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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

UKRAINIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-204, An Act respecting Ukrainian Heritage Month.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce a bill entitled an act respecting Ukrainian heritage month. If passed, the bill will declare September of every year in Canada Ukrainian heritage month. I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for cosponsoring this bill with me, and I hope members on all sides of the House support this legislation.

The first Ukrainian immigrants to Canada arrived 130 years ago. Vasyl Eleniak and Ivan Pylypiw arrived on September 7, 1891. Today, there are almost 1.4 million Ukrainian Canadians.

Ukrainian Canadians have made an important impact on this country. Their contributions span communities from coast to coast in every community represented here in the House, and their contributions are reflected in our economic, political, cultural and social life.

At the same time, Canada has welcomed and supported Ukrainian Canadians. Canada was the first country to recognize Ukraine's independence in 1991, Canada has recognized the Holodomor as a genocide and Canada continues to support Ukraine in its fight for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ukrainian heritage month would offer a special opportunity for us to celebrate Ukrainian heritage, the role Canada has played in supporting Ukrainian Canadians and the contributions Ukrainian Canadians have made to Canada.

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

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour of tabling a petition on the pandemic.

[*English*]

This petition is an electronic petition.

The petitioners point out that Canadians living in various parts of the country experience different responses and that the provinces and territories make different decisions. The petitioners feel that some Canadians have been better protected than others, but unless we are all protected, they do not see the end of the pandemic.

They are calling on the federal government to use whatever resources and means are necessary to deploy equivalent public health and safety provisions, response tools, strategies and policies. The suggestion in the petition is an innovative approach to use federal lands, for example, for rapid test clinics to ensure there are services available to all Canadians for proper testing and tracking and ensure that provincial health responses reflect Government of Canada science.

I present this petition on behalf of constituents who are concerned about the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

[*Translation*]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a petition today signed by members of my community in Outremont and Mile End.

The petitioners are calling on the government to act more quickly and decisively to reduce our emissions and make the just and green transition we all want.

[*English*]

I am extremely honoured to be presenting this petition on behalf of For Our Kids. These are grandparents and parents who are asking the government to reduce emissions by 60% below 2005 levels by 2030 while creating good, well-paying, low-carbon jobs for Canadians right across the country. They are also calling for a wealth tax in order to pay for this just transition. I am extremely proud to present their petition to the House of Commons.

The Address

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from November 23 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Parliament has returned after an election held amid the COVID-19 pandemic, an election that was called after the opposition parties asked the Prime Minister to wait until after the crisis. It was an election called as Afghanistan was falling. It was an election called as British Columbia was burning and feeling cut off from Ottawa.

The Prime Minister said he was calling a pandemic election because it was a pivotal time for our country. It was so pivotal that the Prime Minister took his sweet time to bring the House of Commons back to be accountable to Canadians at this pivotal time. It was so pivotal that three months after, he has still not put in place the full structure of government, committees and Parliament. The time was so pivotal for Canada that even the Prime Minister relented and brought back Parliament months late, and then immediately began to avoid scrutiny and accountability in the same way we ended the previous Parliament. One of the first actions of the Liberal government was to partner with the NDP to avoid accountability by returning Parliament to a virtual format.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister is shirking the great responsibility that comes with our Parliament. He is also ignoring the real consequences of his many failures, of his economic failures, on families, seniors and small businesses across the country.

- (1010)

[English]

The House of Commons has returned, but the Prime Minister still forgets that being Prime Minister of Canada is more than photo ops and more than announcements. The House is supposed to be a reflection of this great country: its hopes, its fears and its aspirations for the future. The House is supposed to reflect the will of the people in this great country.

However, the Liberal government seems intent on only governing for the connected few. That was clear in the Speech from the Throne, which completely ignored most of the critical issues facing Canada now, such as the inflation crisis, the cost-of-living crisis, economic uncertainty, severe labour shortages, alienation in the

west, an erosion of trust in the government and the complete collapse of Canada's reputation on the world stage.

The Prime Minister remains completely disconnected from the real needs of Canadians and is causing our country to be less prosperous and more divided. Too many voices in Canada do not feel heard. As leader of the Conservative opposition, I am going to share the voices of several Canadians who want to see real action from the government. Canada's Conservatives will be the voice for all Canadians who are being forgotten or left behind by the Liberal government.

While the Liberal and NDP MPs in this chamber will go back to hiding in their basements on Zoom, the Conservatives will be here to be a voice for the voiceless, to fight for a country that has never been more divided. We will be the voice for the millions of Canadians who believe in this country and want their elected officials to address the real issues being talked about at kitchen tables across this country, kitchen tables like those in Nova Scotia.

I spoke with Peter Richardson, a business owner from Nova Scotia. Peter has been operating a boat charter company and a lobster roll eatery near the famous Peggy's Cove for many years. In a good year, Peter would hire 10 other people to help throughout the season who would tour guests from across the country and around the globe to enjoy Canada's ocean playground.

However, when I spoke to Peter, he said he wonders why the Liberal government has repeatedly failed to listen to small business owners in the tourism sector as part of their COVID response measures. He knows that billions of dollars were spent. He knows of businesses that had record profits and still received support from support programs, while his business and the businesses of other small operators were completely left behind.

Peter, being a hard-working Canadian, found work and even helped transit the iconic Theodore Tugboat from Nova Scotia and the Halifax Harbour to Ontario down the St. Lawrence. He feels that Ottawa has not been listening to the voices of small operators in the tourism and travel sector. I want Peter and people in those highly affected sectors of travel, tourism and hospitality to know that the Conservative Party of Canada will be their voice in this Parliament.

[Translation]

I also spoke with Germain Blais, the CEO of Beauce Atlas, a company in Beauce, Quebec.

Germain, his family and his staff built a steel structure manufacturing business that is world renowned but depends on access to the U.S. market to succeed. His business built major projects such as the incredible Glacier Skywalk in Jasper National Park and the Logan airport in Boston.

Unfortunately, Beauce Atlas is another business that this government forgot. This is also the same government that failed to address the problems related to the buy American policy, the unfair tariffs on steel, and the labour shortage.

Germain told me that many of his foreign workers are from the Philippines. They worked hard to learn French. These workers are essential for his business, but they may have to leave the country because of wait times for their work permits.

The Liberal government did not say anything in the throne speech about the labour shortage. That is not a priority for the Liberal government.

I want businesses in Quebec, like Beauce Atlas and many others, to know that the Conservatives will be their voice and will address the labour shortage.

• (1015)

[English]

Another voice I want to ensure is heard in this Parliament is Clifford Martin's voice. He is from Trochu, Alberta. I had a great conversation with Clifford. He is an example of one of the millions of seniors across this country who has worked hard to contribute to the growing of Canada and deserves a retirement and senior years in dignity. Clifford and so many like him in all parts of this country have felt completely abandoned by the government.

