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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 14, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE REVIEW COMMISSION ACT (DAVID AND JOYCE MILGAARD'S LAW)

The House resumed from June 6 consideration of Bill C-40, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation (miscarriage of justice reviews), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-40, which we are continuing to debate today, is a very important piece of legislation. This bill would establish an independent commission dedicated to reviewing miscarriage of justice applications.

Specifically, Bill C-40 would amend the Criminal Code by reforming the existing miscarriage of justice review process in two ways.

First, it specifies accessibility criteria. It specifies the investigative process, in particular the legal threshold to conduct investigations, powers of investigation and provisions of investigation reports. The bill also specifies the decision-making process, specifically the legal threshold to refer cases back to the courts for a new trial, hearing or appeal. In addition, on that decision-making process, it would change the relevant decision-making factors.

The second area Bill C-40 addresses is additions to the Criminal Code to establish the commission: mandate, composition, appointment process and qualifications specifically, as well as the powers, duties and functions.

Bill C-40 is named after David and Joyce Milgaard. David Milgaard was convicted of a crime he did not commit and spent 23 years in prison before being released in 1992 and finally exonerated in 1997. Joyce Milgaard, David's mother, spent decades advocating for her son's release and compensation for the injustices he faced. Mr. Milgaard's experience revealed the flaws that can exist in our justice system. Joyce and David Milgaard were forceful advocates

for the wrongfully convicted. They called for changes to Canada's wrongful conviction review process, including the establishment of an independent commission. We are all very proud to honour their work and their vision for a more just Canada.

I want to reflect on that last bit for a moment. Just imagine for a second being a parent who has one of their children convicted of a crime, or, first of all, just being accused and charged with a crime and the time they spend. I am reflecting on my own children, if I were in this position. I have a 20-year-old son, and I imagine if something occurred and he was put in a position like this. I just think to myself, from a parent's perspective, what would one do? A parent would go to all ends, especially if they knew their child was innocent, to protect them and to make sure they get the proper justice they deserve.

The inspiration of this bill and who the bill is named after is an example of that incredible deep passion that people bring, in particular, when trying to find justice for their children. We are very fortunate. I know there are many people who have been wrongfully convicted who did not have advocates like their parents fighting for their release. We need to use the example of what happened here, this particular dynamic with the child and their parents fighting for them, and in particular their mother, as a standard for the way we should be treating matters like this.

This is a very important bill. This bill would address the injustices that unfortunately can occur within a justice system that is intended to hold accountable those who have committed crimes.

I know, as a matter of fact, after listening to this debate in the House during the times when the bill has been up for debate, that everybody in the House supports this bill. This is a bill I have heard Conservatives speak in favour of. I have heard the NDP, the Bloc and certainly Liberals speak in favour of it. This is a bill that has unanimous consent. This is a bill that anybody who has children, who knows somebody wrongfully convicted or who fears that one day somebody else could be wrongfully convicted should support.

Government Orders

• (1005)

Knowing that we have unanimous consent for a bill like this, that we all believe that this is so important, that we all know that people who have been wrongfully convicted continue to sit in prison today, knowing all of this, and knowing that we all support it and that we all believe that justice is just as important for the wrongfully convicted as it is for the rightfully convicted, one would think that a bill like this could pass through the House very quickly, that it could get to the Senate and the Senate could do its thing with this and adopt this bill just as quickly. This should be a completely non-partisan issue. There should be no need for anybody in the House to try to slow down the process and the speed at which this bill moves through the House, especially when we hear and we know that everybody supports it.

Unfortunately, that is not what happened. Despite the fact that Conservatives said they support this, and they get up in their speeches and talk about how much they support this, they have intentionally slowed the passage of this bill through the House. The member for Langley—Aldergrove put forward 20 amendments to the bill, a bill that he supports, a bill that Conservatives will vote in favour of. Does one think these were meaningful amendments that he brought forward? They were not.

The first amendment that he brought forward was that we delete the short title. He then went on to bring forward amendments that would consecutively delete each clause of the bill, one by one. What he is doing is putting forward these amendments and, by the way, as soon as one puts forward an amendment to a bill, it resets the speaking order and everybody can speak again. He will effectively, unless the Conservatives change course and decide to apply the votes or do something at the last minute, make 20 votes out of this simple bill that everybody supports and just absolutely slow down the process.

I understand that there are issues we disagree on. I understand that the main tool of an opposition party, His Majesty's loyal opposition party, is to affect the amount of time it takes to do things in the House. I respect that. I understand that. It makes sense that, from time to time, Conservatives want to use those tools for issues that they passionately disagree with. I get it. On contentious issues, it makes sense.

However, on a bill like this, which everybody supports, which literally will allow justice to be served for those who have been wrongfully convicted, the Conservative Party played games with the bill and continues to play games with the bill now. We had to bring in a motion of closure to force the Conservatives to vote on this bill and to stop delaying it. That is where we are now. We are on the final few hours of this, because we had to force the Conservatives into this position. It is absolutely shameful that Conservatives would act in this manner with respect to a bill like this. This bill deserves the unanimous support that the House has already said it gives it. This bill deserves to be passed as quickly as possible. It is extremely unfortunate that Conservatives continue to play their games with such an important piece of legislation.

• (1010)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, indeed, at second reading, we thought it was a pretty good

bill. There were some drafting errors that we were pretty convinced we were going to be able to convince other committee members to amend. They disagreed with that, and what happened to the bill is that it came back worse than it went in, unfortunately, because, originally, an applicant for a judicial review of what they thought was a wrongful conviction would have to have exhausted all the appeal procedures that were available to them. The Liberals unfortunately took that out. We are saying that it is creating a competing criminal justice system, which is just not necessary. David Milgaard's problem was never that the appeal process was not there, but that the system was too cumbersome. Fix that and we would agree with it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, does that warrant deleting the short title? Does that warrant putting a separate amendment on the floor just to delete the short title? It is the short title of the bill. It is not even the full title of the bill. It is literally the short version of what we refer to the bill as.

If the member is genuine and genuinely says there is a concern about the bill, then he should explain to Canadians why he wants to delete the short title of the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, we live in a society where the justice system is based on rehabilitation. We also have a justice system and society that believes, as Voltaire did, that “It is better to risk saving a guilty person than to condemn an innocent one”.

However, we are dealing with heartbreaking cases of miscarriages of justice. One example is the case we have been talking about, that of Mr. Milgaard. There are also cases in Quebec. Take, for example, the Jolivet case, which was also highly publicized.

If this is one of our values, why did the government wait so long to react and to create something that will make it possible to correct miscarriages of justice within a much more reasonable time frame?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, this bill attempts to correct that. I agree with the member in that Liberals believe, and I believe the Bloc and the NDP also believe, in the rehabilitative process. It is called Corrections Canada. It is not “lock them up and throw away the key” Canada. The Conservatives do not believe in corrections. They do not believe in rehabilitation. They believe in locking people up and throwing away the key.

With all due respect, I know this very well, coming from a riding that has six prisons in the area. Kingston is known as the prison capital of Canada. I have heard stories from when the Conservatives were in power, about the double bunking that was going on and the absolute catastrophe of what was happening in the prisons. The Conservatives are not interested in rehabilitation. They just want to lock people up and throw away the key.

Government Orders

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with the speaker across that there is a fundamental difference in terms of how we treat people in this world and how we truly see them as people.

With that in mind, the NDP is concerned about the fact that robust financial supports need to be provided to the commission to ensure it gets running quickly, considering a lot of these cases are so urgent. Could the member speak to the need to ensure funding for the commission?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, if we do not give the commission the tools that it needs to do its work, then we are basically setting it up for failure. What those supports are exactly and how much it needs, in terms of resources, is to be determined.

I would agree with the member that the supports and resources, financial resources in particular, to do the work the commission needs to do, to do the investigative work, and to ensure that people have access to the appeals process, need to be properly funded.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country.

Before I begin my speech today, I would like to mention that we will be rising soon, in this place, for the summer. I want to wish everyone a safe summer for travelling. I also want to thank all responders who might be out there, helping to save lives and keeping our communities safe.

I am rising today to speak to Bill C-40, the miscarriage of justice review commission act, David and Joyce Milgaard's law. This is an act to amend the Criminal Code, to make consequential amendments to other acts and to repeal a regulation, miscarriage of justice reviews, which will establish a commission dedicated to reviewing miscarriage of justice applications.

The current criminal conviction process is handled by the Criminal Conviction Review Group within the Department of Justice Canada, which then advises the justice minister on cases with grounds for review.

The justice minister was mandated, in 2019 and 2021, to work toward the establishment of an independent criminal case review commission to improve access to justice for people who have potentially been wrongfully convicted to have their applications reviewed. Of course, myself and the Conservatives are very sympathetic to people who have been wrongfully convicted, like David Milgaard, whom this bill has been named after. No one wants innocent people to be convicted and to be in jail. We also do not want guilty people on our streets.

It is important to have a wrongful conviction review procedure, which Canada has had for a very long time. The problem with the current system is that there is political intervention. It is cumbersome and bureaucratic. We were very optimistic that Bill C-40 could be the answer to addressing some of these issues. As is on the record, at second reading, Conservatives were in favour of this legislation, and it was sent to committee to look at potential amendments. There was one part in the legislation where we genuinely thought there was a drafting error, which can happen on occasion, and it was looked into at committee. I want to thank my Conserva-

tive colleagues who sit on the justice committee for their detailed work and their expertise on this.

The threshold for getting a review is very low. Right now, it is worded as if it has “likely occurred”, referring to a miscarriage of justice. This bill would change that to “may have occurred”. Conservatives on the committee thought that they could convince the other members of the committee to keep the higher threshold, which did not happen, so now, it has come back to the House at third reading.

One of the good parts of the bill is that it would take the political realm out of the process, which Conservatives like, to make it purely administrative. If that was all the legislation did, then we could very easily support it here in its present form. However, we believe that the lower threshold would open the door to all kinds of cases. We know that the court system is already very clogged and backlogged, but we were unable to convince members at committee to make the changes. The legislation that has come back to the House from committee is more problematic than what had been sent to committee. We think there are genuinely some clerical administrative errors with respect to the writing of the legislation. The original Bill C-40 application for review would use all available appeal avenues, such as a provincial court of appeal.

• (1015)

I do want to bring up a couple of quotes that I think are relevant to what we are talking about here today. David Lametti's speech, at second reading, on the miscarriage of justice review commission act, was on June 12, 2023, so it was almost exactly a year ago.

He stated, “It is important to note that the miscarriage of justice review process is not an alternative to the judicial system, nor is it another level of appeal. Rather, it provides a post-appeal mechanism to review and investigate new information or evidence that was not previously considered by the courts.” We agree with this.

As well, in the press release entitled, “Minister of Justice introduces legislation (David and Joyce Milgaard’s Law) to establish an independent Miscarriage of Justice Review Commission”, it stated, “The proposed new commission would not be an alternative to the justice system. Applicants would first need to exhaust their rights of appeal before requesting a miscarriage of justice review by the commission.”

We also agree with this. However, this is not what the legislation does. In addition, Minister Virani, at committee, in October of 2023—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Government Orders

• (1020)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows that she cannot mention current members' names.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: The minister, in October 2023, stated, “I think there are built-in factors to avoid them getting all the way through the floodgates. You still need to meet the threshold criteria. You need to have exhausted your appeals, at least to a court of appeal or, in some instances, all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.”

However, since that date, in October 2023, the government has changed its approach. It has removed that requirement altogether. What it originally stated last year, with this legislation, was in fact not what we have before us today. In particular, the amendments made at committee are very far apart from the original comments that were made in the original tabling of the legislation.

As I mentioned, Conservatives did support this at second reading to go to committee. The Liberals made amendments at committee. They are really going around the appeal system, and this makes it very difficult for us to support the legislation.

One other thing I want to mention is that unlike the current process where the Minister of Justice decides whether a miscarriage of justice has likely occurred, this new commission would decide whether a miscarriage of justice may have occurred and whether it is in the interest of justice to direct a new trial or to refer the case to the Court of Appeal.

Wording does matter. That is why it is very important that in legislation, especially when we are talking about judicial legislation, every word is really thought about very carefully. Some of the issues that I have brought forth are really problematic. There really is quite a gap from the statements by the minister, the statements that were originally from the government. It is really quite a departure from what the original intention was.

We support the intention of the legislation. We support the original direction of this and the concept of it; however, once we get into the details, there are some problematic parts of this, which I have mentioned. I look forward to any questions.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard from marginalized groups, particularly indigenous women, who are disproportionately impacted by our justice system and who are disproportionately present in our jails. They have been begging for there to be changes to the legislation, yet the Conservatives filibustered for months, trying to stop the actual changes that indigenous women have been asking for.

How does the member justify that?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I find it really interesting that particularly with my private member's bill, end the revolving door act, which would have gotten mental health assessments, and addiction treatment and recovery, in federal penitentiaries, the member, most of her NDP colleagues and the Liberals voted against it. It is really interesting when we hear questions like that. There was great legislation brought forth by Conservatives to help people get out of the revolving door we have in Canada and to help them get mental health assessments and addiction treatment, but the

Liberals voted against that. It is really unfortunate that the legislation did not pass.

• (1025)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, in her very thoughtful speech, my colleague from British Columbia mentioned some things that happened in committee, and the Conservatives supported the general framework of the legislation, but not some of the flip-flopping that happened on some very key issues. I wonder what my colleague thinks about how important it is for Canadians to have confidence in our criminal justice system and how the flip-flopping by the minister is going to undermine that, particularly with getting rid of the necessity to fully exhaust all available avenues of appeal.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for all the work he has done on this piece of legislation and for the work he does at committee.

It is very similar to what we see the Liberals quite often do. They will have some legislation where the title sounds good, and they will have sort of a purpose and will make statements on that. However, once we actually see the end result of the legislation, it is very different from what the concept is or what the title is. That is exactly what we are seeing in this particular legislation. The concept of it makes sense. There are many parts of this, as I mentioned, that we can support, but once we get into the details, there are parts of the bill that are very different from what was originally stated by the minister and the minister's office. It is quite a departure from what the legislation appeared to have been originally focused on.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague brought up a private member's bill that she put forward and that would have greatly assisted those suffering from addictions and mental health issues, which was voted down by the government and other parties. I wonder if the member could expand a bit on some of those policies that, if brought forward, would have actually helped Canadians.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, there are a couple of parts. First of all, we know that the bail reform the government has done has just led to a revolving door in the bail system. We have citizens being traumatized in our communities by the revolving door of people breaking the law. On the other side, there are people being convicted whom we want to help, and of course within our jurisdiction, it would be in the federal penitentiaries. If we do not help them while they are in those penitentiaries, the recidivism and the revolving doors just continue. My legislation, the end the revolving door act, would have been one way to genuinely help people. We know that more than 70% of people convicted and sentenced to federal penitentiaries have addictions issues.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-40. This bill seeks to modernize the Canadian justice system by creating the miscarriage of justice review commission to address shortcomings in the processing of miscarriage of justice applications.

We are all aware of this issue; it has been rather well documented. The minister at the time, David Lametti, commissioned a study in 2021 to examine the issue because the processing times for the applications of people claiming to be the victim of a miscarriage of justice were completely unreasonable. In some cases, people who managed to complete the process had already spent many years behind bars, part of their lives, before being found innocent and released from prison.

The issue clearly needed to be addressed. The Liberal minister at the time, Mr. Lametti, commissioned a study and launched consultations, after which all the experts agreed that the minister needed to be stripped of one of his powers that might be characterized as absolute. Traditionally, under our laws, the minister alone had the fairly significant power to decide whether a person who claimed to be the victim of a miscarriage of justice could have a re-trial. That put a lot of power in the hands of one person, the person holding the position of Minister of Justice.

Although the minister worked with a team, it was still necessary to create a quasi-judicial commission made up of commissioners independent of the government apparatus in order to restore public trust. These commissioners will be able to take over from the minister to expedite the process of analyzing applications from people who believe they have been the victim of a miscarriage of justice. This should also serve to increase public trust in the fact that the people analyzing these applications are neutral.

There is one thing we find hard to understand. The Liberals have been in power since 2015. The Minister of Justice, Mr. Lametti, commissioned this study back in the day, and it had fairly unanimous support, yet he waited until 2023 to introduce his bill. Why is it that today, in June 2024, we are using an expedited legislative process to get this bill adopted? Two years ago, certain people could have benefited from a new miscarriage of justice review commission. We find it hard to comprehend why, all of a sudden, the Liberals are rushing to pass this bill even though it has been in the works since 2021 and has unanimous support.

When the bill was studied in committee, our justice critic, the member for Rivière-du-Nord, said that this commission was necessary and that he supported the bill. Naturally, the Bloc Québécois is going to vote in favour of Bill C-40. We hope, once the bill is passed, that the government will promptly implement all necessary measures to allow the new commissioners to get on with their work.

Now, there is another question we are asking ourselves. Minister Lametti commissioned this study in 2021, but he also made a big decision in 2021, one that is hard to understand. I read another article today in the investigative section of *La Presse*. Former justice minister David Lametti is still being asked why, for example, he ordered a second trial in the Jacques Delisle case. Jacques Delisle is a former judge who was found guilty of murdering his wife. It is hard to understand why the minister did that. It is not just me, the member for Salaberry—Suroît, who is saying this.

