the AG today. What will this government not do to feed its friends at McKinsey?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I am old enough to remember that contracts are awarded by public servants, and I am old enough to remember that the same company made quite a living under the previous Conservative government.

Contracts are given to companies such as McKinsey, PwC, Deloitte and KPMG to advise the government, and I would not necessarily put a red hat or a blue hat. They have done very well under significant governments, but if some have broken the rules, then they should face the full consequence of the law, and that is our position.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:29 a.m.)

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of
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