Clifford drove a truck and had a number of jobs over a 40-year career before an injury at the age of 63 forced him to stop working. During the pandemic, he applied for support from the government. Clifford specifically asked the agent whether qualifying for the pandemic support would impact his pension or eligibility for the guaranteed income supplement. He was told directly by his government that it would not, yet without any notice he was cut off in July and is now struggling. He also sees thousands of other families in his province of Alberta struggling and losing faith not only in the government, but in Canada.

How did all of this happen, with some of the proudest Canadians losing faith? How could vulnerable people like Clifford, who reached out to their government, gave their social insurance number and asked specific questions, be told the wrong information? How could they be failed so badly by their government? How could it design these programs to leave people like Clifford behind?

This is another example of why Parliament needed to come back and why we need committees to come back. It is to make sure that people are not left behind again. Time after time the government has dropped the ball and Parliament needs to be here to pick it up again for the Cliffords of this country.

He told me that, as a result of the cuts in July, his cupboards are bare at the end of the month. He relies on food banks. Like a compassionate Canadian, Clifford also told me, "I try not to make using the food bank a habit, as there are people out there worse off than me."

I find inspiration in that. That is the inspiration of our citizens, of our country, struggling and facing challenges themselves but still thinking of others. The generosity of Clifford and the hearts of the people in Alberta are an example to us here in Parliament.

The Address

Clifford is not alone. I spoke to the organizer at Food Banks Canada, which ties together a network of members: food banks in small towns, large cities, remote communities and indigenous communities across this country. Food Banks Canada told me that Clifford's situation is not unique. Food banks across this country have seen an acute rise in use from families renting in this economy, with rents going up. They are raising children and needing to access food banks to keep people fed. Single seniors living on their own, fighting against the cost of living increases that are leaving them drowning at the end of the month, are also a group of Canadians using food banks more. Clifford in Trochu, Alberta is just an example of that.

Food banks across this country are trying their best to meet the rising need. We know that inflation, the cost of living crisis the government is trying to ignore, is going to put additional strain on all of these important agencies in our communities. That is why inflation matters. That is why, Prime Minister, monetary policy matters. That is why the budget, debt, deficits, job creation, competitiveness and our economic future matter, something lost completely on a Prime Minister who is making us less prosperous and driving up the cost of everyday living.

Canadians are falling behind, and I want to thank those generous citizens and organizations like food banks that are helping lift people up. I want to champion and salute food banks across this country and thank their volunteers, donors and employees, including Feed the Need in Durham, in my area, and the Daily Bread Food Bank in the GTA. I want to use this opportunity to invite Canadians and all their communities to support their food banks in the Christmas season. We should be like Clifford and make sure we are thinking about people in our community and stepping up to help our food banks this Christmas season.

These are just a few of the voices that Conservative members have been telling me about and connecting me with across this country, families and businesses that are struggling as our country faces a cost of living crisis, a housing crisis, economic challenges and strains on mental health and wellness. There is hardly a family in this country that has not been directly touched by the mental health strains of this pandemic.

Canadians are feeling the pressure, and they are getting priced out of their own lives. They worry about the debt being heaped on the shoulders of their children. They love this country, and they wonder how a Prime Minister who decides to vacation for a day dedicated to reconciliation can be the same Prime Minister who uses our national flag as a political prop.

The Address

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Our country is in the midst of a serious crisis. Canadians are more divided than ever. Families are dealing with more and more challenges and stress. Our economy is weak and our prosperity is in jeopardy.

Meanwhile, Canadians see a Liberal government that is completely out of touch with these realities, a government that is so out of touch that it is making these challenges worse.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister's high-tax, high-deficit agenda will cripple our economy at a time when it is already teetering on the edge. The Prime Minister's ideological and activist agenda will further erode our national unity at a time when it is already under massive pressure.

Rhetoric and empty promises are what we have heard from the government at a time when Canadians desperately need progress. Ambition has trumped achievement; symbolism has replaced action and division has eclipsed unity after six years of the Liberal government.

It is also clear that my friends in the NDP will not hold the Liberals to account. Instead, days after campaigning against the Liberals in the election, the NDP were campaigning to join them in some sort of coalition that will make our challenges even greater and will give the Liberal government a pass on accountability. Well, Canada's Conservatives will not stay silent while our collective prosperity is put at risk.

My friends in the NDP have forgotten who they used to represent. Canada's Conservatives are the real voice for working Canadians in this country. We are the real voice of small business owners, of steel- and autoworkers, of farming families, and of parents and seniors. As the official opposition, we will continue to fight for an economic recovery, not just for the friends of the Prime Minister, but for every Canadian in every region and every sector of this country.

That is why we are here. This is Canada's House of Commons and after COVID-19, after the last almost two years, every Canadian family deserves a recovery and a return to as much of a normal life as possible. That is not just for the select few that the Liberal government thinks are worthy.

However, our postpandemic economic recovery is in jeopardy. Many businesses, investors, employers and entrepreneurs are already starting to give up on Canada. Over the last two years the Liberals have spent a staggering \$400 billion above what the government should have been spending, and in the four years before that, let us not lose sight of the fact that in good economic times, with strong employment numbers, they ran another \$100 billion of debt. Half a trillion dollars of debt by the government with an economy that is enjoying only tepid growth. Our country is drowning in the rising water of debt, and that is fuelling inflation and uncertainty.

I want to be clear. The pandemic was a crisis that needed a response, and whenever there is a time to put our country first, from

the first wave to today, Canada's Conservatives will always put the country first. The impact of COVID-19, particularly early on, required a swift and large series of supports to help families and to help businesses stay afloat. We needed to spend, but we did not need to spend more than almost every other country on the planet. We did not need to double the national debt. We did not need to pay students living at home with their parents not to work. We did not need to ignore, as the government did, small businesses like Peter's in Nova Scotia, in tourism and hospitality, our restaurants. They needed the support, but they have told us repeatedly that they felt abandoned. Worse than just being slow and unfocused, the Liberal government threw away money on spending that did not foster economic growth and preserving the future. Rather than focus on investment and stimulus to kick-start our recovery and strengthen the economy, the government was focused on furthering its own partisan agenda.

The Deputy Prime Minister herself said the pandemic created "a window of political opportunity". Well, it certainly was an opportunity for the WE Charity. It certainly was an opportunity for former Liberal MPs, like Frank Baylis. It certainly was an opportunity for Liberal lobbyists and the thousands of documents covered up so we could not see how well they accessed supports.

• (1025)

Even when the government was in crisis, the Prime Minister and his inner circle gave special access to their friends and insiders, while people like Peter in the tourism sector and restaurant owners could not get their calls returned. This type of special access to friends and family of the Prime Minister has been there from his first days in office, and people wonder why there is growing cynicism about public life, about Parliament and about politicians. The Prime Minister has set a tone of corruption from day one, and it has sunk into all the benches of his government.