● (1030)

As of March, Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions still did not understand why the minister had ordered a new trial.

Government Orders

With the powers the justice minister held at the time, Mr. Lametti set in motion an entire legal process to retry Jacques Delisle, which obviously led to further investigations. The minister could only order a new trial if new and relevant information had been brought to his attention, if it could be demonstrated that evidence had not been presented at trial or if new evidence had come to light. To this day, Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions is asking former justice minister and lawyer David Lametti to explain himself. Obviously, certain decisions were made as a result of the minister's decision. The Delisle trial has concluded, but not to the satisfaction of Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions, which is understandable.

Bill C-40, which we are debating, may rectify what has been a willingness to concentrate power in the hands of a single individual who holds the position of minister of justice. It is hard not to agree with that. We have every reason to question this. To the Bloc Québécois, it is important that the public and the citizens the minister represents have confidence in our system and that the victims also have confidence in the process and trust beyond a doubt that their case will be studied in a neutral, fair and equitable manner, based on the facts and any new evidence they might present.

During study of the bill in committee, there were debates, including one that surprised us in the Bloc Québécois. The member for Rivière-du-Nord, who is our justice critic and a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, introduced a single amendment. To us, that amendment made so much sense that we assumed its adoption was a mere formality.

The purpose of the amendment that the Bloc Québécois introduced in committee was to require judges, who play a quasi-judicial role in this miscarriage of justice review commission, to be bilingual or at least comfortable in both official languages. I would remind the House that Canada's two official languages are English and French. These two languages are governed by Canada's Official Languages Act. To ensure that the cases of francophones and anglophones are assessed fairly, the commissioners assigned to the case must be able to listen, ask questions and analyze evidence in both official languages.

To our great surprise, the amendment was defeated by a vote of six to five. A Liberal member who serves on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights opposed it. Did his party use him as a scapegoat? I have no idea. He is an Ontario MP. We were very disappointed by that because the amendment made a lot of sense. Canada has an Official Languages Act, and it seemed very obvious to us that this was the way to go.

Government Orders

That will not prevent us from voting in favour of Bill C-40, but once again, we are dealing with a total lack of understanding about the importance of French and the importance of guaranteeing Quebecers and Canadians access in both official languages to the people who will be assessing their case.

I hope that Bill C-40 will be passed quickly and that the commissioners can get to work soon.

• (1035)

[English]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for Salaberry—Suroit for a very thoughtful speech and for highlighting the importance of an independent review commission.

I want to thank the member for raising the case of Jacques Delisle as an example of how things can go wrong when the system is too politicized. I also want to thank her for highlighting the importance that the public must have confidence in our criminal justice system.

In the member's opinion, is that confidence undermined by the threshold for obtaining a review, getting in front of a judge again, being too low? Would it be undermined by eliminating the requirement that an applicant must have exhausted all the appeal avenues that are available under the current legislation, which would be done under the new bill?

• (1040)

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I am not a lawyer. I have no experience with the legal side of things.

I understand that what the member is referring to is complex issue. It is true that some people use every possible legal procedure and all the courts they can to delay the judicial process in their case. Yes, these are questions I have asked myself, but it is difficult to comment on the issue at this stage, as we consider the bill. What I do know is that we need to be able to give a guarantee to our citizens, the people we represent. If someone really wants to claim they have been unfairly convicted, they must be given the chance to do so within a reasonable timeframe, while also complying with all the criteria required for them to be heard by the new commission.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, one issue often found when there are miscarriages of justice has to do with the process of plea bargaining with folks who cannot afford proper legal help. Something we know about the justice system is that it is riddled with systemic violence, and it is targeted more prominently against specific groups. I would say these are indigenous groups, where there is an overrepresentation of folks in the justice system, as well as Black communities.

Would my colleague agree with me that, if we are going to rectify issues in the justice system, we need to deal with systemic racism.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, my colleague asked a good question.

I understand her, and I agree with what she said about people who are less well off and more vulnerable. They may not necessarily have the access or the money to actively engage in the judicial process, which requires hiring legal advisers and good lawyers. That is a real problem.

As I believe everyone knows, since I often mention it in the House, I am a social worker. I am very sensitive to the fact that some people are more vulnerable than others. At first glance, it seems that the justice system is easier to access when people can afford a good, expensive and competent lawyer with subject matter expertise. That concerns me a lot. Quebec has set up a legal aid service that provides the most vulnerable and financially disadvantaged people with access to legal aid and good lawyers to guide and support them through the legal process.

I believe that every province would benefit from examining this solution more closely, considering ways to adapt it more effectively and exploring whether all vulnerable people could be better supported during the legal process.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her speech, which was very clear, very interesting and very well structured. She has made a significant contribution to the study of this bill.

I am wondering about something in her speech that caught my attention. She mentioned that the member for Rivière-du-Nord wanted to bring forward an amendment to ensure that the judges on the judicial review commission are bilingual, meaning that they are proficient in both French and English. The federalist parties here in the House are always saying that French is important to them, but when it comes time to appoint bilingual judges, the answer is no. I am trying to understand why that is.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I think it is obvious.

We are governed by the Official Languages Act in Canada. However, when it comes to enforcing the act or being consistent when independent commissions or committees are set up, there is resistance. We do not understand this resistance, because it stands to reason that, here in Canada, in Quebec and in the other provinces, services must be provided in both official languages, French and English.

Government Orders

• (1045)

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak, on behalf of the residents of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra, in support of Bill C-40, an act to amend the Criminal Code, and to advocate for it being enacted as quickly as possible. I think about the people who were wrongly convicted and who could not afford high-priced lawyers, more often than not women and other marginalized groups, who need reform to the justice system. This miscarriage of justice bill represents a critical step in our ongoing efforts to reform the system and to address the systemic inequities that have plagued it.

For the better part of a decade, New Democrats have called for the establishment of an independent commission to investigate wrongful convictions. In 2021, we supported expediting Bill C-5 in return for the Liberals' promise to create this commission, which Bill C-40 would finally deliver on. Justice delayed is justice denied, so we must act swiftly to ensure that those who are wrongfully convicted have a pathway to justice, free from delays and limitations in the current system.

I want to take a moment to recognize and thank my colleagues from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke and Winnipeg Centre for their wisdom and compassion in making the Canadian justice system fairer. They work tirelessly to improve the system and, with regard to Bill C-40 at committee stage, the NDP supported amendments that would ensure applicants could apply to the commission without having to receive a verdict from a court of appeal or the Supreme Court of Canada. This would remove a significant barrier for those who are wrongfully convicted but lacking the resources to continue lengthy legal battles.

New Democrats also proposed amendments to empower the commission to make recommendations addressing systemic issues that lead to the miscarriage of justice. This proactive approach could help prevent future injustices. Additionally, we ensured that Correctional Service Canada and the Parole Board of Canada would be informed of the importance of not obstructing applicants from accessing programs and services due to their review applications.

Indigenous women, in particular, have disproportionately suffered miscarriages of justice. They are often charged, prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned due to systemic failures within the criminal justice system and the broader societal failure to protect them from racism, sexism and violence. This is a critical issue that strikes at the core of justice inequity in our society. I ask why people living in poverty have higher rates of wrongful convictions in Canada? It certainly highlights the disparities in our legal system and challenges our collective commitment to fairness and justice.

To understand this issue, we must first acknowledge that socio-economic status currently influences outcomes in the criminal justice process. From the moment suspects are identified, their financial status begins to shape their journey through the legal system. Unfortunately, for those without adequate funds, this journey often leads to a higher likelihood of wrongful conviction due to several intersecting factors: lack of adequate legal representation, systemic biases and the pressures of plea bargaining.

One of the most significant factors contributing to wrongful conviction is inadequate legal representation. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to counsel, but in practice, the quality of legal representation a defendant receives can vary drastically based on their ability to pay. Consequently, poorer defendants frequently find themselves under-represented in court, lacking thorough investigation, expert witnesses and comprehensive legal strategies.

Systemic biases play a crucial role in the higher rates of wrongful convictions among people with limited financial means. The justice system, which should be impartial, is not. It is not immune to the biases and prejudices that permeate society. Socio-economic status can influence the perceptions of judges, jurors and law enforcement officers. Poorer defendants often face these implicit biases, as their lack of resources and lower social standing can be subconsciously associated with criminal behaviour. We have heard it in this very House.

This bias can lead to harsher judgments, weaker defences and, ultimately, wrongful convictions. It is proven in convictions that the intersection of race and poverty affect outcomes. Indigenous peoples and racial minorities, who are disproportionately represented among poorer Canadians, face compounded biases that increase their vulnerability to wrongful convictions. Studies have shown that indigenous and Black Canadians are more likely to be wrongfully convicted than their white counterparts, highlighting a deeply rooted problem of racial and economic inequality in our justice system. I note that the Conservatives do not understand this.

• (1050)

Another critical aspect contributing to wrongful convictions is the pressure to accept plea bargains. Plea bargaining, intended to expedite the judicial process and reduce caseloads, often places an undue burden on poor defendants. Faced with the prospect of prolonged pretrial detention, high bail amounts they cannot afford and the uncertainty of a trial, many low-income defendants feel compelled to plead guilty to crimes they did not commit in exchange for a reduced sentence. This coercive aspect of plea bargaining leads to a troubling reality where innocence is sacrificed for expediency.

Government Orders

Let us add that probation requires admittance of guilt, so the wrongfully convicted are forced to make unjust choices. Furthermore, wrongful convictions have devastating consequences beyond the individual. They erode trust in the legal system, perpetuate cycles of poverty and fail to address the real perpetrators of crime. When an innocent person is convicted, the actual offender remains free, posing a continued threat to society. This failure to deliver true justice undermines public confidence and perpetuates the belief that the system is rigged against the marginalized.

The Conservatives are fine with this reality. They say to just appeal. With all of the barriers I just outlined above, it is obvious that appeal is neither equitable nor just. Expanding access to post-conviction review and innocence projects can provide a safety net for those who have been wrongfully convicted. Organizations such as Innocence Canada work tirelessly to investigate claims of innocence and exonerate the wrongfully accused. By supporting their efforts and facilitating the review of questionable convictions, we can rectify past injustices and prevent future ones. It should not have to be that way.

In conclusion, the higher rates of wrongful convictions among lower-income Canadians highlight profound inequities in Canada's legal system. From inadequate legal representation and systemic biases to the pressure of plea bargaining and resource imbalances, the odds are stacked against those with limited financial means. With respect to Bill C-40, miscarriage of justice, it is incumbent on all of us to have a justice system that functions well and does not put innocent people behind bars.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague made an eloquent speech. I agree that, if someone is innocent, they should have the opportunity to be able to defend themselves and have a free and unbiased trial.

My former colleague, a 44-year-old mother of two, was shot and killed by someone who was let out on bail and was wanted. She had the right to live, but that opportunity was not given to her. I ask my hon. colleague, how can we protect the victims if we continue with the catch-and-release system in this society?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely devastating that this happened to a constituent of hers, but again it shows Conservatives do not understand what we are talking about in Bill C-40.

We are talking about, in Bill C-40, the fact that marginalized people in this country, more often indigenous people, indigenous women, and people of colour are being wrongfully convicted in this country, and then they do not have access to appeal because they do not have the funds for it. That is what this bill is about. I understand we need to also fix other injustices and justice in our society, but the Conservatives need to understand that this is about levelling the playing field for those who are under-represented by legal support in the criminal justice system.

• (1055)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am curious what the member thinks of the fact that this bill, which is unanimously supported by the House of Commons, has 20 amendments from the Conservatives, who appear to be supporting the bill anyway. The first of those amendments is to delete

the short title, and the short title includes “David and Joyce Milgaard's Law”. It is such a controversial issue to the Conservatives that they feel as though they need to bring forward an amendment to delete it. I am wondering what the member has to say about that amendment.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I mentioned in my speech that the Liberal government had the opportunity to advance these types of criminal justice amendments much earlier, back in 2021, and it chose to wait an additional three years to do it, so I think what the Liberals need to focus on is passing laws that help people in Canada and worrying less about what things are called.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague on her speech. I would like to ask her a question that I had the chance to ask my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît a bit earlier.

As we know, the member for Rivière-du-Nord would like to ensure that the judges sitting on the review commission are bilingual. According to Canada's official bilingualism policy, both languages should have equal status. Can my colleague tell me how it is that every federalist party voted against that?

When bilingualism is not enforced, we generally end up with English unilingualism. I have never seen unilingual French. Would she be okay with having a unilingual francophone review her case?

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, as the critic for disability inclusion, I often think about people who communicate through sign language. We know there are many people in this country who have different methods of communication. I understand that French and English are our official languages in Canada, but I would like to see a justice system that can accommodate any kind of communication that people need to represent themselves in the system.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, my colleague made an excellent speech. I have a similar question to the Bloc member's, but from indigenous peoples' perspective.

As my colleague indicated, indigenous peoples are overrepresented in the justice system, and we know that language was used to try to eliminate indigenous peoples in Canada. With language revitalization and indigenous people still preferring to speak their languages, is it not just as important to ensure that indigenous languages can be used in this system? This would be so that people who are unable to access the system, both economically and language-wise, would be able to access the same system with indigenous languages.

Statements by Members

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Nunavut, my NDP colleague, for the incredible work she does in the House to advocate for her community. I agree with the point she is making about being able to be represented in one's own language. It is absolutely a necessity.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2 to 20.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would ask for a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 17, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every day since October 7, I have heard from Yukoners by letter, by phone, on the street and in person, horrified and deeply concerned about the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza. My constituents are calling for a ceasefire, for humanitarian aid to flow, for humanitarian law to be respected, for the targeting of hospitals and medical facilities to stop, for the bombing of civilians to stop and for the adversaries to come to the table once and for all. The hostages must be released, and we cannot let an entire population starve.

While all eyes are on Gaza, we know that terrible atrocities are also occurring around the world at this time, in Sudan, in Haiti, and in too many places to name. In the Yukon, we have kept hard conversations civil and respectful; the rest of Canada should take note. The tensions we are living must not escalate into the anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attacks we are seeing.

As parliamentarians, we would do well to bring people together and closer and not use fear and discrimination to drive people apart. The urgency for peace has never been greater. Let us all do our part.

* * *

• (1100)

POETRY CONTEST WINNER

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, today, I stand to congratulate a young man in my riding of

Yorkton—Melville. Jake Soltys, a grade 11 student from Sturgis Composite School, wrote a Remembrance Day poem that pays homage to our fallen heroes, entitled *A Tribute to the Brave*. Jake's poem won at the local, zone, district and provincial levels. He then went on to receive first place on the national level, winning a prize and a trip to Ottawa for this year's national Remembrance Day service.

A portion of his poem reads:

In Flanders Fields the poppies grow
To remind us of the debts we owe.
On Remembrance Day we stand as one,
To remember those whose battles are done.

I am so proud to represent Canadians who remember the sacrifices for our freedoms that were so valiantly defended and fought for. I am extremely proud of our young community members like Jake who honour that legacy.

Congratulations to Jake. I am sure his trip to Ottawa on Remembrance Day 2024 will be memorable.

Lest we forget.

* * *

LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud, as the sponsor of the Lebanese Heritage Month Act, to recognize today the first anniversary of the adoption at all stages of the bill into law with unanimous consent. What a delight it was to hoist the Lebanese flag on Parliament Hill last November for the very first time. The pride in the adoption of the law is felt in communities across the country.

This is a challenging time for Lebanon and for the Lebanese people, who overwhelmingly are united in their desire for peace, stability and the opportunity to further their own prosperity. Canada is marking 70 years of diplomatic relations with Lebanon and I will continue to support those Lebanese Canadians using their voices to urge for the preservation of their homeland's sovereignty.

I am looking forward to our second flag raising on the Hill in November and to the celebrations that will be organized throughout the country. Until then, I wish everyone a safe and happy summer.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, as part of acknowledging the 100-year anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force, amazing people in my riding are working hard to celebrate by building a beautiful, full-size display case for the De Havilland Vampire Mark III.

Statements by Members

The aircraft is stored at the base away from public sight to protect it from the weather. We want it outside, safe in a pavilion with the outdoor museum of other military planes. Year-round, people tour the museum and learn more about how our service members served in the past. During the winter holidays, the planes get decked out in lights. The folks have aimed for \$1 million to get the display case built. We have gotten 50% of the way there and I am so proud. I hope the government looks at ways to contribute to help to keep this history.

I want to thank everyone leading the fundraising project, especially the folks at the Comox Air Force Museum, as well as 19 Wing Honorary Colonel Quartermain, for matching donations from the public up to \$50,000, which was successfully done. I thank Dave Mellin, who always keeps me updated.

* * *

CARROUSEL OF THE NATIONS

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I rise in the House to celebrate the 49th annual Carrousel of the Nations festival in my community of Windsor-Essex. Over the next two weekends, our community will showcase our incredible diversity and pride at being a welcoming community. Thirty villages, from Greek to German, Croatian, Caribbean, Italian, Lebanese, Polish, Filipino and more, will open the doors to share their heritage, dancing, beautiful cultural dress and, of course, delicious food.