Canada's Conservatives have repeatedly warned the government about reckless spending and insider deals and what they would cost our country in terms of prosperity and unity. For more than a year, we warned the government about the flood of money into our system and the constant extension of programs and CERB and other benefits when there were labour shortages. We warned that it would fuel inflation, especially if spending was not targeted and time-limited. Now we are watching the consequences of the government's actions in real time.

The Address

Heating homes is more expensive and natural gas is up 20%. Filling up a car is more expensive under the Prime Minister, up 42%. Buying food for one's family, putting food on the table, is more expensive, up 10% to 20% for nutritious foods. All of this is piled on top of housing inflation put in motion by the Prime Minister's inaction for the last five years, which is pricing Canadians out of their own neighbourhoods. Rent is up 20% this year alone in some Canadian cities, while wages are flat or declining. Everything is going up, except the optimism of Canadian families for our prospects in the future. Canada is the only country in the G7 where inflation is dramatically accelerating quarter after quarter, while our GDP is flat or even shrinking in some quarters.

We will hear the Prime Minister and the finance minister ignore people who are warning about the cost-of-living crisis, and suggest that it is transitory, that it is temporary. Canadians know the prices are not going to go down. They see no plan to tackle the labour shortage. They know this is not true. They know the Prime Minister does not understand the pressures families are facing, because he has never had to face pressures in his life.

Other countries are experiencing a degree of inflation, but only Canada is seeing its economy in actual long-term decline. The United States is facing inflation, but quarter after quarter it has had roaring GDP growth.

Under the Liberal government, Canada spent the most per capita among our allies on COVID benefits, and got the worst result. Hundreds of billions of dollars were spent and we have an unemployment rate that is almost 2% above the G7 average. Inflation has skyrocketed to 4.7% and is still rising, while hourly wages are up barely 2% over a year ago. That means the average Canadian worker is experiencing a 3% pay cut at the worst possible time.

Canadian families are being forced to make hard choices. Families raising kids and seniors, especially single seniors on fixed income, are having to do more with less, and they are worried. They do not see this as being transitory or temporary. They see this hurting their lives today. While the Liberal government and some of its pundits will continue to downplay the long-term risks to our economy and the challenges facing families with inflation, the results speak for themselves.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Job creation is a good thing. It has always been one of my goals, but we also need to tackle the labour shortage. This is not just a problem; it is a crisis affecting every sector in Canada, from restaurants and construction sites to farms and factories.

Shops and businesses everywhere have "Help wanted" signs in the window. Millions of dollars are being lost every day. Thousands of businesses have closed their doors or left the country because they cannot find workers.

Businesses are suffering. The Prime Minister needs to understand that. He needs to protect them. The solution is to make it easier to bring in foreign workers, invest in skills training programs and recruit students and retirees to work in the trades and reduce skyrocketing costs.

When will the Prime Minister finally listen to them?

[*English*]

During the pandemic, Canada spent the most per capita of any G7 country, only to achieve the worst economic outcomes. Our employment rate shows that, and these are not just numbers: they are real people, such as the mother who lost her job in the tourism sector in Victoria, the student in Hamilton who relies on waiting tables to help pay for school and the energy worker in St. John's or in Fort McMurray. Now the Biden administration, with enhanced measures on buy-American, more protectionist policies and higher tariffs, threatens to cost thousands more Canadian jobs.

The current Prime Minister has led our country through the steepest decline in Canada-U.S. relations in the modern age over the course of three different administrations, so we cannot blame the second one. Over three presidents we have watched our partnership with the United States on trade, diplomacy and security wither away to nothing. What was a special relationship for centuries is a token relationship under the current Prime Minister.

President Biden admitted as much last week, when he described relations with Canada as the "easiest" relations the U.S. has. A one-way street is quite easy. It is easy for the U.S. to dominate, easy for the U.S. to win with the current Prime Minister and easy to ignore Canada under the current Liberal government.

When it comes to Canada-U.S. relations, the Prime Minister's track record over six years could be the subject of an hour speech alone. His approach is one of symbolism, posturing and failure to express a shared vision for our continent and for our democratic values. Over time, Canada's influence in Washington has waned to a point that Canada does not even warrant a phone call anymore.

The Address

It was easy for the U.S. President to cancel Keystone XL, because he knows the Prime Minister does not care about our energy sector. It was easy for the President to ignore the actions of the governor of Michigan when it came to the shutdown of Line 5, because she was following the Prime Minister's lead. It is easy for the U.S. to double softwood lumber tariffs, because the Prime Minister failed to make the case for our lumber sector six years ago when the President was the vice-president. It is easy for the U.S. to box out Canada when it fixes its supply chain crisis and when it rebalances global trade with China, because the Prime Minister has ignored U.S. warnings about Huawei and other foreign takeovers, and has showed repeatedly that Canada is no longer, under the current Liberal government, a trustworthy ally.

Now, it is easy for the U.S. to ignore the integrated Canada-U.S. automotive industry that goes back to the 1960s and the auto pact.

• (1035)

It is easy for President Biden to pledge massive incentives for U.S.-only-made electric vehicles, because the Prime Minister has never adequately made the case for the auto, energy, forestry or any sector in Washington.

What does the Prime Minister say in the face of these risks to auto workers in Windsor, St. Catharines, Oshawa and other communities across Ontario and, indeed, across Canada? The Prime Minister said that he is “a little bit concerned”.

There has been failure upon failure with our most important economic relationship, and after six years of failure the best we can get out of this Prime Minister is that he is a little bit concerned. Canada's Conservatives are very concerned about our economic prosperity and our future relations with the United States. Our relationship with the United States is in tatters and is about to get worse, and finally our Prime Minister is only a little bit concerned.

We will continue to fight to restore the influence lost under the Prime Minister's watch, with our shadow minister and our entire team understanding the needs of working Canadians, understanding the needs of the energy, steel and auto sectors, understanding the needs of farming families and fighting for our security interests and our values on the world stage. Canada's Conservatives will work hard to restore that important relationship with the United States as we cannot count on this government.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

At a time when the country is more divided than ever, the Prime Minister needs to respect the provinces, change how he relates to them, drop the paternalistic attitude and work with them as a partner. As Prime Minister, his focus should be on uniting the country, not dividing it.

My approach is different. It is the opposite of the Prime Minister's “Ottawa knows best” approach. It is the Conservative approach, one of respect, listening, dialogue and finding common ground.

The Liberal government also needs to resolve the French language issue once and for all. We need a modern Official Languages Act now, one with actual teeth that is based on what minority fran-

cophone communities say they need. The Liberals talk a good game, but they have not done anything since 2015. They need to stop playing political games. The French language is in danger not only in Montreal, but elsewhere in Quebec and Canada. It is a priority right now, and it is my priority.

I have said it before and I will say it again: Under my leadership, the Conservative Party will defend the interests of Quebec, its identity and its culture. The Prime Minister does not believe that Canada has an identity. He wants Canadians to live in shame, ashamed of their past, their identity and their culture. He favours accusations, division and conflict over listening, sharing, dialogue and reconciliation. He sees patriotism as problematic, as though loving one's country were a problem. I have dedicated my life to defending my country. I have served my country and am very proud to continue serving it. That is why I continue to fight for Canada.

[*English*]

We have seen the Prime Minister continually fail to match his ambition with achievement. Nowhere is this more true than when it comes to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. The Prime Minister, who once said that this relationship was the most important for him as Prime Minister, is the same person who famously turned indigenous protesters into punchlines. The Prime Minister went surfing rather than stand in solidarity.

Reconciliation is another issue for which the Liberal government prefers symbolism as a substitute for serious action. I have spoken to many indigenous leaders, and they are tired of the talk. They are tired of the symbolism and they are tired of the inaction of the Liberal government. They are tired of ambition with no plan, tired of having to wait for another study, another review or another retired Liberal politician studying something. They are tired of more ministers who promise action and fail to deliver.

Reconciliation at its core means re-establishing trust between indigenous peoples and the federal government, it means rebuilding respect and it means action. It means forging partnerships with indigenous leaders, nations and businesses to move the relationship forward together. Above all, it requires honesty and striving to over-deliver and stop over-promising. A promise to eliminate long-term drinking water advisories is just empty words without a plan and a firm deadline to do so. A promise made by the Prime Minister in 2015 to move on all calls to action in the truth and reconciliation report is equally hollow without a transparent process to prioritize actions and be held accountable for them.

The Address

The painful discovery of graves at the former residential school site in Kamloops made the news across the country months ago. My 10-year-old son, Jack, and I talked about it. He said to me, “Kids aren’t supposed to die at school, dad.” These are the conversations of reconciliation. These are the difficult but important conversations all Canadian families must have. I am sure that many families and many communities have had these difficult conversations. What I told Jack was that Canada has a plan to help those families heal. Our country has a plan to return those missing children home. Our country has a plan and a road map to address the sins of our past and of our present.

I know the Prime Minister cares about this as deeply as I do. I have said this on numerous occasions. I know all members of the House want to act on the path of reconciliation. I know that all members and their families have shared the pain of Kamloops, Cowessess, Kootenay and so many other communities. That is why, in June, the Conservative opposition pledged our cross-party support to move swiftly on calls to action 71 to 76. We pledged that before Canada Day to show survivors, indigenous communities and all Canadians that we can make progress on the path to reconciliation. We can harness our tears of sorrow into the perspiration of action.

Half a year later, and after half a year with our flag at half-mast, nobody knows the status of those calls to action in relation to missing children at former residential school sites. Once again, there is no urgency, no transparency and no action from the government. There is no leadership from the Prime Minister on this issue, despite the fact that he cares and makes those promises.

Canada's Conservatives want to see steady and measurable progress on reconciliation with first nations. We want families in urban and rural settings, on and off reserves, to be lifted out of poverty. We want the next intergenerational transfer for indigenous peoples to be wealth and opportunity, not more decades of trauma.

● (1045)

With the cost of living crisis our country is facing, this is more important than ever for first nation communities and indigenous families. We need to dismantle the barriers that hold back too many young indigenous people back from jobs, skills development and post-secondary education. For first nation communities and businesses across the country, we need to build partnerships; indigenous supply chains, including in the energy sector; and revenue-sharing models. First nation leaders and businesses are there, but the government is not. We must also take action on housing and focus on mental health and addiction support.

[*Translation*]

I want to congratulate the Liberal government on its decision to create the position of minister responsible for mental health. I like to think that our policies and initiatives may have contributed to that decision, but again, I hope this will be more than just symbolic, as per usual. Like me, Canadians want concrete measures.

[*English*]

We will continue pushing for significant funding for culturally appropriate services to end addiction, and the mental health epidemic, on and off reserves for indigenous Canadians.

I want inequality and discrimination to become things of the past and for indigenous peoples to be full partners in the prosperity of Canada. When the Liberal government takes ideological action that hurts the prosperity of Canada and goes against the resource sector, whether through capping or trying to stop resource development, Canadians need to know it is also hurting our progress on the road to reconciliation. The government, countless times, has violated its constitutional duty to consult first nations, and it is holding back partnerships and opportunities for indigenous peoples to have prosperity.

Ideological policies are leaving behind millions of Canadians and causing strains to our national unity. The world is currently facing an energy crisis. We see it ourselves in our everyday lives when we go to the pumps and gas is almost 50% higher. We see it in President Biden calling for OPEC and other energy producers to increase production of oil and gas to lower soaring energy prices, which could complicate global pandemic recovery.

Nothing shows how out of touch and how ideologically unsound the government's natural resources policy is better than what is happening right now in Washington. Our closest ally, the United States, is asking for more oil and gas from countries in OPEC while holding back the Canadian energy sector with the cancellation of Keystone XL and threats to Line 5.

What is the Prime Minister going to do about this? Is he also a little concerned about this? Under the Prime Minister, it is easy for the United States to ask for less from Canada while asking for more from countries like Angola, Libya and Venezuela. Canada has some of the most ethical, most environmentally conscious, most regulated and highly transparent energy production in the world. We are a leader in terms of environmental, social and governance, or ESG, and we are the top leader in the world when it comes to ESG and indigenous participation. Canada is the energy ESGI power in the world, and we should be leveraging that to help Canadian families and our country, and to help with reconciliation.

The Address

Canada, as the leader of democratic resource countries, could step up and increase production to address the energy crisis. We can fill the void, and help Canadian families and our trade partners. The world can trust our industry's commitments to net zero and GHG emissions, while it cannot trust a word that comes out of any of the OPEC countries.

• (1050)

We have labour organizations, union leaders and union members right across this country who have helped by getting their hands dirty making our energy and natural resource sector world leaders, while being a source for hundreds of thousands of stable, well-paying jobs for their members. Unlike the NDP and the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party will stand alongside those working families for their future.

However, the Prime Minister and his new environment minister, who I think is cycling to Ottawa as we speak, want to deny the energy sector the opportunity to supply the world, to fill this gap, with ethical, lower-emission, Canadian energy at a time that it is desperately needed. The government would rather ship crude up the St. Lawrence from Saudi Arabia or Venezuela than ensure a worker in Edmonton or a worker in an indigenous community can provide for their family, and that is a failure.

The Prime Minister likes to pretend that we cannot support our energy sector while maintaining our commitment to climate action and lowering emissions. His recent cabinet choices seem to reward activists and demote pragmatists. The astronaut gets grounded and the activist gets launched. Time in handcuffs for stunts is valued over time in space for our country, and there is something wrong with that. We could say, "Houston, we have a problem."