In a world divided by difference, the Carrousel of the Nations celebrates our differences as our strength, what unites us and what makes our country so vibrant and so beautiful. I am proud that our federal government has been a strong partner for Carrousel of the Nations, providing over half a million dollars to the festival over the last eight years.

I want to thank Fred Francis and the amazing team at the multi-cultural council, and all the volunteers and vendors, for the incredible dedication to a remarkable festival.

Save me a honey bowl and some slivovica, and I will see everyone at Carrousel.

* * *

● (1105)

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week we honoured Canadians who had made spectacular contributions to Canada's cultural life, with the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards. Among the honourees was Calgary's own Jenny Belzberg, winner of the Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts. Created in 1992 by the late governor general, along with his wife, Gerda Hnatyshyn, the award is given yearly to a Canadian whose work and accomplishments enrich Canada's cultural life.

Ms. Belzberg has had a lifetime of impact on the arts in Alberta. She helped found the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards Foundation in 2003. The foundation has overseen more than \$1.5 million awarded to 100 Alberta artists.

The performing arts thrive due to the major dedication of volunteers, and it is thanks to people like Jenny Belzberg that arts projects can succeed in our communities. We are all richer for that. Join me in bidding a warm congratulations to Jenny Belzberg on receiving—

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

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss the significant investments Liberals are making in housing across Canada, particularly in northern regions like Labrador. Recently I announced over \$10 million for 33 new homes in the community of Sheshatshiu. I continue to work with its chief and band council to address its ever-pressing housing needs.

Over the last decade, we have invested more than \$100 million in housing in the Nunatsiavut region in the northern part of my ride, resulting in new homes, including triplexes, in communities like Nain and Hopedale for those people who were housing insecure.

We have also added 20 new units for women fleeing violence and for low-income families in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. In Labrador West we have upgraded more than 20 new units under Newfoundland and Labrador housing, and constructed additional units.

While the Conservatives slashed housing budgets and did not respond to the needs of families, and continue to vote down the Liberals' investments, we continue to work hard—

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the great honour of travelling to Normandy to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day. It was a very moving experience. There I met a dozen veterans who helped liberate Europe and give us the freedom we enjoy today.

[English]

I was especially proud to see so many Hamilton connections in Normandy for D-Day. Major-General Richard Rohmer, honorary lieutenant general of the Canadian Armed Forces, was born in Hamilton. He flew a Mustang in the Second World War, and his reconnaissance led the allies to find and injure Nazi general Erwin Rommel.

A team of engineering students from McMaster University built a special torch for the occasion. They brought a bit of the Centennial Flame from Ottawa across the ocean and used it to brighten various ceremonies throughout the week.

In a new remembrance room at the Juno Beach Centre, I saw a beautiful tribute to Hamilton's own Nathan Cirillo, who was killed in 2014 in Ottawa while on sentry duty at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

We will remember them.

* * *

[Translation]

LAC-MÉGANTIC TRAGEDY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, late at night on July 6, 2013, at 1:14 a.m., a runaway train derailed in the middle of the small town of Lac-Mégantic. Forty-seven people were killed and 2,000 others were forced from their homes. We will never forget this tragedy.

I was mayor of a nearby municipality when the tragedy occurred. I remember the pain expressed by the victims' families. I remember the outpouring of solidarity that followed this tragic accident. Today, I feel compelled to remind the House of all of this because the community of Lac-Mégantic is still waiting for the solution put forward by the governments, specifically the construction of a rail bypass.

Canadians might not know this, but 11 years after the tragedy and just over six years after the Premier of Quebec and the Prime Minister of Canada jointly announced that the rail bypass would be complete in 2022, the work has not even started.

I am pleading with the Liberal government, Transport Canada, the Canadian Transportation Agency, Canadian Pacific Kansas City and all decision-makers to remember July 6, 2013, and the 47 people who lost their lives. The people of Lac-Mégantic, Nantes and Frontenac want answers and they want action. The time for talk is past.

* * *

[English]

BOXING CHAMPION

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Surrey is home to high-level athletes from across the country. Last month, 26-year-old Buneet Bisla was crowned as the Canadian light-heavyweight champion in a first-round knockout, making it his first professional title.

Turning pro in 2019, Bisla has amassed a record of 10 wins and is now the undisputed number-one ranked fighter in Canada for the

Statements by Members

light-heavyweight category. Bisla was also the first Sikh Punjabi fighter to fight at Madison Square Garden in 2023 against a top-ranked American in his class.

I have seen this kid work tirelessly at his dad's gym, Bisla Martial Arts in Surrey, to win fight after fight. Buneet Bisla serves as a role model to young Canadians across the country who hope to pursue their dreams of fighting professionally one day.

Congratulations to Buneet Bisla.

* * *

● (1110)

TAXATION

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government is at it again. Its job-killing economic vandalism knows no bounds. The government is sabotaging our economy by taxing farmers during a food crisis.

Sylvain Charlebois, Canada's "Food Professor", said, "to suggest that this change only affects a minimal number of Canadians I think is misleading. I think it actually affects a lot of businesses, including in the agri-food sector, and I would start with farmers."

He is right. The Liberals are jacking up taxes on farm families by 30% to pay for the Liberals' out-of-control spending. By targeting farmers' retirement plans, the Prime Minister is jeopardizing the transfer of the operation to the next generation, and for what? Is it to pretend he is Robin Hood and that farmers are the villains? In reality, he is the Sheriff of Nottingham, roaming around the countryside to pillage what is left of people's bank accounts. He is undermining Canadian values and diminishing the rewards that a life of hard work deserves.

It is time to bring home the Canada we remember, the Canada we recognize and the Canada we need.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, over two years ago, the Liberal MP for Whitby committed candour. He accidentally told Canadians the truth, that the radical Liberal net-zero plan would intentionally cause Canadians pain. Now Canadians know what the Liberals have been hiding all along.

For weeks now, the Liberals have been refusing to provide their secret report on the cost of the carbon tax to Canadian families. This is a desperate and malicious attempt to hide their own data that shows that Canadians are worse off under the disastrous, inflationary carbon tax. The carbon tax will cost nearly \$2,000 per household in lost GDP, a \$30.5-billion hit to our economy.

Statements by Members

For years now, the radical environment minister has told Canadians that the carbon tax was making them richer, while the exact opposite was true, and they knew it all along. When will the radical environment minister resign and the government release its secret carbon tax report?

* * *

MAYOR OF MISSISSAUGA

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on Monday, Mississauga voters went to the polls across the city to elect a mayor, and I want to congratulate my dear friend, Carolyn Parrish, the new mayor-elect of Mississauga, on her victory.

Mississauga is a city of a vibrant mosaic of people from different religions, ethnicities, languages and experiences, who had their say on the priorities that matter most to them, like housing, the cost of living, transportation and safety in our community. They exercised their vote for an experienced leader with a proven track record serving Mississauga at multiple levels of government, who has dedicated her career to the city that I call home.

I want to congratulate and thank all candidates who put their name forward, including sitting councillors Alvin Tedjo, Dipika Damerla and Stephen Dasko, who ran respectable campaigns, articulated their vision for Mississauga and took part in the democratic process.

Congratulations to Carolyn.

* * *

SUNFEST

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, in 1985, the city of London welcomed the Caxaj family, political refugees from Guatemala. It was not easy for them; they had to learn a new language while facing racism and discrimination. However, they persevered, and for the past 40 years have created an incredible space in London through the universal language of music.

This year is the 30th anniversary of Sunfest, a free music festival that brings together music from across Canada and the world to London. We will also be celebrating Alfredo Caxaj's appointment to the Order of Canada for his contributions to Canadian music and culture.

From July 4 to 7, Londoners will come together in Victoria Park to celebrate our diversity and our designation as Canada's first UNESCO City of Music. Almost 50 artists will be performing everything from Afro-Latin punk to hip-hop to Spanish folk music.

I thank Alfredo, Paty, Alfie and Mercedes for everything they have given to our city.

I hope all Canadians take a moment to reflect on the rich diversity that makes Canada better.

[Translation]

STÉPHANE RACICOT

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about a local man whose courage and determination are inspiring. His name is Stéphane Racicot.

For several years now, Stéphane has been involved in the Abitibi music scene as a DJ and event organizer. In August 2022, following a simple fall in his hotel room, he became a quadriplegic. His rehabilitation took nine months. Unsurprisingly, music was part of his journey to recovery.

On June 8, Stéphane was back on stage for the first time since his accident as a DJ at the fifth annual Val-d'Or Pride festivities. Thanks to new technology, Stéphane can control everything with his eyes. Stéphane has been heavily involved with Fierté Val-d'Or as a coordinator, organizer and board member.

In 2023, his involvement was recognized at the Rayon C Gala, where he received the volunteer of the year award, notably for his involvement with Fierté Val-d'Or, FRIMAT and the Prospecteur shows. I am very happy to hear Stéphane is back, and I wish him nothing but the best for the future.

* * *

● (1115)

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ministry of truth has assured Canadians that they are better off because of the carbon tax. It costs them nothing, and in fact, they are getting richer because of it.

However, a few weeks ago, we learned from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that the government has a secret report on the carbon tax. After seeing some of the government's data, we understand why it is trying to hide it. The government's own data shows that the carbon tax costs every Canadian household nearly \$2,000, and that Canadians are losing about \$30 billion in economic activity because of the carbon tax.

Canadians are exhausted by the Liberal government's double-peak. They know what we know; that the carbon tax costs Canadians billions of dollars. Why does the Prime Minister continue to stand by his radical environment minister instead of standing up for Canadians?

* * *

[Translation]

FATHER'S DAY

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we prepare to celebrate Father's Day this Sunday, I would like to take this opportunity to salute all the fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers in my riding of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine and across the country.

[English]

Father's Day is an opportunity for all of us to express our appreciation to the incredible dads and father figures in our lives, those who offer guidance, support and love in immeasurable ways.

As I get older, I reflect on all the countless ways my father always put my brothers and me first, from volunteering for my Girl Guide troop, to showing me how to put a worm on a hook, to making the best campfires and letting me hang out at the fire station.

While I was running for the nomination as candidate 10 years ago, my dad was undergoing treatment for throat cancer, yet he still ran around collecting support for me. I do not get to spend as much time with my dad as I wish I could, but he should know that he will always be my hero.

To the dads in my life, my father, Dave; my father-in-law, Gary; my husband, Chris; my son, Patrick; and any day now, my son, Jonathan, I wish a happy Father's Day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, an employee responsible for causing \$30,000 in economic vandalism to his or her company would be fired on the spot.

In this case, it is even worse. The radical Minister of Environment knew that the carbon tax would cause \$30.5 billion in economic damage to Canada. That is nearly \$2,000 per family. He covered up the report. He ridiculed the Parliamentary Budget Officer and tried to muzzle him. Basically, he was trying to hide the truth from Canadians.

When will he be fired?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this side of the House will take no lessons from people who are incapable of doing even basic math.

This is the party that told us a few weeks ago—although it never mentions it now—that if we were to remove all federal taxes on gas over the summer, people in Alberta, for example, could save \$1,000.

I tried using math, and that failed. I tried using culture, and that failed too. Now I am going to try astronomy. In order to save \$1,000, if all federal gas taxes were removed this summer, a person would have to travel 10% of the distance between the earth and the moon—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, this minister may not be lost in space, but he is definitely way out in left field.

Oral Questions

There is a reason he kept trying to cover up the secret report. It is because the report reveals the true cost of the carbon tax for Quebeckers.

According to that report, Quebeckers will pay \$5 billion a year in economic damage because of his carbon tax. The worst part is that the Liberal Bloc wants to go even further and radically increase the tax on gas and diesel.

The minister hid the truth. Quebeckers are paying the price. When will he resign?

• (1120)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is so ridiculous.

First, the data sent to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, at his request, confirms that where the federal price on pollution applies, eight out of 10 families receive more than they pay.

Second, it seems like the only thing the Conservatives can calculate is the cost of implementing measures. Of course there are costs, but the Conservatives never talk about the benefits, which are estimated at between \$15 billion and \$25 billion a year right now. I do not mean only in 2030, but each and every year, and that is not counting the \$23 billion less in climate change impacts that Canada will see as a result of our measures.

If anyone in the House ought to resign, it is those—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, the Liberals decided to wipe out of the middle class.

Again this week, the Prime Minister refused to include in the bill on the job-killing tax a provision guaranteeing that 99.27% of Canadians would be spared from the Liberal Bloc tax hikes. We asked that carpenters, plumbers, small businesses, seniors all be excluded. They said no to all of that.

We now have the proof. When will the Liberal Bloc stop picking the pockets of the middle class to pay for the centralizing wasteful spending of the massive federal Liberal government?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is quite the question. I am not sure who first wrote it, but the member added quite the word salad.

What Quebeckers understand is that tax fairness is what counts. What we are doing is sparing everyone who earns a paycheque. Imagine: Everyone who earns a paycheque is not affected. Those who earn over \$250,000 in one year will be required to pay a little bit more.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the truth is out about its punishing carbon tax. A partial government report leaked by the Liberals to the marketing arm of the Liberal Party of Canada, the CBC, revealed that, when factoring for inflation, the Liberal carbon tax will leave a \$30-billion hole in our economic activity. The carbon tax will cost every Canadian household almost \$2,000. The Liberals' activist environment minister tried to silence the Parliamentary Budget Officer from exposing this report. This is unbelievable.

The environment minister is not worth the cost. When will he resign?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite is fighting action against climate change, at the very moment that houses in her own community are threatened by wild-fires. We are trying to make sure that we save people's homes. We are protecting Canadian communities. She is busy letting the planet burn.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is absolutely ridiculous. The Liberals have been hiding the truth from Canadians. At the finance committee, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said, "we've been told explicitly not to disclose it and reference it." The Liberals have been trying to muzzle the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the government is still holding much of this report from the public. The entire report must be released to expose the economic vandalism of the carbon tax. The environment minister is not worth the cost. Will he resign?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member sure represents a beautiful part of Canada. The last time I was there, one could almost choke on the forest fire smoke. People in Kelowna and the Okanagan expect action on climate change. They also know that eight out of 10 of them pay less in the price on pollution than they get back in rebates. That is the case across the country where the tax applies.

We are acting on the environment. We are acting on affordability. The people of the Okanagan support that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

* * *

*[Translation]***DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about foreign interference.

One leader says it is nothing serious. Another leader says it is very serious. Both want us to take their word for it, so we are no further ahead.

On Monday, the Minister of Public Safety said he would not breach secrecy because RCMP Deputy Commissioner Mark Flynn warned him he would face criminal prosecution.

Does the government think that all elected officials who read the documents should face the same charges?

Does the government deem that we are further ahead today with elected representatives playing with legal limits?

● (1125)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me begin by thanking the Bloc Québécois. Yesterday, we passed a very important bill on foreign interference at third reading. This is one more measure in a long series of solutions and initiatives that our government has put in place to counter foreign interference.

We know that every country in the world is facing this challenge. Canada stands out for the series of initiatives it has undertaken and the work it has done to strengthen its institutions in order to counter foreign interference.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, there are two opposing narratives: One is the optimists' version and advocates moving on because there is nothing to see here, while the other is the version of the alarmists, who want to call 911. We do not know whether either of the two camps, or any of them at all, is telling the truth. We do not know whether one of them or both of them caved to the lure of the spotlight. That has done nothing but breed mistrust.

Now, thanks to them, when the Hogue commission tables its report, there is a chance that one of the two camps, the optimists or the alarmists, will cast doubt over the ruling.

Is it too much to ask that elected members be responsible and law-abiding and allow the judge to do her job?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we certainly want to allow Justice Hogue to do her job. That is why the House and the House leaders negotiated a very clear and very broad mandate. Obviously we are eagerly awaiting for Justice Hogue to show us her work.

I do not know if this happened, but I note that the Bloc Québécois leader offered to consult the confidential documents. The NDP leader did the same. The Green Party leader did too, but—

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

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*[English]***HOUSING**

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, in Edmonton, it is becoming increasingly hard to find an affordable place to live. Rents are up 20% since last year and there simply is not enough affordable housing. Conservatives think building luxury condos will fix the problem, which is another example of them wanting to give money to their rich friends.

Oral Questions

Canadian families need homes and the Liberals are not acting with the urgency necessary to build below-market, co-op and supportive housing. When will the government get serious about affordable housing so that people in Edmonton can find a place to live?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish the member had attended this week's meeting at the House of Commons committee responsible for housing. An Alberman, Tim Richter, from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, made it clear that this housing vision put forward by the government is the most ambitious in 40 years. It is substantive. It is justified. There are proof points in everything we have put forward, including the co-op housing that she mentions. In fact, just a few days ago, we saw the largest investment we have seen for co-op housing in the past 30 years. She talks about supportive housing. We have supplemented that in the most recent budget. In her community, she has seen support, with 71,000 people lifted—

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

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FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, as Canadians choke on smoke and flee from wildfires, Canada's biggest banks are handing out even more money to oil and gas companies. Under the Liberals, Canadian banks have become some of the biggest financiers of fossil fuels in the world. The Conservatives are happy to let these banks put profits over our planet. Canadians are struggling with the cost of living and the climate emergency while the banks fuel both of these crises to get even richer. Why are the Liberals letting big banks off the hook?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would agree with my hon. colleague. We think that bank executives should be doing more when it comes to fighting climate change, and putting money where their mouth is, which is why the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions is putting in place measures to ensure that the officials at banks and other financial institutions disclose their climate risks. We have also committed to and put in place measures to ensure that we have a taxonomy principle in Canada, so we ensure that green investments that are made are actually green.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals promised to be the most open and transparent government in history and said that data paid for by Canadians belongs to Canadians. Well, that promise is just a sick joke after nine years of secrecy and cover-ups.

Yesterday, common-sense Conservatives forced the NDP-Liberal government to release some of the data that the government has been suppressing. It proves that the carbon tax costs every Canadian family nearly \$2,000.

The environment minister has misled Canadians. When will he resign?

• (1130)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the people who should resign are those who, hundreds of times, have voted against providing Canadians with clean air and clean water and protecting the environment. This is not tens of times but hundreds of times. If anyone should resign in the House, it is those people. Eight out of 10 Canadians are better off because of carbon pricing where the federal program applies. We are helping Canadians, and we are fighting climate change. The Conservatives are doing none of that.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government only does the right thing when it gets caught. The Liberals only disclosed the information because Conservatives forced them to. The NDP-Liberal government put a gag order on the Parliamentary Budget Officer because it did not want Canadians to know the economic cost of the carbon tax. Per capita GDP is falling and the carbon tax makes life more expensive, proving that this Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

The environment minister has misled Canadians by hiding the truth. When will he resign?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have answered that question many times from the sloppy Conservatives. We know where they are going. They are against climate change. They have resigned from acting on behalf of Canadians. They have resigned from taking the best side for Canadians. They have resigned from future generations. Let us think about that. The Conservatives will not stand up to fight for our kids and our grandkids. Climate change is the issue of our time, and they have resigned from this issue, so it is laughable to hear them speak about resigning.

Eight out of 10 Canadians will be better off. We are going to fight for Canadians every step of the way. Canadians know that, and they see the games that the Conservatives are playing this morning.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, let us test that hypothesis and call an election right now.

Oral Questions

After months of fighting the NDP-Liberal government just to get the facts, we finally got some of the documents. The government's own analysis on the carbon tax shows that Canadians will lose nearly \$30 billion, costing families \$1,800 each year. Clearly, Canadians are not better off with the job-killing carbon tax. Everyone is paying more and getting less. The Liberal government is not worth the cost.

The minister needs to take responsibility for hiding this information from Canadians. When will the Prime Minister be demanding his resignation?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the member opposite actually cares about the next generation, as we are looking toward Father's Day, let us think about that. We are talking about taking responsibility today for our actions, to make sure that we are passing over a healthy planet to our next generations. Eight out of 10 Canadians get more back from the climate rebate than they pay in any kind of carbon pricing. More important is that we are making sure we are protecting the planet for our children.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, if that were true, why is the NDP-Liberal government working so hard to cover up the documents that prove it wrong? It was only common-sense Conservatives who forced the NDP-Liberal government to reveal the truth. The Liberals tried to discredit our own budget watchdog, but it was revealed that they were hiding the true cost of their carbon tax with secret documents and gag orders. The Liberals can run, but they cannot hide from the true cost of their inflationary carbon tax. Canadians will lose nearly \$30 billion a year. That is \$1,800 for each Canadian family.

The minister needs to face the consequences for the cover-up. When will the Prime Minister demand the minister's resignation?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the current environment minister is the first in history to put forward a credible plan to meet our net zero 2050 objectives and our Paris commitments.

What should the member do? What would he have preferred remain secret? The premier of his province, who scoured the universe, looked on the Internet, got out his calculator and did all of the analysis that Scott Moe does, said the price on pollution is the cheapest way to go about fighting change and putting money in people's—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Regina—Wascana has the floor.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the cover-ups. The environment minister has been saying all along that the carbon tax would not cost us any money or that it would even make money, but now we know that the economy will lose \$30.5 billion per year, or \$1,800 per family, because of the carbon tax.

When will the environment minister resign?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of

Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is clear that this question has been answered numerous times, but it is no surprise that Conservatives do not want to talk about their embarrassing vote against tax fairness. Conservatives believe that, if someone is flipping burgers, they should pay more tax than if they are flipping stocks or houses. With our plan, we are standing up for tax fairness, and let us just be clear that if someone does not profit by over \$250,000 from an investment or the sale of an asset in a single year, they will not pay a cent more. If someone makes their hard-earned money on a paycheque, they will not pay a cent more. The Conservatives think hard-working Canadians pay tax on—

• (1135)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Regina—Wascana has the floor.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the Parliamentary Budget Officer asked the minister's department to provide its internal economic analysis of the carbon tax, the response included the following sentence: "I request you to ensure that this information is used for your office's internal purposes only and is not published or further distributed."

This is the gag order that the extremist environment minister placed on the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and this is why the environment minister must resign. When will he do it?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is clear the Conservatives do not care about the future of the planet. They do not care about tax fairness. They do not care about investments that Canadians need and rely on. They believe that, if someone is flipping burgers, they should pay more tax than if they are flipping homes or flipping stocks to make a living. Under our plan for tax fairness, if someone does not profit over by \$250,000 from an investment or the sale of a property, they will not pay a cent more. If someone makes their hard-earned income on a paycheque, they will not pay a cent more. That is 99.87% of the population who will not pay a cent more. We think that the wealthiest should—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Repentigny has the floor.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday in committee, we heard from the heads of Canada's five big banks, specifically BMO, Scotiabank, CIBC, the Royal Bank of Canada and TD Bank. They all rank in the top third of the world's oil financiers.

Oral Questions

It is hard to get an accurate picture of their investments because the other three parties in the House refuse to make them disclose those investments. They all voted against a Bloc Québécois amendment to Bill C-69 requiring the mandatory disclosure of banks' investments in fossil fuels.

Why does the government not want to force banks to be honest with the public about their oil agenda?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. She should know that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions is already implementing measures to ensure that all financial institutions in Canada, not just the big banks, disclose their investments in fossil fuels and their exposure to climate change risks.

That is already being done, thanks to our government.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know whether it is optional or not, but anyway.

These three parties are deliberately turning a blind eye to fossil fuel funding. Just last year, Canada's five big banks invested \$142 billion in the industry. The CEO of Scotiabank spoke for all five when he said, "We should move away from emission reductions at all costs".

Bankers speak the same language and share the same goal as the oil companies; they want to profit as much as possible from pollution.

We want to force the banks to disclose their dirty oil assets. The other three parties want them to invest in secrecy. Why?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I must correct my colleague. This is not optional. It is an obligation that Canada's Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions is going to impose on all financial institutions.

My colleague is speaking only about the big banks. I am not talking only about the big banks, I am talking about all financial institutions.

The two of us agree on one thing, however. We agree that the big banks should be doing more to fight climate change, and we are going to work to make sure that happens.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, \$30 billion is the true cost to Canadian families of the Liberal-NDP carbon tax that the environment minister tried so desperately to cover up. That is \$1,800 in cost to every household. It is no wonder the environment minister did his best to gag the Parliamentary Budget Officer and cover up the true cost of the carbon tax.

Instead of sending a memo to the PBO demanding his silence, why does the environment minister not instead send a memo to the PMO with his resignation?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is clear that the Conservatives do not care about the future of our planet. They will not stand up for our children and our grandchildren.

On this side of the House, we are advancing tax fairness for Canadians with our new capital gains regime. That means people earning their hard-earned incomes on their paycheques will not pay a penny more, unless they earn over \$250,000 a year from the sale of an asset.

Conservatives believe that those who are flipping burgers should pay more tax than those who are flipping stocks or homes.

• (1140)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals' response to questions on more taxes is talking points that add more taxes.

The Minister of Environment interfered with the work of the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer. He repeatedly stood in the House and misled Canadians, saying that they would be better off financially with the carbon tax, all the while covering up the fact that the Liberal-NDP carbon tax will cost Canadians more than \$30 billion a year.

Instead of working to increase the economic vandalism of the carbon tax, why does the environment minister not just do Canadians a favour and resign?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what Canadians are seeing this morning, those who are here and at home, is that Conservatives just do not care. That is the bottom line of all the questions we have heard this morning.

Canadians understand that what we did in the last budget was about generational fairness. That is the core issue that Canadians want us to address. That is why we made changes to the capital gain taxes, because we want to invest in the next generation. We want to invest in workers. We want to invest in seniors. We want to invest in our future.

However, here we go again, and the Conservatives voted against that fairness.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government misled Canadians by claiming they would be better off with a carbon tax scam.

Oral Questions

It turns out that the environment minister's own carbon tax data shows that it will cost families nearly \$2,000 more after the higher costs on groceries, home heating and gas. That is \$30 billion in economic vandalism per year.

Now, Conservatives have forced the release of all the carbon tax cover-up documents. Will the radical environment minister finally climb down from his tower and resign?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me repeat the numbers because the numbers bear repeating. It is \$1,800 a year for a family of four in Alberta, \$1,200 a year in Manitoba, \$1,120 in Ontario, \$1,504 in Saskatchewan, \$760 a year in New Brunswick, \$824 a year in Nova Scotia, \$880 a year in P.E.I., and it is \$1,192 for a family of four in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That is cold, hard cash, and the Conservatives would know that if they bothered to check their own bank accounts.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, how many times have the Liberals falsely stated, even today, that eight out of 10 Canadians get more back than they pay? I guess they figure that if they say something often enough, people will start to believe it.

However, Canadians know because their pocketbooks tell them so. Conservatives have forced the end of the carbon tax cover-up, and now the public budget watchdog's report confirms that Canadian families pay nearly \$2,000 more in carbon tax per year. They also know that it will cost our economy \$30 billion per year in economic activity lost.

When will the environment minister resign—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are a lot of great farmers in Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

It is shameful that the Conservative leader, who has never seen the top of a combine or a hay baler, hides behind farmers and workers to justify his opposition to our plan on tax fairness. We are increasing the capital gains sheltering for farmers—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to interrupt the hon. government House leader. We will have order, or there will be questions taken away. Order.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, it is shameful. The leader of the Conservative Party has never been seen on a hay baler.

He is opposing our program to give tax fairness to farmers. We are increasing the capital gains sheltering for farmers by boosting the lifetime exception for qualified farming properties to \$1.25 million per owner.

The member over there should be standing up and celebrating tax fairness for farmers.

HOUSING

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the federal government's very own Public Sector Pension Investment Board partnered up with the rich real estate CEOs to invest in 71, 75 and 79 Thorncliffe Park Drive.

Now, they are hiking rents and evicting people, and the Liberals are letting them get away with it. When the NDP tried to summon the very same CEOs to explain themselves, the Liberals and the Conservatives teamed up to block it.

Why are the Liberals partnering with rich CEOs to jack up rents and to evict people from their homes?

• (1145)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member knows about this very well because she put in an Order Paper question not too long ago about this matter. She keeps on raising the name of the company Starlight, which did not have any relations with CMHC, so we can take up that matter at committee.

More substantively on the issue of housing, the current government is the first in Canadian history to put forward measures to protect renters and, in fact, to attach conditionality to infrastructure funding. Provinces want access to infrastructure funding. They have to respond by putting in place protections for renters, whether they include supportive housing or co-op housing; all the things the NDP rightly championed were behind that vision for the country.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, Jordan's principle is supposed to uphold equity and health services for indigenous children and youth, yet multiple organizations in Winnipeg Centre are going without funding. Bigewin is owed almost \$600,000, and Spirit Horse is owed almost \$400,000. Staff are going without pay. The minister would not work without pay, so why should indigenous organizations?

When will the Liberals uphold Jordan's principle and ensure that indigenous organizations are paid what they are owed?

Oral Questions

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for generations, first nations families and people have suffered tremendously through discriminatory and systemically racist child welfare practices. One of the first things we did as a government was to implement Jordan's principle in 2016 to ensure that first nations children can access the care they need, when they need it. Last year, we also reached a milestone compensation agreement that was co-developed with first nations partners. We are actively working with partners on strategies and best practices to speed up approvals and reduce administrative burdens faced by service providers.

I will work with the member to make sure that this issue is dealt with.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for far too long, successive governments have failed to fund and protect affordable housing across Canada, but our government is changing that. Last week, we made a historic \$1.5-billion investment in the new co-operative housing development program; it is the largest investment in co-op housing this country has seen in 30 years.

Can the parliamentary secretary for housing, infrastructure and communities please share with Canadians how the co-op housing development program is going to create a new generation of co-operative housing across Canada?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a former mayor, our colleague understands very well the place of co-op housing in communities, large and small. Two hundred and fifty thousand Canadians live in co-ops. It is an affordable option. These are non-profits, of course, which come in various types. They may be large apartments or townhouse complexes. They vary, but they fundamentally provide a sense of community to the people who live there.

The Leader of the Opposition insulted these 250,000 Canadians by calling it Soviet-style housing. He styles himself as some sort of student of history. He should read his history. He should come up with a housing plan that actually makes sense. The Conservatives have no vision because they do not care.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, last night, the Auditor General revealed that the Prime Minister's hand-picked Liberal cronies running the billion-dollar green slush fund gave companies they owned not the \$76 million that was revealed last week but, actually, \$319 million of taxpayer money. That is on top of the Auditor General's findings that \$59 million was spent on ineligible projects by those Liberal robbers. That is almost \$400 million of taxpayers' money that the Liberals took to enrich themselves.

When will the Liberals get the money back?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, here are the sleepy Conservatives again. We have said it time and time again. We investigated what happened at SDTC. We made sure that the chair and the CEO resigned. We launched an investigation. We suspended the fund to the organization. We supported the Auditor General's report, and now we have provided a new governance mechanism to make sure that we can support the small and medium-sized businesses in this country that are fighting climate change.

When will the Conservatives get on board and support our actions?

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal minister was sleeping at the switch. He sat idly by for five years and did absolutely nothing as Liberals stole \$400 million of taxpayer money. It took a Conservative motion in the House to be passed to send documents on these corrupt Liberals to the RCMP, despite Liberals voting against it. The Liberal hacks broke two laws, and their lobbyist, the minister of the environment, joined the minister of industry in the getaway car as the Liberals funnelled \$400 million to themselves.

When will the Liberals demand the return of the \$400 million stolen by the Prime Minister's friends?

● (1150)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy. I know it is Friday, so let us wake up the Conservatives. They have been sleeping. I launched the investigation when they were sleeping. Here we go. We started the investigation. We made sure that people would come back and have a new governance model. We made sure we would support our small and medium-sized businesses. We know they are against climate change, but now we have learned they are against small and medium-sized businesses. Can one imagine that they are against small and medium-sized businesses? We are going to fight for Canadians every step of the way, restore governance and fight climate change.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General confirmed that a staggering 400 million taxpayers' dollars improperly went out the door at the Liberals' green slush fund. Board members illegally funnelled \$319 million into their own companies. Meanwhile, the current minister and former minister turned a blind eye to corruption on a level that makes the sponsorship scandal look small.

Oral Questions

Now that the corruption has been exposed, what specific steps is the minister taking to get taxpayers a refund?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, here we go again. Another one just woke up and asked a question about something we have dealt with. Canadians want governance. That is what we did. They want to make sure we get to the bottom of things, which is what we did. They want to make sure we restore funding to small and medium-sized businesses so we can fight climate change together. I do not mind these sleepy Conservatives asking me questions, because I will always fight for Canadians, I will always fight for small businesses and will fight against climate change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, we will not take any lessons from this government, and especially not from this minister, who has been asleep at the switch for five years while a very serious situation was happening with the green fund at Sustainable Development Technology Canada, or SDTC.

We thought things could not get worse, but we were wrong. Yesterday, the Auditor General tabled a report that shows that these people put nearly \$400 million in the pockets of Liberal cronies. That is the reality. What is more, \$319 million went to the directors of the green fund.

When will the minister finally wake up? The whistle-blower himself recognized that the minister did not act in time.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, now my friend and colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent is waking up. The French-speaking Conservatives are finally waking up. I know it is Friday, but people seem to finally be waking up. As I said before, we launched the investigation to restore governance within this important organization.

The chair of the board and the CEO both resigned. We suspended the funding. We proposed a new governance model. On this side of the House, we will always fight for small and medium-sized businesses. We will fight climate change, and we will continue to support—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

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DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, all regions deserve support in dealing with forest fires. In the supplementary estimates, Ottawa is increasing the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada's budget to rebuild the village of Lytton, British Columbia, which was razed by fires in 2021.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Lytton. We want them to rebuild their lives. That said, there were fires in Quebec last summer, too. Fires burned 4.3 million hectares of forest in Quebec. That is an area bigger than Switzerland. Will the other economic

development agencies also be entitled to similar assistance for last year's forest fires?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question. As she probably saw in the last budget, this year we have again invested extra money to be better prepared for forest fires. By the end of the year, we will have trained more than 1,000 firefighters across the country.