On the world stage, this is another example of the Prime Minister's ambition and symbolism, rather than one of achievement and concrete action. Despite the tweets and tag lines, the Prime Minister has never hit one of his emission reduction targets. Talk is a great game. Like everything, he thinks budgets will balance themselves and emissions will lower themselves. He has failed on every single piece of his legislative agenda in 2015, except marijuana. I guess that is a personal favourite of his.

The Prime Minister has failed in every measure. He has raised our taxes. He did not lower our emissions. We are the only country in the G7 where emissions have gone up during the Prime Minister's time in government over the last five years. The Prime Minister is now tripling down on his failed policy by tripling the price of his carbon tax.

Conservatives know, and we have showed this in conversations, discussions and actual tangible plans, that we can protect our environment, lower our emissions, and meet our international amendments and agreements, without sacrificing our economy, without giving up on Clifford in Trochu, Alberta, and without giving up on families in Newfoundland and Labrador, as the Liberal MPs have for six years.

We know it is possible to work with our energy sector to lower emissions while providing jobs and opportunities at home, and while supplying sustainable and ethically resourced products to developing countries and our democratic allies, who should want to

source their energy from a country like Canada to transition to a lower-carbon future. Liberals want their coffee to be fair trade. They should want their energy to be fair trade as well.

We can lower emissions. We can promote green technologies, and we can generate emission-free electricity through nuclear, hydro, carbon capture and sequestration, all while protecting jobs in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and in fact, in all parts of this country.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

Investments in clean energy, such as hydrogen and small modular reactors, can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Canada and around the world. However, Canadians are seeing the opposite. They see the Liberal government cozying up to militant groups rather than doing any real work to promote innovation and create jobs in this country.

[*English*]

It is time for the government to get serious about Canada's economic and environmental future because its record has been dismal on both. It is failing on both measures and dividing the country as it goes.

Speaking of dividing the country, we saw that the pandemic election was focused on that. There was no hiding it. There was no reason for the election. In fact, everyone asked the Prime Minister not to have it. He planned on dividing east versus west and vaccinated against non-vaccinated, adding to the pressure when we should have been reducing it to tackle hesitancy.

We know the COVID-19 pandemic has been an extremely difficult time for our country. It required us to not play to those difficulties and divisions. It has been shameful to see the Prime Minister fall short of that, and lately, his whip as well. These hard times have often brought out the best in people outside of Parliament, especially our frontline health care workers, to whom we all owe a great debt.

We should also give a big thanks to the thousands of essential workers, truckers and people who stepped up to work, particularly when times were uncertain. They stepped up to help their friends and neighbours in need. However, when our country needed to be unified, the Prime Minister used vaccines as a wedge issue, both before and during the election.

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Research shows that the best way to increase vaccination rates is to incentivize, educate and persuade. Instead of doing the tough work to combat hesitancy and misinformation to encourage vaccination, the Prime Minister added to the confusion and the division in the country at a time when he should have been taking the pressure down. He needed to partner with the provinces delivering the health care, not use them as punching bags.

Questions of health are deeply personal. They are critical to the well-being of each Canadian, their family and their community. Such questions of personal health and well-being should never be used to divide or scare Canadians. When people, including anyone watching this speech right now, have questions about vaccines, they should go to their physician, or someone they trust, to have those questions answered because they need to get vaccinated.

The division has also added to the isolation and mental health costs this country is facing. It is sad to hear the Liberals laughing as I move on to mental health. They should be listening. This is an area that should be beyond politics because all families have seen the impacts on mental health and wellness during this pandemic. From our children to our grandparents, the loneliness and change in the pandemic has taken a toll on the mental well-being of everyone.

We have seen this in higher depression rates in young people. Eating disorders are out of control. We need to have important conversations and take the temperature down to make sure people get the help they need. There is help out there for them, and the Conservatives will continue to make sure we try to bring people together on this subject.

There is not a family I have spoken to in the last year, including my own, that has not been impacted by this crisis. Our country has been gripped not only by those who we have lost to COVID, but also those who we fear we might lose to it. Last year alone in British Columbia there were 60% more deaths attributable to the opioid crisis than to COVID. Opioid addictions became worse over the course of the pandemic.

Earlier this year, The Globe and Mail had a weekend cover page with the faces of some of the Canadians lost to the opioid crisis in the last two years. It moved our family so much that Rebecca and I laid the faces out on a table and had a chat with Mollie and Jack about the dangers of the opioid crisis.

- (1100)

They were heartbreaking photos of young lives cut short, sometimes with a drug that killed them on the first attempt, Canadians like 16-year-old Elliot Eurchuk from Victoria, who died two years ago, or 12-year-old Ally Londono from the same community, who died in April.

We owe it to these families to work together on all sides of this chamber to help communities, to help first nations, to help this country fight the opioid crisis, and we will stand in the House to do that.

We must provide options for treatment. We must work with communities that are seeing mental health and addiction change the face of their downtowns. I was talking to folks in Victoria about that weeks ago.

Vulnerable Canadians, people suffering, most with mental health conditions, are hiding in plain sight in our cities, because we are becoming accustomed to tent cities. We are becoming numb to the misery in our path. We are getting used to just crossing the street to avoid confronting it. Let us ensure Canada does not become a country that crosses the street.

We must create solutions so that those battling depression and addiction know where to turn for help. We need to ensure that wait times are not barriers to accessing real treatment, and treatment needs to be an option on top of harm reduction. We also need to ensure that all voices know that we want to hear from them. That is why the Conservatives put forward a national 988 suicide hotline in the last Parliament. It is why we have pushed for major investment in treatment beds, and why we will push the government to finally deliver on the 988 hotline to help Canadians.

I hope this is an area where I can finally say that ambition is matched by achievement. Let us work together to help the vulnerable in our society. I will praise when praise is due. I know my colleagues on the other side are as heartbroken as any parent when they see the images of those young people from Victoria or from any community. They feel that sorrow and they want to act. Therefore, I say this is for the back bench members of the Liberal government. After six years of not being heard, they should tell their Prime Minister to act on mental health and addiction.

Across the country, there are challenges but there are also incredible opportunities. Canada is blessed with our resources and our people. Let us never lose sight of that. We have to fight to see wages go higher. We have to combat inflation and know that people are suffering. However, there is hope on the horizon. Parliament is about instilling hope by action, not by words.

I meet young people all the time in the Greater Toronto Area or the Lower Mainland of B.C. A generation of Canadians in college or starting in the workforce are giving up on the idea of home ownership. They do not think it is even an option. We need to see action.

Commuters can hardly afford to fill up their tanks. Seniors are trying to stretch every dollar as inflation ravages their fixed income. Small businesses are being squeezed by inflation, high taxes and the supply chain shortages, making their margins disappear.

As we approach the holidays, far too many families will be accessing those food banks, as I spoke about earlier, and are worried about leaving gifts under the tree for their kids.

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Each month presents new challenges, and that is why each month we should be in Parliament fighting for Canadians as we face those challenges together. The Liberal government spending is fuelling inflation. The government's ideology is fuelling division. The government's platitudes are too often a barrier to real action.