We are working with our partners in the provinces, territories and indigenous communities, as well as the international community, to ensure that we are as prepared as possible for forest fires. Of course, being prepared for forest fires also means tackling climate change. Sadly, this is something the Conservatives have not yet understood.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, my riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou was hit particularly hard. More than one million hectares went up in smoke. We all remember the courage of local residents, who fought to save their municipalities and their homes. That is why we cannot help but empathize with the residents of Lytton. We can imagine what they went through.

All we are asking for is fairness. Will any funding be allocated to the other economic development agencies whose regions were also affected by the 2023 forest fires?

• (1155)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, not only did we invest additional funding in the most recent budget to increase our capacity to deal with forest fires, but last year we also implemented the first climate change adaptation plan in the history of the country.

We worked with all the provincial governments. We are working with municipalities. We are working with indigenous communities to implement measures to help our communities be better prepared to deal with climate change.

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[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, in a cabinet of serial lawbreakers, the minister from Edmonton is showing that after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the Prime Minister is not worth the corruption. This is the minister who has been cashing cheques from a lobbying firm that is lobbying his own government. Global News revealed text messages that show a “Randy” is involved in a \$500,000 fraud case at the minister's company.

I have a really simple question that we have not been able to get an answer to and maybe the government House leader can answer it today. Why will the Liberals not tell us what Randy's last name is?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the member well knows and as has been repeated many times, the minister took an hour to answer the questions from, among others, my hon. colleague opposite. The minister lives under the most stringent conflict of interest and ethics guidelines in the world and he has completely answered all of the questions that have been posed.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, just like the hour we spent not getting answers from the Liberals, we did not get any answers from the minister when he was at committee, just like when Conservatives ordered the minister to produce his phone records and he did not do that. Now the committee has sent for those same records again. Liberals blocked the summons of the other Randy to come to committee. Conservatives have now ordered the minister from Edmonton's two business partners to appear at committee in this case of a \$500,000 fraud and another Randy.

The question is very simple, and we will see if the government House Leader can answer it. Is the other Randy in Sunnyvale having a cheeseburger picnic or is he in cabinet with the Prime Minister?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in an age of climate change, in an age of ensuring tax fairness, in an age of a number of major issues facing the country that we continue to work on, it is amazing to me that every time the member gets up, he asks a question that has been asked dozens of times in this chamber and answered dozens of times in this chamber and in committee. The minister has responded to all of them.

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TAXATION

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the incompetent Liberals, nine out of 10 middle-class Canadians are paying more in tax, despite promises that only the ultrarich will pay. A lot of Canadians are surprised to hear that they are now part of the ultrarich, like Karen, a retailer who bought her own commercial strata unit to save for her retirement, but now the Liberals are imposing another capital gains tax on her retirement nest egg.

How is this fair to retailers and entrepreneurs like Karen who just want to work hard, make a good living and save for their retirement?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us review the Conservatives' record. In 2015, when our government proposed to raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% and cut them for everyone else, the Conservatives voted against it. When our government implemented carbon pricing that put more money in eight out of 10 families' pockets, ensuring everyone but the wealthiest were better off, the Conservatives voted against it. When our government

Oral Questions

asked those who profit over \$250,000 per year to contribute just a little more, the Conservative leader and his party voted against it.

Let us be honest with Canadians. Fairness is just not a Conservative value.

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HOUSING

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, supportive housing projects across Canada are critical to people's well-being. They provide people a safe place to live and access many services. Having a place to call home is also critical for the path to recovery for people struggling with substance use. Investing in supportive housing is, therefore, key to addressing the overdose crisis. Under a Conservative government, we would see cuts to supportive housing.

Can the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions tell the House about investments our government is making in supportive housing?

● (1200)

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, building and supporting low-barrier access to housing is at the core of our response to the overdose crisis. For example, we are supporting the Northreach Society project in Alberta that provides treatment and mental health services to tenants or, I could add, The Neighbourhood Group Community Services project in Toronto, so it can train tenants in overdose prevention and response services.

We are investing in projects like this across the country to support the most vulnerable among us, and we are steadfast in that commitment to support housing solutions that respond to the needs—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

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TAXATION

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the Prime Minister, Canada is going through the worst decline in living standards in 40 years.

I recently spoke to a local mortgage broker. He told me that, since the budget was announced, a dozen doctors have contacted him about closing their practices and moving to the United States. This is terrible for Canadians as millions are without a family doctor.

Does the reckless NDP-Liberal government recognize that its excessive taxation is driving health care professionals out of our country?

Oral Questions

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one thing that is absolutely clear is that the Conservatives do not care. They do not care about Canadians. They want to make sure they keep giving tax breaks to the ultra-wealthy in this country. At the same time, they will cut programs for Canadians that Canadians rely on.

What is clear today is that the Conservatives will cut the Canadian dental care program that is serving 200,000 seniors across this country with oral health care. They will cut the pharmacare program so women cannot get—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

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HEALTH

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, Health Canada's priority review program exists to allow the expedited review of new, potentially life-saving, therapies. Qualifying drug submissions are able to seek approval for therapeutic use in advance of other, less urgent therapies. Health Canada's posted timeframe for this expedited process is a target of 180 calendar days.

How often is Health Canada meeting this target? How often has this target been missed in each of the years since the priority review program was established?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for asking a really important question. I know he has asked similar questions before.

As I said earlier in the House, our focus is to make sure that we approve medications through Health Canada, but do so in a manner that maintains the safety of medications for Canadians. We cannot afford to ever take shortcuts that could jeopardize the lives of Canadians.

Of course, through the pandemic, we learned a lot of lessons. We are looking at ways to improve the approval process, and we will continue to work on that.

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HOUSING

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will ask the housing minister something this time.

Carleton Place, in my riding, has been Canada's fastest-growing municipality for the past four years. When the town was given zero dollars from the housing accelerator fund, I wondered why. It turns out there is a pattern here. Of the \$1.5 billion awarded to Ontario under the fund, 97% went to cities and towns in which Liberals hold seats.

There are some non-Liberal seats in those cities and towns, but even when this is taken into account, there is a clear pattern. Liberal-held areas received several times more funding per capita than areas held by MPs from other parties.

Why is this so?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there were 179 agreements signed by the federal government to incent zoning changes at the municipal level that will lead to more missing middle housing. That includes row houses, mid-rise apartments and fourplexes, which the Conservatives are scared of, for some reason. They are against that entire vision, which also includes triplexes and duplexes.

This is the vision that this government has put forward to see more homes built, in particular for young people, so they can have a future. That includes in communities large and small. In fact, just recently, I had meetings with mayors from southwestern Ontario in rural communities who are excited about the \$400-million top-up to the housing accelerator fund, which the member and the Conservative party oppose.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, nature is core to Canada's national identity. From our oceans, to the St. Elias Mountains, to the St. Lawrence River, Canadians take pride in the beauty of our nature, which is also the foundation of our shared well-being and economy.

I am proud that Canada is remaining a competitive world leader as the global community transitions to a nature-positive, net-zero economy. Our government launched the largest nature conservation campaign in Canadian history and funded the establishment of three new national parks in this year's budget.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change provide the House with an update on our nature agenda?

● (1205)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday, we took a major step toward launching Canada's 2030 nature strategy by introducing Bill C-73, the nature accountability act, in the House. Canada is the second country in the world to do so.

The bill would hold our government and future governments accountable in making progress on our ambitious nature protection goals. The bill and the strategy provide a coordinated approach to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, help protect nature for future generations and ensure we reach our goal of protecting at least 30% of our lands, waters and ice by 2030.

HOUSING

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, rents in Nanaimo have been increasing at record rates and are up more than 8% from just last year. The Liberals are failing to deliver the affordable homes families need. Meanwhile, Conservatives want to leave housing up to luxury condo developers, who are jacking up prices. Neither option will bring down housing costs in Nanaimo—Ladysmith and across Canada.

Why have the Liberals spent nine years following in the footsteps of the corporate Conservatives by putting rich developers first?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, builders in the member's community and throughout the country require incentives, and we have put forward incentives that lead to more building, in particular for apartments, by lifting the GST on the construction of rental apartments for the middle class, which the Conservatives oppose.

When it comes to more home building, I just spoke about the housing accelerator fund. We take a non-partisan approach to that issue. In communities large and small, represented by various members of Parliament, we are seeing, or will see, more building, through zoning changes that incent the kind of building we need, for young people in particular, with more missing middle options, from duplexes, to fourplexes, to mid-rise apartments and so on. We have more to do, and we will.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1

BILL C-69—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to report stage and third reading of Bill C-69, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stages of the bill.

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ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION ACT

BILL C-65—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to second reading stage of Bill C-65, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to

Routine Proceedings

allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage of the bill.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting be 12 midnight, pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28, the minister's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to three petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my role as chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I have the honour to present, in the both official languages, the 24th report of the committee regarding the consideration of George Dolhai for appointment as director of public prosecutions.

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● (1210)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-405, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Parliament of Canada Act.

He said: Madam Speaker, the penalties for perjury act is a mechanism to restore Canadians' confidence in our democratic institutions. It would do two critical things. One, it would impose a mandatory minimum penalty under the Criminal Code for perjury before a House of Parliament; and second, it would allow Parliament to impose a fine of up to \$50,000 for a contempt against a House of Parliament. This is incredibly important in the context that we have seen of the Prime Minister's \$60-million arrive scam and contempt that has been found before the House. Common-sense Conservatives will stop the crime and restore accountability to Canada's Parliament.

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

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

PETITIONS

GATINEAU PARK

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour of presenting an important petition calling on the government to amend the National Capital Act to protect Gatineau Park for future generations.

[English]

This petition was launched by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Ottawa Valley chapter.

I send my warmest thanks to the hard-working volunteers for their dedication on behalf of thousands of residents of this region.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to present two petitions.

The first petition is from petitioners who observe the gross human rights violations being perpetrated by the Chinese Communist regime against Falun Gong practitioners. The petitioners call on the government to invoke Magnitsky sanctions on the perpetrators of these human rights abuses and to refuse immigration or a visitor visa to those who are persecuting Falun Gong practitioners in China.

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians who are calling on the government to use all legislative tools available, including invoking the notwithstanding clause, to override the Supreme Court of Canada's unjust decision in *Bissonnette*. This struck down a very reasonable law passed by the Harper government giving judges the flexibility and the discretion to impose consecutive sentencing on some of Canada's worst murderers.

UKRAINE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions that I will be sharing today.

The first petition is signed by over 1,000 Canadians. It is in response to Russia's genocide against the Ukrainian people. These citizens are calling on the Government of Canada to put the Russian Federation on the list of foreign supporters of terrorism.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): My second petition is also with regard to the illegal invasion of Ukraine and to the people who have come from Ukraine to Canada. This petition is signed by hundreds of Canadians.

The petition speaks about the thousands of Ukrainians who have come to Canada to escape the war in Ukraine. It calls on Canada to allow Ukrainians working in apprenticeship programs to qualify for permanent residency.

DECriminalization of DRUGS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

The first petition I am presenting is on behalf of members of Kelowna—Lake Country and our region. The petition is calling on the government to immediately end its failed and radical drug decriminalization experiment in British Columbia, stop spending taxpayer dollars on dangerous drugs and, instead, fund treatment and recovery programs to bring our loved ones home drug-free.

● (1215)

AIR SERVICE TO INDIA

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition that I am presenting today states that no airline is currently providing direct flight services between Vancouver, British Columbia, and Amritsar, Punjab, a logical route with the shortest physical distance. Reducing the kilometres needlessly travelled would reduce trip length, improve passenger experience, save fuel and significantly reduce carbon emissions.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to leverage its ownership of Air Canada shares to encourage the company to explore the implementation of direct flights between Vancouver, British Columbia, and Amritsar, Punjab, should such a route become viable.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the third petition I am presenting today discusses Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's clear service standards, which are publicly available on its website. They outline, in business days, the length of time IRCC expects to process applications for work permits, temporary passport applications and certificates of identity, among other things.

In the 2022-23 fiscal year, IRCC consistently failed to meet its own publicly stated targets, with only 50% met.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to immediately take action and ensure that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada meets or exceeds its service standards in all application categories.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of folks who are concerned about the fact that the Department of National Defence uses live piglets in training exercises. The piglets are hurt and treated poorly. There has been quite a lot of concern in terms of the treatment of these animals, and, in the petitioners' opinion, their use is unnecessary. The petitioners are calling on the Minister of National Defence to end the use of animals in the military medical training program.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 2599, 2601, 2608, 2610 to 2612 and 2616.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 2599—**Ms. Louise Chabot:**

With regard to the Age Well at Home initiative: (a) how many organizations submitted projects between June 8, 2022, and July 29, 2022, in the constituency of Thérèse-De Blainville and, of these project submissions, how many (i) were approved, (ii) were denied, (iii) have not yet received a response; and (b) of the project applications in the constituency of Thérèse-De Blainville that have not yet received a response, (i) what are the estimated timelines for processing these applications, (ii) what are the reasons for these processing delays, (iii) will the amounts approved initially for these applications be adjusted for inflation?

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of the age well at home initiative call for proposals held between June 8, 2022, and July 29, 2022, ESDC received one application for funding from an organization within the constituency of Thérèse-De Blainville. This application was not approved for funding. The organization was informed of this decision by ESDC during the week of April 22, 2024, and therefore there are no outstanding responses for applicants from the constituency of Thérèse-De Blainville.

Question No. 2601—**Mr. Richard Bragdon:**

With regard to stakeholders that were consulted by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance about what to include in budget 2024: (a) what were the names and titles of all stakeholders consulted; and (b) what are the details, including the date, location, and manner in which each of the stakeholders in (a) were consulted?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regarding the response to parts (a) and (b), the Department of Finance consults with Canadians on issues large and small, enabling public input on policy options. The department seeks to ensure that as many people as possible, whether they represent businesses, groups with special interests or individual Canadians, get the opportunity to have their say.

On December 12, 2023, the government launched consultations to hear from Canadians on the most pressing challenges of today, such as making life more affordable, building more homes faster, and creating good jobs for Canadian workers today and for generations to come. These consultations would help inform decisions on budget 2024. These pre-budget 2024 consultations concluded on February 9, 2024.

Please note that the information requested is not systematically tracked in a centralized database. The Department of Finance concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual collection of information that is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Question No. 2608—**Mr. Rick Perkins:**

With regard to lethal and non-lethal military export control permits currently awaiting a governor-in-council decision: what are details of each item, including the (i) vendor, (ii) item description, (iii) dollar value of the export, (iv) date on which the control permit was referred to the governor-in-council for a decision, (v) country for which the item is destined?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

Maintaining international peace and security and protecting human rights are central to Canada's foreign policy. Canada has one of the most rigorous export control systems in the world, harmonized

with those of our allies and partners under the major export control regimes. Canada's accession to the Arms Trade Treaty, ATT, in 2019 has further strengthened this approach. Canadian residents wishing to export items on the export control list, ECL, must apply for, and be issued, a permit prior to export. Items listed on the ECL include a wide variety of goods and technology intended for both civilian and military purposes, destined to a broad range of end-users. Examples of items include forest and agricultural products, telecommunications equipment, decontamination equipment, cryptographic equipment, protective equipment, simulators, imaging equipment, electronic components, firearms, and ammunition.

All permit applications for controlled items are reviewed on a case-by-case basis as part of a robust risk assessment, including against ATT criteria, which have been enshrined in the Export and Import Permits Act, EIPA. Permits for the export of controlled goods and technology from Canada will not be issued if there is a substantial risk that they could be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international human rights law or international humanitarian law, to undermine peace and security, to facilitate international organized crime or terrorism, or to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. Pursuant to EIPA amendments made in 2019, the government must table, no later than May 31 of each year, annual reports with respect to the administration of the EIPA and the export of military goods over the course of the preceding year; these had previously been tabled on a voluntary basis since 1990. The 2023 annual report on the export of military goods was tabled in Parliament by May 31, 2024.

GAC does not comment on individual permits or permit applications, as the specific details of controlled items requested to be exported are protected commercial information. Furthermore, the disclosure of such information would be counter to the principles set out in the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act, as well as other legislative and legal obligations.

Question No. 2610—**Mr. Warren Steinley:**

With regard to the Canada Dental Benefit, to date: how many Canadians have (i) signed up, (ii) been approved, (iii) received dental care paid for through the benefit?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above-noted question, what follows is the response from the CRA as of April 29, 2024, that is, the date of the question.

In response to part (i), the Canada dental benefit, CDB, has two eligibility periods from December 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, and from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

We note that one application may include multiple children.

Routine Proceedings

During period 1, from December 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, the CRA received 206,290 applications for 323,350 children.

During period 2, from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, as of April 24, 2024, the CRA has received 219,430 applications for 348,710 children.

Between both periods, since December 1, 2022, 441,180 unique children have been supported through the benefit.

In response to part (ii), due to the upfront validation program design of the interim CDB, the number of applications approved equals the number of applications received. Consequently, the CDB volumes stated in response to part (i) are the same for part (ii).

In response to part (iii), the CDB payment was designed to provide upfront financial assistance in which the applicant attests that they have incurred, or will incur, costs related to dental care services. Consequently, the CRA is not in a position to provide the requested number of Canadians who have received dental care paid for through the benefit, as the CRA does not have the data available.