• (1105)

The Conservative opposition is here to fight for Canadians, and I have spoken about a few of them in my speech today. We are proud of our country and we are here to stand up for it. We are here to fight for a plan toward prosperity and toward unity. We will be relentlessly focused on an economic recovery after this pandemic. I said it once and I will say it again; a recovery in every sector of our economy and in every region of our great country.

On inflation, on the budget, on taxes, on support for workers, on reconciliation, on climate change, on mental health and on the future, I want Canadians to know they have a voice in Ottawa with the Conservative opposition. We will actually be here and we will be a strong voice.

I want Canadians to know that they will have a choice to make in the future: achievement over empty words; more of the same from the Liberal and NDP coalition in its official or unofficial form; more of the same lofty rhetoric; more of the ideological division gripping our country; more of the ethical scandals and cover-ups that are becoming the hallmark of the Prime Minister's government; or Canada's Conservative opposition members who will stand up for all Canadians, who want to stand up for those who work hard to provide for their families.

In all parts of our great country, we will be their voice, the voice of Canadians who want to see a clean environment and a lower carbon future, but who want to leverage Canadian energy and innovation as part of that future; the voice for Canadians who are proud of what we build and what we invent in Canada, from the critical minerals in electric vehicles to the steel, aluminum and the people who go into making them; the voice of Canadians who are proud of their country and want to see real progress on the path of reconciliation and not just symbolic gestures.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Quebeckers are sick of waiting and getting crumbs from the Liberal government. They want Ottawa to show them some respect. They want an effective federal government that will address the labour shortage problem and the inflation crisis, while protecting Quebec's identity and autonomy. Only the Conservatives are up to the task. Only the Conservative team will do what it takes and stand up for Quebec.

[*English*]

I want Canadians to know that we heard them in the election. They did not want the pandemic election and they sent back another minority Parliament to get to work. They may have kicked the tires on the Conservative Party or even on me, but they did not buy the car. I want them to know that we will never stop fighting to earn their trust, and we want them to buy the blue car next time.

I am proud to lead a passionate, experienced and capable team of women and men from all parts of the country, who are here in Parliament because they love their country and they are committed to its unity and its prosperity. All of us will dedicate ourselves to peace, order and good government, and to healing the divisions in our country. When we can work with the other parties in House to make Canada more prosperous and more united, we will.

We will also be tenacious in our efforts to hold the government to account, to demand accountability and to demand transparency. We will propose solutions to get Canada moving again, and that is what our country needs. As opposition, we will oppose, and that is our job, but we will also propose plans for the future, and that is our passion. We will fight tirelessly for Canadians at home to build strong relations and to restore our reputation abroad.

We will work with indigenous leaders, union leaders, businesses and volunteers to create opportunities for our children and grandchildren. The Conservatives will be the real voice for working Canadians, for families and for seniors in Ottawa, because the Liberals and the NDP are leaving millions of voices behind.

We will stand against discrimination, because in a country as great as Canada, we must fight to make it better. There is no room for racism, intolerance, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or extremism of any kind. No Canadian should face barriers because of their faith, gender, sexual orientation or the colour of their skin. I want them to know that Canada's Conservatives will fight for all Canadians.

My true patriot love is as strong today as it was in 1991 when I first put on the uniform of service when Brian Mulroney was prime minister of the country. Standing in this chamber and having been part of the government of Stephen Harper, giving us balanced budgets and a place in the world, serving in uniform and in Parliament, at risk on Sea King helicopters and at risk on Twitter, it is the honour of my life. I have the honour to lead the party that founded our great country and I am proud to have a team that is here to save it.

Standing in this chamber, it is an honour for me to represent the people in Durham as well and it is an honour for me to be here as the husband of Rebecca and the father to Mollie and Jack. I often talk to them about our country's challenges and its opportunities.

As we emerge from the pandemic and as families across the country talk about those challenges and opportunities, they need to see the 44th Parliament seized with those challenges and passionate about the future of the country. They do not want more words and ambition; they want concrete action and achievement. My belief in Canada is unlimited, my confidence in its people unbounded and my dedication to its service is beyond measure.

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• (1115)

[Translation]

I believe in Canada. I believe in my country. My confidence in Canadians knows no bounds, and my devotion to this country is without limit.

The Conservative opposition is here to serve Canada. It is our job and that is what we will do.

[English]

We will strive to place the interests of the country, its unity and its prosperity at the forefront of everything we do in this Parliament. We will serve as a reflection of the country, its people, its hopes, its fears and its aspirations. Over the course of this Parliament, we will work hard to prove ourselves worthy of what Prime Minister Borden once described as the “great responsibility [that] comes to us as heirs of the past and trustees of the future.”

In that spirit, for those reasons, I move:

That the motion be amended by adding the following:

(a) a cost of living crisis that is cutting the average Canadian worker's paycheque by 2.7%, which requires urgent action by the government to (i) table a plan to control spending and apply a laser focus on policies that will create growth, (ii) maintain the Bank of Canada's 2% inflation target, (iii) increase production of Canadian energy to boost supply and lower gas prices, (iv) take action to improve the resilience of Canadian supply chains;

(b) a stagnant economy, with Canada's real GDP growth now the weakest in the G7, actually shrinking by 1.1% in the second quarter, which requires urgent action by the government to (i) reduce the burden of taxes and regulation to restore Canada as an attractive place to invest and build a business, (ii) table a plan to create growth in all sectors of the economy and boost real wages, (iii) drive innovation and technology by overhauling Canada's R&D programs;

(c) a housing crisis that has driven home prices up 30% over the past year and priced thousands of young families out of the market, which requires policies that will build an additional one million homes over the next three years by (i) reallocating 15% of the government's real estate portfolio for housing, (ii) tackling regulatory barriers that raise costs of construction, (iii) linking infrastructure dollars to higher density zoning, (iv) committing to not tax principal residences;

[Translation]

(d) an acute labour shortage that is affecting 60% of businesses in Canada and 82% of Canadian manufacturers, which requires the government to (i) improve alignment of immigration criteria with the needs of employers, (ii) streamline the rules of the temporary foreign workers program, (iii) improve skills training and give more powers to provinces; and

[English]

(e) a national unity crisis, which requires (i), respecting provincial jurisdiction, (ii), supporting and growing all parts of the economy, including the energy sector, (iii), restoring confidence in our national institutions, starting by returning ethics and accountability to the government.

• (1120)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Outremont.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne, our government laid out measures in order to ensure a strong economic recovery. We also laid out steps in order to keep Canadians safe; safe from COVID-19, but also safe from the scourge of gun violence that has been attacking our cities. We have committed to building on the assault weapons ban, on instituting a mandatory buyback and on cracking down on smuggling at the borders.

[Translation]

I understand that the Conservative leader does not like talking about gun control. His performance during the election campaign was totally disastrous on that front. However, we are a few days away from the anniversary of the Polytechnique femicide. The loved ones and families of the victims have the right to a response.

Can the leader of the Conservatives tell us today whether he is or is not in favour of reinforcing the ban on assault-style weapons in Canada?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. Action must be taken, especially at the border, because the Liberal government has ignored the problem on that front. Ten days ago, Thomas Trudel was murdered in Montreal. That is another example of street gang violence. We are ready to act together with the police, municipalities and the families of victims to stop the smuggling, because that is the problem. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has ignored the problem, and its inaction has only made it worse. It is time to tackle the real problem.

[English]

It is time to really act, as we saw recently with Thomas Trudel, the latest young victim caught in rising gang violence in cities. These are illegally smuggled weapons from the United States that any serious voice will tell us is what we have to stop in all of our big cities.

I would like the member for Outremont to listen to what I said in my speech. Lofty words not matched by real concrete action at the border are another example of a government that is making public safety in our cities worse.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know there are many members of the Conservative caucus who are prone to conspiracy theories. I see the leader of the official opposition is no exception, but what he does not talk about is the other coalition that sometimes rears its head around here: the collaboration between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

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For instance, in the last Parliament, when we proposed a national pharmacare program and legislation to put it into effect, we saw the Liberals and Conservatives collaborate to end it. When we talk about tax havens and tax fairness, we see the Liberals and Conservatives co-operate to ensure that real action is not taken to make the wealthy pay their fair share. When we talk about back-to-work legislation, steamrolling the rights of workers, the Conservatives are the first to stand up and vote with the Liberals to pass back-to-work legislation. Even on the question of prorogation and dissolution of Parliament in the last Parliament at the procedure and House affairs committee, when we moved to say the Prime Minister should no longer have the right and privilege of proroguing the House and dissolving Parliament without consulting this place, it was Conservatives who sided with the Liberals to defend the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

When it comes to the labour shortage, the leader of the official opposition talks about the labour shortage and says the Liberals have no plan. In fact, the plan they have is to end the CRB, which was the major recommendation of the Conservatives. We are a month out. We have not seen any alleviation of the labour shortage, but there are almost 900,000 Canadian workers who were hung out to dry—

• (1125)

The Deputy Speaker: The leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I have to admire the courage of the member for Elmwood—Transcona to rise in the House and talk about coalitions. I know that his leader probably did not consult him on the coalition that he put forward with the Liberal government. It was a coalition to spend more and get less and a coalition to cover things up, which is actually not the job of the opposition.

I know that member comes from a long line of New Democrats who used to stand up for working Canadians. They do not anymore. That colleague knows that some of the members of Parliament from the NDP were participating in protests called Shut Down Canada. Do members know who that hurts? It hurts working Canadians. It hurts indigenous communities. It holds back our economy.

That is why we are coming after seats in Timmins and Winnipeg, where working families want more than some woke voices. They want concrete action to make sure they have jobs for their families and a future for their kids. To all the working families, there is no NDP left for them anymore. They should unite behind the Conservatives. We will fight for them.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing the second opposition.

I have to say that I do not even know where to begin with the speech by the leader of the official opposition, especially the part about the environment, because I have so many questions to ask him. First, I would say to him that ethical oil and clean oil do not exist.

The leader of the official opposition stated that Canada can play a leadership role. I will talk about the ways in which Canada is a leader.

Canada is a leader when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions. Canada is the top emitter of all G7 countries. Canada is a leader when it comes to subsidies for oil energy and having the most polluting vehicles, for example. Canada makes the third largest per capita contribution to global warming.

When the leader of the official opposition speaks about improving the environmental record—we know that there is work to do—does this mean that he and his party believe we should go from oil to even more oil?

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of Canada's energy sector. I am proud of our workers in Quebec and all across the country. I am proud of clean energy, more specifically, hydroelectricity in Quebec. I am proud of Hydro-Québec. I am proud of nuclear energy and small modular reactors, too. I am also proud of our businesses out west that are reducing their emissions.

All of the members in the House use gas. That is the reality. It is hard to bike between Saguenay and Ottawa. We must use Canadian energy, especially in the coming decades, because it is cleaner than Saudi Arabian gas and energy. This is why I am proud of all of our workers in Canada and Quebec. We must work together to support an economic recovery in Quebec and across the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition back in this House. It is great to see him in the same seat as in the 43rd Parliament. He mentioned during his speech \$400 billion that the government had perhaps overspent. I do not have the words right in front of me. By rough math, that is about two-thirds of what the government took on during the height of the pandemic to be able to support Canadians with the wage subsidy, the emergency business account and the CERB.

I think it is important for him to be able to come clear with Canadians what programs he would not have supported. The problem I have, if I may, as a backbench MP being able to address him, is that I hear in one moment from his colleagues that we should do more and are not doing enough and in the next breath that too much has been done and that there are deficits and debt.

What is the member's position? There has been flip-flop, whether it is on guns or vaccines. It is not clear to Canadians what this party stands for. We talked about tourism and small businesses. Will this party support Bill C-2, the measures to protect our tourism-related and hardest-hit sectors, in the days ahead?

• (1130)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I am glad a backbench member of the government stood up to ask me a question. Unlike in his party, everyone in my party is able to talk to me.

The irony for the member for Kings—Hants, who said that I was in the same seat and he is glad about it, is that he was in that same seat as a government backbencher. Peter Richardson, who I talked about, the small business owner from Peggy's Cove, asked for his help. His comments to me were that he could get calls but there were no programs for small business. They were not being heard. He was not connected.

I challenge that member, as I did the backbench. After six years of being ignored by the Prime Minister, after six years of seeing our economy at risk, our unity at risk, it is time for that member to stand up and be heard.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Beaches—East York.

I will begin by acknowledging that this House rests on unceded Algonquin Anishinabe territory. I will also take the opportunity to thank the people of Fredericton for putting their faith in me once again.

[*Translation*]

I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

[*English*]

It was certainly a journey to return to the House. Our paths to this place are unique. We all have had our battles. We learn, we grow, we keep moving forward. I want to congratulate my fellow members of Parliament on their election and for the privilege to stand in the House to represent Canadians.

I also want to congratulate the Hon. Mary Simon on her historic appointment and the remarkable career that led her to the throne. She makes me feel humble and proud to be Canadian and grateful for my home, which is on native land. This we must acknowledge each and every day as the foundation of reconciliation. As Governor General Simon said:

This land acknowledgement is not a symbolic declaration. It is our true history. In each of your own ridings, I encourage you to seek out the truth, and to learn about the lived realities in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. Although each community is distinct, we all share a desire to chart a way forward together towards reconciliation.