Question No. 2611—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to the government's proposed plastics registry: (a) what is the projected cost to establish the registry and maintain it each year; (b) what is the timeline by which the government will implement the registry; and (c) did the government conduct any studies on the impact the registry will have on the price of food and other consumer products, and, if so, what are the details of each such study, including the findings and the website where the study can be found online?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), developing and maintaining good-quality Canada-wide data on how plastic moves through the economy is necessary to transition towards a circular economy in Canada. The federal plastics registry, the registry, will provide critical data that will identify opportunities for the government to take further action to reduce plastic waste and pollution, as well as help monitor progress over time.

The cost to government to collect data for the registry is \$7,294,154 projected over five years to establish the registry, and \$600,756 each year after for maintenance. The cost of inaction against plastic pollution in Canada is very high. As an example, the regulatory impact analysis statement for the single-use plastics prohibition regulations, SUPPR, determined that the SUPPR alone will save Canadians \$581 million over 10 years in avoided terrestrial litter cleanup costs. Canadians want to see more concrete action, like the SUPPR, from governments and industry to tackle plastic pollution. The registry is a stepping stone for future actions that tackle plastic pollution and cut costs for all Canadians.

In response to part (b), reporting requirements for the federal plastics registry will be introduced in phases to allow time and flexibility for those obligated to report. Phase 1 reporting will start in September 2025, requiring reporting on plastic placed on the market in three categories, electronic and electrical equipment, packaging, and single-use or disposable products, for the 2024 calendar year. Phase 2 reporting will start in 2026, adding reporting requirements for resin manufacturers and importers, as well as reporting on plastic placed on the market for the remaining categories: tires, transportation, construction, agriculture and horticulture, fishing and aquaculture, apparel and textiles. In 2026, reporting on plastic

waste generated at industrial, commercial, and institutional facilities, plastic collected at end-of-life, as well as plastic sent for diversion and disposal for some categories, will also be introduced. In 2027, additional reporting requirements on plastics collected and sent for diversion and disposal for more categories will be added. Details of the reporting schedule appear in schedule 5 of the "Notice with respect to reporting of plastic resins and certain plastic products for the Federal Plastics Registry for 2024, 2025 and 2026".

In response to part (c), Environment and Climate Change Canada, ECCC, has consulted extensively on the development of the registry, and no company has quantified the cost of reporting or signaled how these costs would impact the price of food or consumer goods. ECCC continues to work with companies on the development of a technical guidance to reduce the administrative tasks and costs associated with reporting and assist them in fulfilling their obligations. ECCC has also created category-specific working groups to better understand supply chains and develop targeted reporting methodologies to further assist companies in fulfilling their reporting obligations.

The federal plastics registry, the registry, is the most comprehensive registry of its kind. Other registries are usually limited to a few categories like packaging or electronics and electrical equipment. These registries differ from the registry by including provisions for extended producer responsibility and assigning costs to producers for the plastics they put on the market. Note that the registry assigns no charges to food or consumer good companies and does not regulate food or consumer products in any manner. It only aims to create an inventory of data on plastics throughout their life cycle and across several sectors of the economy.

Question No. 2612—Mr. Rob Moore:

With regard to top secret security clearances provided by the government: how many employees or representatives of registered political parties currently have top secret security clearances, in total and broken down by party?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada recognizes the need for political parties recognized in the House of Commons to have access to information that can help them protect themselves from threats and has undertaken a range of initiatives to contribute to this important objective.

As part of the plan to protect Canada's democracy, the Privy Council Office provides security clearances to representatives of political parties recognized in the House of Commons. These clearances give political party representatives the opportunity to attend briefings during pre-election and election periods, including recent by-election periods. The briefings, provided by the security and intelligence threats to elections, SITE, task force, range from unclassified to secret-level.

In addition to offering to sponsor clearances for representatives of political parties recognized in the House of Commons in the context of elections and by-elections, the Government of Canada also provides security clearances that allow parliamentarians and representatives of political parties recognized in the House of Commons to view documents intended for a readership beyond the government itself. This includes classified reports such as the independent special rapporteur's first report with its classified annex, which was published in May 2023, as well as the rapporteur's classified final report, completed in June 2023. Recently, Commissioner Hogue, who leads the public inquiry into foreign interference in Canada's federal elections and democratic processes, published her initial report in May 2024, which also contained a classified annex. The Privy Council Office is responsible for facilitating the necessary security clearances at the required level for those representatives from political parties recognized in the House of Commons who need to access these classified reports.

Another key component of the government's commitment to meaningful engagement with parliamentarians on national security is reflected in the 2017 establishment of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, NSICOP. The committee's mandate includes reviewing the legislative, regulatory, policy, administrative, and financial framework for national security and intelligence. It also covers any activity related to national security or intelligence conducted by a government department, except for ongoing operations where the appropriate minister determines that a review would jeopardize national security. Additionally, NSICOP can examine any matter pertaining to national security or intelligence that is referred to it by a minister of the Crown. NSICOP comprises 10 parliamentarians who hold top secret-level clearances and are bound by the provisions of the Security of Information Act, which requires them to maintain strict secrecy. Currently, NSICOP consists of three members from the Liberal Party of Canada, two from the Conservative Party of Canada, one from the Bloc Québécois, one from the New Democratic Party, and three senators. These individuals play an important role in conducting independent reviews and providing oversight of national security and intelligence activities in Canada.

Additionally, the government has recently introduced Bill C-70, an act respecting countering foreign interference, which proposes to update existing laws to better equip the government to detect, disrupt, and protect against foreign interference threats. Amongst other measures, this legislation would enable broader disclosure of Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, information to key partners beyond the Government of Canada, with appropriate safeguards, to help partners build resiliency to threats.

Question No. 2616—**Mr. Michael D. Chong:**

With regard to Canada's sanctions against the Russian Federation: (a) on what date was Airbus Canada granted a waiver to import titanium from the VSMPO-

Routine Proceedings

AVISMA Corporation; (b) which minister approved the waiver; (c) what was the rationale for the waiver; (d) who was consulted before the waiver was granted; (e) was the Ukrainian government informed before the waiver was granted, and, if so, when; (f) if the answer to (e) is negative, why not; and (g) has any other company in Canada been granted a waiver or waivers to Canada's sanctions regime against the Russian Federation since February 21, 2024, and, if so, what are the details, including the names of the companies?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

Since 2014, Canada has sanctioned over 3,000 entities and individuals in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova and imposed numerous other measures in the financial, trade of goods and services, energy and transport sectors. These measures aim to denounce Russia's breach of international security and those who support it, limit the Russian government's ability to finance its illegal war against Ukraine, and pressure the Putin regime to change its behaviour.

On February 21, 2024, Canada marked the two-year anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine by imposing a number of new sanctions, including, among other measures, the listing of 10 individuals and 153 entities known to provide support to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine.

Any person in Canada or Canadian outside Canada is prohibited from dealing in the property of, entering into transactions with, providing services to, transferring property to, or otherwise making goods available to listed persons.

Under Canadian sanctions legislation, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has the discretion to issue permits to persons in Canada and Canadians outside Canada on an exceptional basis in respect of activities that are prohibited under the Special Economic Measures Act and the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, and can similarly issue certificates under the United Nations Act.

The Government of Canada respects privacy and commercial confidentiality and does not comment on permit applications made in the context of the Special Economic Measures Act.

While the government does not comment on specific permit applications, from a general perspective each application for a permit or certificate that is received is reviewed in depth on a case-by-case basis. This review involves extensive analysis, applicable intra- and interdepartmental consultations, and significant due diligence.

Routine Proceedings

Canada's support for Ukraine is unwavering, demonstrated through its leadership in sanctioning strategic Russian industries complicit in the Putin regime's ongoing breaches of international law. Canada stands with Ukraine and will continue to impose severe costs on Russia until it puts an end to its illegal, unprovoked, and unjustifiable war. Moreover, Canada shares this conviction with its allies and partners who, together, will continue to increase international pressure on Russia in support of Ukraine.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, furthermore, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 2600, 2602 to 2607, 2609, 2613 to 2615, 2617 and 2618 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2600—Mr. Luc Berthold:

With regard to asylum claims made by individuals who arrived in Canada on a student visa, since 2018: how many claims (i) were accepted, (ii) were rejected, (iii) are still being processed, in total and broken down by the school in which the claimant was enrolled when the asylum claim was made?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2602—Mr. Richard Bragdon:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency's (CRA) response to the Privacy Commissioner of Canada's special report to Parliament on February 15, 2024, indicating that a major privacy breach at the CRA involved "vast amounts of sensitive personal information" and that the CRA needed stronger security safeguards: (a) does the CRA accept the conclusions of the Privacy Commissioner that the current process and procedures that govern the handling of sensitive personal information are inadequate; (b) what steps is the CRA undertaking to rectify this lack of safeguards and due diligence to give Canadians confidence that their personal, sensitive and private information is secure with the CRA; (c) what steps is the CRA taking to limit collection until it can be confident that information can be properly secured; and (d) does the CRA take the position that seeking sensitive information from businesses with no sales or confirmed tax obligations would be a misuse of the Universal Periodic Review provisions, and, if not, why not?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2603—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to usage of the government's fleet of Challenger aircraft, since October 27, 2023: what are the details of the legs of each flight, including the (i) date, (ii) point of departure, (iii) destination, (iv) number of passengers, (v) names and titles of the passengers, excluding security or Canadian Armed Forces members, (vi) total catering bill related to the flight, (vii) volume of fuel used, or an estimate, (viii) amount spent on fuel?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2604—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to usage of the government's fleet of Airbus and Polaris aircraft since September 1, 2023: what are the details of the legs of each flight, including the (i) date, (ii) point of departure, (iii) destination, (iv) number of passengers, (v) names and titles of the passengers, excluding security or Canadian Armed Forces members, (vi) total catering bill related to the flight, (vii) volume of fuel used, or an estimate, (viii) amount spent on fuel, (ix) type of aircraft?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2605—Mr. Michael Barrett:

With regard to the 140 conflict of interest declarations filed in the 2022-23 fiscal year, and the 162 conflict of interest declarations filed in the 2023-24 fiscal year concerning public servants employed in the core public administration who were involved in contractual relationships with the Government of Canada, broken down by fiscal year: (a) what is the breakdown of the declarations by department, agency or other government entity by which the public servant was employed; (b) what are the names of the vendors which have contracts with the government that were the subjects of the declarations; and (c) what are the details of each contract provided to the vendors in (b), including, for each, the (i) department, agency, or other government entity that signed the contract, (ii) vendor, (iii) date, (iv) amount, (v) description of goods or services, (vi) manner in which the contract was awarded (sole-sourced, competitive bid)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2606—Mr. Rick Perkins:

With regard to human resource complaints submitted by employees of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, since January 1, 2016, broken down by year: (a) what was the total number of complaints broken down by the (i) name of the agency or Crown corporation employing the complainant, (ii) reason for the complaint, (iii) type of resolution or follow-up action that occurred; and (b) what was the average time between a complaint being filed and the matter being settled or otherwise concluded?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2607—Mr. Rick Perkins:

With regard to tax owed to the government for unpaid excise tax on cannabis: (a) what is the current amount owed, in total and broken down by the province or territory of the entity owing tax; (b) how many separate taxpaying entities have unpaid excise tax on cannabis; and (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by the tax year from which the unpaid tax is owed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2609—Mr. Rick Perkins:

With regard to digital marketing firms contracted by the government to conduct digital marketing since 2016: what are the details of all contracts, including the (i) name of the firm contracted, (ii) commission provided to the marketing firm as part of the contract, (iii) total sum provided for marketing purposes, (iv) total amount used for marketing purposes, (v) marketing platforms used to communicate as part of the contract, (vi) policy initiative being communicated?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2613—Mr. Rob Moore:

With regard to the event named "Symposium: Building a Safe and Respectful Digital World" hosted at the Governor General's residence on April 11, 2024: (a) what were the costs associated with the event, in total and broken down by type of expenditure; (b) was this event initiated by the Governor General and her staff or officials, or by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General and his staff or officials; (c) on what dates did organizational or planning meetings take place in preparation for the event, and who was in attendance at each meeting; (d) were any government bills or initiatives highlighted during the event, and, if so, which ones; and (e) what specific action, if any, was taken by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General to ensure that the event did not put the Governor General in a partisan situation, and to stop any government legislation, initiatives or talking points from being promoted at the event?

(Return tabled)

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**Question No. 2614—**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:**

With regard to government engagement, association, or dealing in any other manner with social media influencers related to budget 2024 or any of the announcements leading up to the budget: (a) what are the names and handles of the influencers who were invited to (i) events on budget presentation day in Ottawa, (ii) government announcements or events in the month leading up to budget 2024; and (b) what are the amounts and details of all expenditures, in total, and broken down by influencer and type of cost the government incurred or expects to incur related to influencers, including, but not limited to, any payments being made to the influencers, travel costs, per diems, hospitality expenses, reimbursements for expenses incurred, honorariums, contracts, grants, monetary and non-monetary gifts, or any other type of incentive, financial or otherwise?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2615—**Ms. Melissa Lantsman:**

With regard to government information about crime, broken down by year since 2016: how many suspects who were charged or deemed chargeable with homicide were on (i) bail or other type of remand, (ii) house arrest, (iii) parole, (iv) another type of community supervision, broken down by type, (v) an arrest warrant for a different crime, at the time they were charged or deemed chargeable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2617—**Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to federal housing investments for Windsor, Toronto and Hamilton, since February 1, 2006, broken down by year and city: (a) how much federal funding was provided to support the construction of nonprofit or community housing and how many units were developed; (b) how much federal funding was provided to support the construction of cooperative housing and how many units were developed; and (c) how much federal funding was provided to support the construction of purpose-built rental housing and how many units were developed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2618—**Ms. Jenny Kwan:**

With regard to Rent-Geared-Income (RGI) subsidies and operating subsidies funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC): (a) how many housing projects and units are currently receiving RGI subsidies funded by the CMHC, broken down by municipality, province or territory; (b) how many are receiving operating subsidies funded by the CMHC, broken down by municipality, province and territory; (c) is there an end or expiration date for the CMHC-funded RGI subsidies and operating subsidies for these housing projects/units and, if so, (i) what is the end date, (ii) how many units will lose the CMHC RGI subsidies broken down by (iii) municipality, province and territory, (iv) year; (d) what is the CMHC's annual budget allocation for RGI subsidies, broken down by (i) municipality, province and territory, (ii) year since 1990; and (e) what is the CMHC's annual budget allocation for operating subsidies, broken down by (i) municipality, province and territory, (ii) year since 1990?

(Return tabled)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m. to start Private Member's Business.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*[English]***NATIONAL CANADIAN SEAFOOD DAY****Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.) moved:**

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should designate the first day in October every year as National Canadian Seafood Day in recognition of the significant contributions of Canada's fish harvesters and their families from coast to coast to coast, all the processors who help deliver world-class products that are enjoyed domestically and internationally, and all those who work in the seafood industry, which is a vital employment and economic driver in so many coastal communities across Canada.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today and introduce Motion No. 111, which would establish a national Canadian seafood day on the first day of October each year.

National Canadian seafood day would recognize and promote the rich and diverse nature of the safe, high-quality and delicious seafood we produce here in Canada. We are long overdue in having one day a year dedicated to this very important industry. Canada is uniquely defined in its extensive network of lakes, rivers and wetlands, as well as its geographical positioning, bordered by three vast oceans: the Atlantic, the Arctic and the Pacific. We are also home to one of the world's largest and most diverse supply of marine and freshwater fish. We have the world's longest coastline, which is home to many coastal communities in Canada. We are also recognized by and proud of our iconic fish and seafood, which are synonymous with taste, quality and sustainability.

If someone is from Quebec, the Atlantic provinces or Northwest Territories, lobster and crab are their most popular product. British Columbia and Nunavut produce salmon and Salmonidae respectively as their number one products. As we move inland, processing takes over. Manitoba and Ontario count frozen fish fillets as their number one seafood product. Even landlocked Saskatchewan last year produced \$7.2 million worth of farmed trout.

At the heart of Motion No. 111 lies a profound acknowledgement of the significance of fish and seafood to Canada's society and our blue economy, particularly in many rural, coastal communities. In supporting this motion, we would signal to Canadians our deep appreciation of the people involved in the sector and bring attention to an industry that sustains millions across the country and around the globe.

Our coastal communities depend on Canadian fisheries for jobs and prosperity. This point was illustrated in 2022 when commercial sea and freshwater fisheries landings alone were valued at an impressive \$4.8 billion, with aquaculture production contributing an additional \$1.3 billion to our nation's economy. The total contribution to GDP from the Canadian seafood industry was more than \$9 billion in 2022, a figure that is growing annually.

Private Members' Business

These figures underscore the substantial economic impact of this industry in providing nutrition and delicious products not only here at home, but also around the world. More than just representing the products we ship abroad, this data represents the bread and butter put on Canadian tables through the hard work of those in this sector.

At home, Canada's fish and seafood industry is composed of a vast network of individuals whose livelihoods depend on factors ranging from climate, weather and ice patterns, to the health of fish stocks and the state of global markets. From fish harvesters navigating the icy waters of the Atlantic to processors meticulously preparing seafood products for markets, over 72,000 Canadians are directly employed with this sector. This includes more than 50,000 individuals in commercial fisheries and more than 20,000 in seafood product preparation and packaging.

Fish and seafood also play a vital role in the economic livelihoods of many indigenous communities. Commercial fishing, subsistence harvesting and processing provide employment opportunities that generate income for indigenous fish harvesters, processors and entrepreneurs. Across our country, hard-working individuals engage in meaningful employment within the sector, sustaining livelihoods along the supply chain and fostering economic growth in communities from coast to coast to coast, while also playing a critical role in ensuring the quality, sustainability and safety of our seafood products.

Beyond those roles, countless others are employed in spin-off industries such as transportation, retail and tourism, all of which are sustained by the demand for sustainable harvested fish and seafood products. The overall economic impact of fish and seafood reverberates far beyond the shores of our coastal communities, extending into urban centres and rural areas alike.

These individuals are the backbone of our fish and seafood industry, and their dedication and resilience deserve to be celebrated and honoured. Canada's position as one of the world's largest exporters of fish and seafood on the global stage is a testament to the quality and competitiveness of our products.

In 2023, our nation's exports of fish and seafood amounted to an impressive \$7.6 billion, showcasing the industry's ability to thrive in international markets. In 2023, we sent a whopping \$4.9 billion worth of fish and seafood to our largest trading partner, the United States. Our friends to the south of the border love our fresh or processed lobster, fresh crab, salmon, halibut and scallops. The Chinese market is fond of Canadian lobster, cold-water shrimp, fresh crab and frozen clams.

• (1220)

The European Union imports over \$400 million worth of tasty Canadian fish and seafood a year, becoming our third biggest importer, and it continues to grow. Rounding out the top Canadian seafood importing jurisdictions last year are Chile, Vietnam, India, Thailand, Norway, Japan, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. We should be proud of the billions of dollars we export annually in fish and seafood, and we are working to expand those markets even further. This past February, we opened Canada's first-ever agriculture and agri-food office in the Indo-Pacific region in Manila. This office will help us make connections in the region and share knowl-

edge that will make our partnerships in food, including seafood, stronger.

With a diverse and delicious array of sustainably harvested products, Canadian seafood is highly sought after in global markets. Canada is proud to be a trusted and reliable trading partner to the world. Canada exports its fish and seafood to 115 countries around the world. These exports not only contribute to Canada's overall economic growth but also strengthen our trade relationships with key partners, and enhance our position in a global marketplace.

Our fish and seafood products matter, as do the livelihoods of those working in the sector. Supporting Motion No. 111 matters. In Canada, we already have a designated Agriculture Day, which we celebrate in February. We also celebrate the Saturday before the first Monday in August as Food Day. Furthermore, the United States celebrates October as National Seafood Month.

By designating a day to celebrate Canada's fish and seafood, we can put a spotlight on this unique and important sector and those who work in it by celebrating their significant role in our economy. As we look forward to potentially celebrating the first annual national Canadian seafood day, let us continue to buy, cook and eat Canadian seafood products. Let us take part in the celebrations, enjoy the catch of the day and try new recipes using Canadian ingredients. Let us seek out exciting products that highlight the diversity of cultures' cuisines that make up our great country. Let us recognize those behind the scenes, our fish harvesters and food entrepreneurs, who are working hard and putting forth their best ideas to solve some of the world's most pressing food security and environmental challenges.

Our hard-working Canadian seafood producers and processors are leaders in innovative technologies, and their products meet the highest standards. That is what makes Canada a trusted supplier around the world for seafood that is both high quality and sustainable. It does not hurt that it is really delicious too.

In supporting Motion No. 111, we have the opportunity to provide national recognition to an industry that not only sustains livelihoods, but drives our economic growth and prosperity. From the rugged shorelines of Newfoundland to the Canadian Arctic archipelago to the pristine waters of British Columbia, the economic impact of this industry is felt in communities large and small. This motion is not merely about saying we support setting a date on the calendar; it is about marking a moment of national acknowledgement for the resilience, innovation and enduring spirit of an industry that is unquestionably Canadian.

Private Members' Business

By designating the first day of October each year as national Canadian seafood day, we affirm our commitment to honouring the contributions of fish harvesters, processors and all those who labour tirelessly in this industry.

In conclusion, the quality of Canadian fish and seafood is unlike anywhere else in the world. Canada's fish and seafood sector is a vital engine to our economic growth. Let us seize this opportunity to foster a brighter and more prosperous future for all Canadians involved in this sector. Let us celebrate the pride, passion, resiliency and hard work of all those who bring fish and seafood onto the plates of consumers here at home and around the world.

I am incredibly proud to stand here to introduce this motion. I look forward to seeing members' support to realize the vision of celebrating a national Canadian seafood day in the coming years and for generations to come.

• (1225)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to this great initiative of the member to recognize our important seafood industry. I am curious because, after nine years of the Liberal government, it seems to be the only positive thing that the government has done for the sector.

We had produced a report in the fisheries committee that drew the attention of the government to the massive biological disaster that is happening in our ocean concerning seals, pinnipeds, walrus-es, sea lions on the west coast and seals in the east coast, gray seals in Nova Scotia.

The government has basically ignored it. First nations are demanding a seal hunt. We need to put things in balance.

Why has the government not acted?

Mr. Heath MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue and a very touchy issue for the fishermen, even in my riding. Some of my family fish, and I hear all about the seals all the time and the amount of fish they are eating. I did attend one of the committee meetings that the hon. member was attending, and the Maritime Fishermen's Union, I believe, was at the table, and we were having this discussion. It becomes a very tricky situation when we have the Marine Mammal Protection Act in the United States, and that is where the conversation led. We need to do more with the U.S. in regard to the seal, because we all know what happened in the mid-1980s. Our lobster fishery almost collapsed because of the feedback and negativity that surrounded the seal-processing hunt.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and for having the idea of creating this day, which recognizes those who are truly on the front lines of the fishing industry. Their work is not often recognized. That said, we cannot overlook the lax approach, the inadequate management of the fisheries sector, and the lack of transparency of the department or its ill-timed decisions.

Does my colleague think that this day will help make workers and their families a priority for his government?

[*English*]

Mr. Heath MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are trying to do, to present a day where we can recognize those who perhaps we do not get to see that often, who work so hard and tirelessly in the processing plants across the country to drive our economy and make us prosperous. It is important that we recognize them and give them a day to celebrate what they do.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that I do not know who would not support a national Canadian seafood day. This is vitally important for Canadians across the country.

The question I have for the member is on the importance of having sustainable local seafood. In particular, I am thinking about the promise made by Trudeau to get open-net fish farms out—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tom Kmiec): Just a reminder to the member that she cannot refer to the name of the Prime Minister or any member of the House.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the reminder. I apologize for that. It was an error.

With respect to the Prime Minister's promise to get open-net fish farms out of the west coast waters, I would specifically highlight that Atlantic salmon is being farmed on the west coast of Canada, which is spreading pathogens and diseases to the surrounding marine ecosystems.

Does the member agree with the importance of getting those fish farms out of the water for good and looking at land-based systems and other ways so that all those who are impacted can participate in sustainable seafood production?

Mr. Heath MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, this is ongoing, obviously. There are consultations taking place as we speak, and I believe there is going to be a decision forthcoming. It is important to hear both sides of the story, and we will continue to monitor it. This is something that the government of the day is digging into. I have heard about this from members from the west coast in our own party as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for my colleague, and I also want to congratulate him on taking the initiative to create this day. Fish harvesters, especially those from the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, have been feeling extremely frustrated, primarily over the management of quotas and fishing licences. Does my colleague think that a day like this one will raise the government's awareness about the realities of fish harvesters?

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Heath MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I think a day like this can bring together ideas and communication. We have a lot of things going on in the fishery across the country. Climate change, for example, is one. There are all kinds of regulated issues that we are dealing with. I think it is important to recognize this fishery. It could be a day perhaps where we can put partisan politics aside and bring out the goodness in this industry and this sector, which is so important to our communities.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the member for Malpeque's motion to create national seafood day on the first day of October. I note, it is numbered Motion No. 111, which is a great number for it. I would have been happier if it was Motion No. 1, but Motion No. 111 is a good substitute, because three times, four times or five times, this is the most important industry in our rural coastal communities on all three coasts.

We will be supporting this motion, but I would like to make a few comments about it. As I said a little earlier, I represent a very large fishery riding, the riding of South Shore—St. Margarets. There are more than 5,000 commercial fishermen in my community. Every possible species one could think of that is commercially harvested is harvested in the South Shore of Nova Scotia.

Of course, the most lucrative one is the best lobster in the world from Lobster Fishing Area 33 and Lobster Fishing Area 34, a winter fishery. Seafood, and lobster in particular, is our number one industry in Nova Scotia. It drives our GDP. There would not be any government jobs in Halifax if it was not for the wealth generated by fishing for the food Canadians eat in the South Shore of Nova Scotia.

As much as I support this motion, as much as we support this motion, I believe it is, after nine years, the first time the government has actually done anything positive for the seafood industry. The member for Malpeque went through the numbers financially of what it does, province by province and species by species. I would say that some of those are declining numbers because the government has pursued policies that have actually harmed the industry, when it has pursued any at all.

I will start maybe with something I have raised quite frequently over the last year, which is the elver fishery. I know everybody knows what an elver is. It is otherwise known as a glass eel, a baby eel. After being born in the Sargasso Sea, they swim back to the rivers of Maine, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. They go up the rivers to become full-size adult, grown eels that live for about 25 years before they migrate back out to the ocean to reproduce. These are the most expensive fish we harvest in Canada, and arguably in the world, at \$5,000 a kilogram. That is the cost of the glass eels, or elvers.

This industry has been under attack. Elvers are exported, by the way, live to China, where they are grown into full-size eels for food. This industry has been under attack because of the incompetence of the government. In particular, fisheries minister number four, whom I defeated, closed this fishery in the year 2020 in hopes that the poaching would end, and then, the poaching increased.

Fisheries minister number five, last year, closed the industry halfway through the season in hopes that the poaching would stop, and it increased. Fisheries minister number six, this year, did the same thing. The ministers have done the same thing three out of the last four years and have expected a different result. That is the definition of insanity.

The best way to enforce the law is to arrest the people on the river who do not have a licence, and 74% of the rivers in the Maritimes, where there are poachers, are not licensed rivers, so it is easy to identify where they are.

The government has ignored many great reports. I mentioned the issue of pinnipeds earlier. Those are seals, sea lions and walrus. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans did an excellent unanimous report on that, and I will tell the House what some witnesses said.

Trevor Jones, who is a fish harvester, said, "Leadership within DFO, in its wisdom, seems to think that closing a commercial fishery [that being seals] to harvesters will save and help rebuild fish stocks, but the truth is that it does not."

When the fishery was closed 31 years ago, the cod fishery, the groundfishery, there were about three million seals in Newfoundland. Now, there are over eight million seals, with no harvest, and the expectation is that the fish will come back. Even though 97% of the unnatural mortality in the Atlantic Ocean of fish is caused by seals, the government sits on its duff and does nothing. It only just acknowledged, after 31 years, last year, that seals eat fish. That was a revelation to the Liberals that seals eat fish. I guess they were enjoying Alberta beef like the rest of us do. The Liberals have a record of inaction on almost every file.

● (1235)

Recently, only a few weeks ago, there was an issue with the endangered right whales. There is a great policy that when a right whale is discovered swimming by Nova Scotia or into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, there is what is called a dynamic closure, a closure for 15 days of the area where the whale is spotted. If the whale is not spotted again, it opens up.

Right whales cannot swim in less than 10 fathoms of water. Nonetheless, the minister, only a few weeks ago, closed a fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence right up to the coast, right up to the sand, to the edge, in less than 10 fathoms of water, throwing crab fishermen and lobster fishermen in that area out of work. Of course the massive protests were so bad that the Liberals' own member from northern New Brunswick criticized the minister of fisheries for yet again failing to understand the basics of the fishery. The minister had to back down.

The simple, basic closure is estimated to have cost the community a considerable amount of money. The cost, apparently, for the minister's mistake was \$40 million to the industry and to the people in the community. Martin Mallet of the Maritime Fishermen's Union did say that it is difficult to put a price on the closure cost-wise, but for two weeks, depending on the number of fishermen, it can easily go into a few million dollars' worth of lost revenues. The whales do not go into water less than 10 fathoms deep, yet the minister thought, "Well, let's close that and put people out of work." Yet again it was another failure by the government.

The list goes on. There has been an issue of poaching in the lobster fishery. Some members will remember that it, most famously, was in the news again in St. Marys Bay in the riding of West Nova in 2020. The minister refused to implement and enforce the law. That is the basis of our society: enforcing law. The fishery cannot work unless the law is enforced. It is sort of like saying, "You know what, the Trans-Canada Highway has a speed limit, but there'll never be any police on the road." Do members think everybody would do the speed limit? That is what is happening.

DFO, in large parts of the province of Nova Scotia, between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. has absolutely nobody on duty. DFO does not meet boats when they come off the wharf, does not monitor the catch as it comes in, and allows illegal fishing. In fact DFO does not even have any idea of the food and ceremonial fishery of first nations with respect to how much is caught. There has been testimony at committee from DFO enforcement officers who said that 90% of that in Nova Scotia is an illegal commercial fishery. DFO does get catch data for the FSC fishery in B.C. but does not get it in Atlantic Canada.

There has been failure after failure by the government with respect to the fishery, to the point that I would be surprised, out of the fishing ridings in Atlantic Canada, to see any Liberal survive the next election, given the anger towards the government on fishery management, with its six incompetent fisheries ministers over the last nine years.

Again and again, when asked by the committee unanimously for the government to act, the government ignores what it does. We have raised the issues with the parliamentary secretary, who I see is in the House, but still nothing seems to happen on the elver fishery, the lobster fishery enforcement and the many other fisheries that our communities depend on.

I would say that while we do celebrate the fishery, one day is not enough. I would like the government to celebrate the commercial fishery every single day and do its job. Its job in the oldest department in the government is to ensure the sustainable growth of a commercial fishery for generation after generation, yet the government is introducing marine-protected areas in areas where nothing needs to be protected, and it cannot even produce the science in those areas that would show that something is endangered and that the cause of endangerment is actually the commercial fishery.

I have asked the government questions on that. I have asked it to provide the documents on these things, and it cannot do it, because it is making stuff up as it goes along. As it does so, it harms the day-to-day fishery and the rural communities in our country that depend on the fishery.

Private Members' Business

Therefore while we support the motion, we would ask the government to start doing a better job and pay attention to what fishermen are saying and what needs to be done.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, our party can think of no reason not to vote in favour of the motion moved by the member for Malpeque, in Prince Edward Island.

The Bloc Québécois would especially like to acknowledge the demanding and difficult work that our fish harvesters take on every time they go to sea to serve our communities and provide Quebecers with products that make us proud. In many ways, these men and women embody the resilience, solidarity, and mutual support at the very core of the fish harvesting trade.

We also want to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by the temporary foreign workers who sustain the commercial activities of many independent fish harvesters and processors in Quebec. Without them, the challenges facing the industry would be all the greater, even to the point of forcing many businesses to close or go bankrupt.

As for the commitment of our many communities, the reeves of RCMs and the processing companies in these areas are vital allies and partners in spreading the word about this coastal economic reality. People here confront multiple challenges, including climate disturbances that are dramatically disrupting our marine ecosystems.

Historically, the Bloc Québécois has always vigorously defended workers in the primary sectors of our economy, because they are the very first link in the chain, but unfortunately, they are often the last to be recognized. From the boat to the dock, from the factory to our plates, our hard-working local fishers provide us with world-class products.

Establishing a national Canadian seafood day would not only be a gesture of recognition, but also an opportunity to bring to the forefront the important issues that affect this industry.

I want to discuss a reality that needs to be clarified and that shows why the importance of further decentralizing fisheries management. The reality is that successive governments have always neglected Quebec's marine fisheries. Ottawa constantly uses the division of powers and its exclusive jurisdiction over the protection of stocks as an excuse to impose arbitrary decisions. I could name many other areas where this is the case.

This situation is hindering the development of Quebec's fisheries. Let us not forget that the sector faces unique realities dictated by geopolitical events. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is not being transparent, and that is hurting this sector.

Private Members' Business

The Bloc Québécois will ensure that fishers' concerns are heard in Ottawa and will always be there to stand up for their interests. Whether it is about the wharf in Cap-aux-Meules or the wintering yard in Grande-Rivière, the federal government's conspicuous indifference is getting in the way of the fisheries sector's ability to reach its full regional development potential.

I will paraphrase Jean Garon, a former minister of agriculture under the René Lévesque government who summed up the situation like this: no other aspect of Quebec's economic and social life has been or continues to be as mistreated by our belonging to Canada than the fisheries. I can say that nothing has changed since then.

Let us talk about the cod and shrimp that are at risk or the way the department sped up their disappearance. These species have many natural predators, such as seals and redfish, not to mention exposure to the warming and oxygenation of the waters. The government does not even know in what proportion each of these factors contributed to the disappearance or mortality of these species.

However, we can identify decisions the department made that have harmed these species, starting with its determination to maintain the redfish moratorium that was imposed in 1995. This moratorium was put in place to discourage the use of factory trawlers in the gulf and because redfish was particularly endangered at that time. However, it should have been lifted long before now. It was in place for a long time. The government took far too long to see the obvious.

The other reality is the complete lack of a strategy to promote seal products, which are still being boycotted by the United States and the European Union. It is really outdated to support what could be called the "Bardot effect", but unfortunately, people still have a negative image in their minds. Let us be clear. The killing of baby seals has been banned since 1987, and methods have obviously changed a lot since then.

The Bloc Québécois recently organized a seafood event in New Richmond. Our party's participation in the Salon Fourchette bleue trade show and in the working groups held in La Malbaie also shows the Bloc Québécois's firm commitment to fishers and coastal communities.

• (1245)

Let us talk about shrimp again for a moment. The federal government is telling shrimp and cod harvesters to transition to redfish, since there is an abundance of them. Just to remind everyone, this is just one small consequence of the poorly managed 1995 moratorium. Fishers will make do with it, but the equipment and processing plants still have to be adapted. The minister, however, is not considering any financial assistance or licence buyouts for the shrimp industry.

Daniel Côté, the mayor of Gaspé, and Patrice Element, the director of the Office des pêcheurs de crevettes du Québec, a shrimp non-profit, believe that for this decision to be truly meaningful, shrimp harvesters would have to be able to catch 60,000 tonnes or 80,000 tonnes of redfish or else change their licence. Obviously no one has thought about that.

The member has moved a motion to celebrate the fisheries sector, its artisans and processors. That is all well and good. However, his party's mismanagement of the sector is partly responsible for the problems these workers and their families are currently facing.

Yes, this government did increase shrimp quotas for redfish by 10%, but what it does not want to talk about is the fact that it granted more than 60% of the quotas to offshore trawlers, those out on the high seas. As the environment critic, I have to talk about this, because their impact on the marine environment is significant.

Offshore trawlers are huge vessels that scrape the seabed to catch groundfish, along with many other species, plants and fish that get swept up in their nets. Moreover, this industrial fishing gear creates bycatch, which is a problem.

It is good that fishers were offered compensation when the cod fishery closed, but offshore fishers are still allowed to fish cod, in addition to all the bycatch. All other fishers have to return the fish to the water.

To show how offshore fishers think and how little they care about bycatch, consider this statistic: Redfish sells for about 35¢ a pound, whereas halibut sells for \$5.50. Obviously, bycatch is profitable. These big vessels are masters of bycatch.

The government allowed the Atlantic Groundfish Council, which is mostly made up of offshore fishers from eastern Canada, to get a mapping contract. The ship that is being used is 60 metres long and it is sailing in the Canadian zone of the Atlantic Ocean. Given how big the ship is, there is a good chance that it will damage the sea floor and destroy some ecosystems.

Why was that contract granted? Let us ask ourselves that question. The Canadian Coast Guard has the experience and expertise. The government could have asked the Coast Guard do that work, but it cannot because the Coast Guard's vessel was built in 1982 and it is undergoing repairs.

The Bloc Québécois wants the maritime regions of Quebec to be better developed with a focus on food sovereignty. The Bloc Québécois regularly meets with stakeholders from maritime Quebec, and we will not waver in our support for them.

• (1250)

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today on a topic that very much impacts all of us across Canada. I am happy to be the NDP critic for fisheries and oceans, to participate as a member of the fisheries and oceans committee and to reinforce the importance of us taking the time to acknowledge the important work of fishers across Canada. For those reasons and many others, I am more than happy to support a motion for us to move forward with declaring that the government should designate October 1 as national Canadian seafood day. Who can disagree with that? We will be supporting the motion.

We know that fishers, harvesters, processors and other sector workers across the country deserve to have the recognition of a national Canadian seafood day. It is an industry that supports communities, contributes to food security, and generates economic opportunities and well-being for Canadians.

I have mentioned this before in the House, but I think it is particularly applicable to what we are talking about today. I am originally from St. John's, Newfoundland. I am now honoured to live in Nanaimo, British Columbia, on the west coast. They are two coastal communities very much impacted by what is happening in the fisheries.

The reason my family ended up moving from St. John's, Newfoundland to the west coast, where our home is now, was because of the cod moratorium. Although my family were not fishers, we were very much impacted economically by the implications of the cod collapse. I wanted to reinforce that because I know that my story, and with it the reasons why my family packed up our car, sold everything and drove from one side of Canada to the other, is not an individual one. I have heard from so many across the country who are deeply impacted by what is happening along our coasts and who want to have the ability to participate in a highly sustainable food source for Canadians across the country.

Fishers across the country do so much to support us in providing us with sustainable food choices. We need to be doing all we can to support them. We know that our fisheries are particularly hard hit right now with the climate crisis and with waters warming. There are so many species around Canada that are impacted. We need to be ensuring that we are doing all that we can to not be adding more barriers and challenges for these species that need to be protected.

Days fly by quickly in these roles, so I cannot remember exactly when this was, but within the last two years, I met with a group called Fishing for Communities in Victoria, British Columbia. It is a network of "Indigenous and non-Indigenous fish harvesters, small businesses, fishmongers, chefs, restaurateurs, fishing families, and community organization" who are deeply concerned about the future of the seafood system and fisheries-dependent communities on the west coast of Canada. I will pull a piece right off of the website because I feel that it has a really good way of summarizing what is going on on the west coast of Canada, specifically. It says, "Decades ago, fisheries policy changed on the West Coast [when DFO] privatized fishing access rights making fishing licenses and quota available to the highest bidder on the open market." Since then, B.C. fish harvesters, first nations and coastal communities have struggled to continue their way of life. Unable to compete with corporate and global interests in the fishery, fishing and processing jobs have declined and disappeared.

One particular example of this occurring is highlighted in an article in *The Northern View*. One community that has been particularly hard hit is Prince Rupert. I spoke directly with commercial fisherman Joel Collier and his wife, the co-owner in their harvesting business, Melissa Collier. This is what was talked about in a story dated July 2022.

• (1255)

The article came out a while ago, but it is still so applicable to what we are seeing today. It states:

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Commercial fisherman Joel Collier was shocked when he docked in Prince Rupert this past summer, seeking a shower and shops to restock on supplies, only to find that many of the services and businesses he expected had disappeared.

"Prince Rupert being a huge fishing hub in the past, it was a pretty alarming change," Melissa Collier, Joel's wife, a fellow fisherman and co-owner of their harvest business, said.

The article talks about the fact that when Joel, who is a fisher, and his then partner stopped at Prince Rupert to shower and to be able to access the basic necessities, it had all suddenly shut down. It also talks about how they were looking for a part for their board, which they would normally be able to access in a business in this town. I believe it was a marine antenna. They were unable to access this particular piece of necessary equipment in order to continue on with the fishing. They went to another dock and, again, similar problems occurred.

This is the story we are hearing from many in these coastal communities and from the fishers who rely on them; because of the fact that we are seeing so many local fishers being hard hit right now, there is an impact on coastal communities. It impacts not just the people who are out on the water but also the communities themselves that rely on the fishing industry to thrive, to bring income in to the community, which is how we see vibrant communities that are flourishing.

The issue here around the particular ownership model on the west coast actually came up in the fisheries committee prior to my being a member of Parliament. I was elected in 2021. In 2019, the fisheries committee put together a report called "West Coast Fisheries: Sharing Risks and Benefits". The committee had a list of clear recommendations for the government as to how to best move forward to address the following issue: Currently, there is a system set up on the west coast that disproportionately benefits large corporations and negatively impacts local fishers. The report is asking for the benefits to be provided to those who have boots on the boats, as they like to refer to them. It states that those who are actually out and fishing should be accessing the benefits of the fishing industry. Instead, on the west coast, we see an overabundance of profits going into large corporations that are not only sipping the benefits out of coastal communities but also sending the investment elsewhere.

We have a tremendous amount of resources here along the coasts of Canada as well as in the Great Lakes and rivers. The fishery is an industry that needs to be benefiting Canadians here at home. Unfortunately, that is not what we are seeing on the west coast. We need to see the government taking the actions required to move forward with addressing this. To make matters worse, approximately 85% of Canadian-caught seafood is exported while we import 63% of our seafood. It makes no sense. We have a system that contributes to more greenhouse gas emissions, disempowers small-scale fish harvesters and may affect the future of our fisheries and oceans.

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There is the Fisheries for Communities group and, as I mentioned before, there are many different people who are part of this work. They are asking for the government to give fishing access back to fish harvesters, first nations and coastal communities. They go on to say that only first nations and people who work on fishing boats should be able to own a licence and quota, as I was talking about with respect to the boots on the boats, and that there should be policies in place that phase out big business, investors and non-domestic ownership.

With that, I would like to say I am happy to see that we have the motion coming forward, and I hope the government will implement real policies to support fishers here in Canada.

● (1300)

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand here in full support of Motion No. 111, which calls for the designation of the first day of October every year as national Canadian seafood day.

First and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the hon. member for Malpeque, in Prince Edward Island, for introducing this very important motion. The motion represents more than just a symbolic gesture. It embodies a profound acknowledgement of the cultural heritage and significance of fish and seafood within Canadian society, our culinary traditions, our health and our blue economy.

The cultural and traditional value of fish and seafood in Canada, quite frankly, cannot be overstated. From the serene shores of the Pacific to the rugged, windswept coasts of the Atlantic, and from the icy, pristine waters of the Arctic to the rich, biodiverse expanse of the Great Lakes, fish and seafood are important sources of sustenance and are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric and the spiritual life of Canada.

Fish and seafood have served, and continue to serve, as the tidal pulse of many communities and local economies. They have been central to the social structures and the ceremonial practices of so many communities. From Atlantic lobsters and Arctic char, to Pacific salmon and farmed shellfish, Canadian seafood is both delicious and healthy. I can personally attest to that.

Canada's fish and seafood products are celebrated for their exceptional quality, freshness, variety, nutritional value, sustainability and, most importantly, taste. Therefore, it is unsurprising that our fish and seafood continue to be highly coveted in the global marketplace. In fact, last year alone, Canada exported \$7.6 billion worth of fish and seafood to 115 countries around the globe.

The United States continues to be our largest and most important trading partner, accounting for nearly two-thirds of our exports. To put things in perspective, in my province of Nova Scotia, the biggest export by far is seafood; a distant second is tires. So much is dependent on it. By supporting the establishment of the national Canadian seafood day, we are celebrating not only an iconic Canadian industry, but also the enduring connection between Canada's people and the waters.

Further, we recognize that just as our coastal waters connect us physically to the rest of the world, our sustainably harvested fish

and seafood products connect us commercially with trading partners near and far. Our trading partners look to us for that exceptional product quality that few can deliver worldwide.

The contribution of Canadians who harvest and process these outstanding products deserves Canada's attention, acknowledgement, appreciation and celebration. In supporting this motion, we can take a step in the right direction. We also embrace a valuable opportunity to educate and promote the value of Canadian fish and seafood products as a nutrient-rich source of food harvested in our waters.

A 2023 Dalhousie University study found that almost 80% of respondents in Canada regularly consume fish and seafood. This is indicative of a strong appetite for fish and seafood products. However, the majority of fish and seafood consumed in Canada is imported. Canada, with its vast and pristine coastlines and waterways, is endowed, no doubt, with an abundance of marine life. Our country is one of the world's largest seafood suppliers, yet much of our premium seafood is exported to satisfy high demand abroad.

Support for Motion No. 111 can also encourage the consumption of local fish and seafood products by Canadians, and support for local harvesters and local coastal economies. We should all be taking advantage of the sustainable products harvested in our waters by our local fish and seafood sector. Motion No. 111 recognizes this.

I do want to take a moment to highlight and promote some of the health benefits of fish and seafood consumption. In particular, fish and seafood offer a treasure-trove of nutrients, offering Canadians a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, high-quality proteins, and essential vitamins such as vitamin D and vitamin B2.

Omega-3 fatty acids are particularly crucial for cardiovascular health, and are known for reducing inflammation and potentially lowering the risk of heart disease. By promoting Canadian fish and seafood, we not only provide Canadians with increased awareness of the merits and benefits of our products, but also point to the nutritional value these products have to offer.

● (1305)

Much of what I talked about speaks to the motion's high value to our personal health and to our communities' health. Beyond health benefits, promoting Canadian fish and seafood supports our efforts to address food sovereignty and security. Food sovereignty involves people's right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecological, sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems.

By promoting consumption of Canadian fish and seafood, we would be helping to bolster the resilience of food systems, acting locally against global market fluctuations and supply chain disruptions. Local sourcing, for example, can reduce the reliance on imported foods, which can be vulnerable to external pressures.

Promoting Canadian fish and seafood can also enhance domestic food security, which is particularly crucial in remote and coastal communities where access to fresh produce and other staples, quite frankly, can be limited. For example, locally sourced seafood can provide a reliable and accessible source of nutrition, helping to reduce dependency on imported goods that may be less fresh and more expensive. In addition, fish and seafood are recognized as having a relatively lower carbon footprint compared to other options.

By promoting Canadian fish and seafood, Canadians would become increasingly aware of the domestic and local options available to them. With this awareness, Canadians could also recognize that choosing to enjoy a locally sourced, delicious and nutritious fish and seafood meal can also contribute to a reduction in the national carbon footprint, aligning with global efforts to combat climate change.

Environmental sustainability is another cornerstone of this initiative. Canadian fisheries are managed with a commitment to sustainability that is recognized and valued worldwide. National Canadian seafood day would provide an excellent platform from which to showcase our sustainable practices and to educate the public about the importance of supporting sustainable managed fisheries. In doing so, we would also be promoting the merits of choosing Canadian seafood sources, under sustainable fisheries management processes, not only for our health and well-being, but also for the health of our oceans.

This is an important motion. It is something to recognize. It is something to embrace. It will educate Canadians, and I am very pleased to have been the seconder of this motion. I look forward to its safe passage.

• (1310)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, Conservatives will be supporting this motion. I am a member of Parliament from the west coast and, obviously, seafood, the fisheries and fishing have been part of British Columbia's history from the time it began with the first nations and for the past couple of hundred years with fishers.

It is fine to have a motion, which Conservatives support, on a national seafood day, but it really camouflages, I would say, the inaction of the Liberals, backed by the NDP, on the fisheries front. They are really not getting anything done. They put forward this motion to show what they are doing and say it is a love fest because we all agree about the importance of the fishing industry, but their policies have really been targeted to reduce fishing and the fisheries. They have mismanaged the whole sector.

I have visited different communities where the fishing industry is really important. I have met with industry officials, owner-operators, those trying to make a living, and the frustration is palpable with the Liberal government. They feel that this industry and their

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livelihoods are under attack. It is a growth industry for the Liberals, but in what sense? While they put \$300 million into the industry on the west coast, almost all of it is allocated toward 200 new bureaucrats. They are inflating and building up the bureaucracy and not really making any difference on the ground. They are actually making things worse.

There are different issues that are a big deal and that are having a negative impact. For example, the marine protected areas are basically closing down very significant areas of the coastline to fishing. There have been Order Paper questions on some of the different issues with these marine protected areas, as well as with the southern resident killer whales in the no-transit areas. There have been questions about how many whales go through this area, what times of the year and whether there has been a difference. It is sealing off areas for harvesting and fishing. The Liberals' response has been that it is a good question but they do not know what is going on. Basically, they are implementing their policies willy-nilly and destroying the livelihoods of many British Columbians by their insane and unscientific policies, which are taking significant areas away from fishing.

One of the biggest issues with regard to protecting the fisheries and seeing growth in the industry, on which there is almost unanimous consent, has to do with seals. We need to realize that 97% of unnatural deaths of salmon are not by fishing. That is 3%, but 97% is by seals. A councillor from one of the first nations in my region said that seals are destroying the salmon catch, and there is nothing being done about it. Liberal ministers sit on their hands, not doing anything, and then they blame it on climate change or whatever, when it is just bad policy and bad management of the fisheries.

• (1315)

We need some grown-ups, some adults managing the fisheries. I am looking forward to a Conservative government, which would bring some common sense.

Another issue that is of great importance is that of owner-operators. Conservatives, under the Harper government, made it so that those who operated the boats had to be the owners. It was not just going to be the big corporations.

The Department of Fisheries just seems to be lazy. It would rather deal with two or three big companies than a lot more of the smaller owner-operators who live in the community, provide jobs in the community and actually bring the fish back to the community to get processed. DFO prefers corporations that process the fish on the ships or take it up to Alaska. It is very frustrating for the fishers because they feel that their communities are being undermined by the Liberal-NDP government.

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There needs to be some changes. That is what the Conservative Party supports, to put the power back into the owner-operators. Right now, the packaging plants have moved. They have moved to Washington and Alaska. They are not in Canada. They are not in British Columbia because of the Liberal policies. We want to empower the owner-operators, the small business people and the fishers to have the livelihoods that would help the first nations and coastal communities that are dependent on it.

The Liberals and NDP, including the provincial NDP, are at war with the workers. We want to support working-class Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you seek it, you will find the unanimous consent of the House to see the clock at midnight.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Accordingly, pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 28, the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:19 p.m.)

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