I was looking for leadership on reconciliation in the Speech from the Throne and a moment of education for those who need reminding of their treaty relationship or the ones eager to find ways to improve their allyship. Our Governor General is telling us to keep talking, learning, sharing, reaching out, building bridges and doing the work, and there is still so much work to do. We see treaty rights met with violence in the east, legal and hereditary rights challenged in the west, a water crisis in the north, a housing crisis in communities and cities across this country and ongoing investigations into former residential facilities. We have been faced with the horror of racism and systemic genocide time and time again. As Mary Simon remarked, “We cannot hide from these discoveries; they open deep wounds.”

It is imperative to our success and our collective well-being that we confront trauma in Canadian society. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada educates us about the intergenerational trauma that still ripples through communities today, about underfunded education and child welfare services, and about discrimina-

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tion. Anyone who was surprised by the discoveries of unmarked graves should read the TRC report. I implore them to.

The TRC also tells us about the work that has been done and what is ongoing. There has been significant growth and healing in ways that I have had the immense pleasure of witnessing: in children reclaiming traditional names, dancing and drumming; in seeing elders in residence share their knowledge to institutions seeking to decolonize; in better educational outcomes and increased capacity in health, science and business; and in indigenous art and cultural expression.

Since 2015, there have been effective indigenous language revitalization projects in New Brunswick schools through Wolastoqey Latuwewakon. These efforts prevented a prediction that the Wolastoqey language would have died out by now.

[*Member spoke in Wolastoqey and provided the following text:*]

Ktahcuwi kilun mecimi-te wehkanen ktolatuwewakonon weci skat kshikahtuwohq.

[*Member provided the following translation:*]

We always have to use our language, so we do not lose it.

[*English*]

The Speech from the Throne was also read in Inuktitut. That is an incredible milestone for Canada that we should all be proud of. What I heard in the Speech from the Throne was the intention to ensure “Action on reconciliation. Action on our collective health and well-being. Action on climate [crisis].” These are also the priorities that I heard at doorsteps. I want to be able to return home to my constituents after the 44th Parliament with results. I know we all do.

We have a huge responsibility to act right now in confronting the biggest challenges of our lifetime, and for the generations to come. We have been listening to the youth who take to the streets every Friday, striking from school for the sake of our collective future. I can see in my mind all the slogans and signs from climate rallies over the years: “There is no Planet B”, “Our house is on fire” and “Change the politics, not the climate”. These are pleas for action.

The Speech from the Throne declares that our earth is in danger, that we must adapt, that we are well beyond the point of no return and that we can no longer point fingers as to who is responsible or bicker over the steps required to mitigate the damage. All communities across the globe must prepare for what is to come.

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The millions who have signed petitions, written letters, organized demonstrations, written policy resolutions and started divestment campaigns are making a difference. Their voices have pushed corporations to address their carbon footprints, develop sustainability strategies and move away from single-use plastics. Renewable energy and electric vehicles have never been so accessible, and consumers are empowered to make responsible choices, making the market more competitive. We did this. Never doubt that actions, even the smallest ones, can have a ripple effect and change the world around us.

• (1140)

Our government has committed to 30% protected coastlines and waterways by 2030, more conservation in national parks, active transportation, green community infrastructure, ending fossil fuel subsidies, banning coal and limiting pipeline expansion.

I want Canadian kids to feel good about going back to school and about planning their futures. We need them to study engineering, science, sustainable agriculture and critical race theory. We need them to embrace their role in the transition that is under way. I want them to trust in their government and feel comfort in our demonstrated actions.

We need more aggressive timelines on decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, and I will be the first to admit that. We need to protect the oceans, whales and other carbon-sequestering species and actively support biodiversity. We need to overhaul pesticide and herbicide use, move away from industrialized farming and continue to ramp up renewable energy while empowering municipalities as ground zero for the transformation.

We must also be prepared for extreme weather events, mitigate flooding, implement firebreaks and engage indigenous knowledge, as we know too well that the impacts of the climate crisis are already severely affecting our lives regardless of where we or our loved ones are living in this country. Mother Nature has a way of reminding us of her power and the pandemic is no exception.

I will read an excerpt from the speech. “The pandemic has shown us that we need to put a focus on mental health in the same way as physical well-being because they are inseparable.” What led me here was to fight for mental health access in my community for indigenous youth, women and mothers. The COVID-19 experience has compounded an already existing crisis. Currently, in my home province we have a fourth wave of the virus. Furthermore, ERs are closing, health care workers are on strike, reproductive rights continue to be restricted and 18,000 people in Fredericton’s city centre alone do not have access to a family physician.

The federal government and provincial partners need each other to fill these gaps now. Modernizing means investing in e-health, human resources, housing and immigration; addressing the opioid crisis; and focusing on prevention. Everything is connected, and without the basics for survival no one can be successful. Retention of physicians and nurses starts with listening to them about why they are burned out. Better data collection, planning and strategizing can better distribute the resources we already have.

I am a class of 2019 member of Parliament. After just five months of my political career, the pandemic hit, the world stopped,

our children were out of school, workplaces shut down and planes were grounded. All at once it became abundantly clear that nothing else matters if we do not have health. I have spent the last two years speaking for my community and bringing their voices into this place to make change. Fredericton is an amazing place with informed and engaged citizens. Every time I speak, I speak with their voices in my ear. Their number one concern is access to health care.

Despite the difficulties we face at this moment, I am more hopeful than ever. My message for Canadians today is one of strength and faith that there are better days ahead. I say this knowing the urgency in the change that is required and the disparity that is felt too often across this nation. I too have felt it. People are not alone.

The terms of the game have changed and so have we. Looking throughout this chamber, across the aisles and in the wings, I know we are up to the challenge. It will take all of us: a strong, united government; a healthy pragmatic opposition; and a real commitment to collaboration.

I will read once again from the speech. “Confronting the hard questions will not always be easy or comfortable—and it will require conviction—but it is necessary. The outcome will be a sustainable, united Canada, for you, for me, for our children, and for every generation to come.” The message I heard loud and clear was unity and a commitment toward action, and that will always get my vote.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned climate action. I know that climate change is very important to her, but I note that the government is leading the G7 when it comes to emissions. I understand that it has not reached a single climate target thus far, despite its attacks on Canadian industry and Canadian energy in particular.

I know the member is new to the government side, but I am wondering if she can let the House and Canadians know whether the government, given the failing grade that it has on climate change thus far, is planning to rethink its environmental strategy.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, it is really nice to see my hon. colleague back in the House. I am a new member on the government side, and I came here particularly because I want to be effective, I want to address the urgency in the climate crisis and I want to be a strong voice for this government moving forward.

It is important to note that our plan was given the best grade on addressing the climate crisis out of all parties in the House, so I think it is incumbent on all of us to get behind that plan, work together to implement it and show real action for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I want to stick to the same topic, because I am concerned about the Liberals' strategy of capping emissions from the oil industry instead of capping production and gradually eliminating total emissions.

As a former member of the Green Party, what are my colleague's thoughts on this, and what will she do within her new party? It is all well and good to talk about wanting to have an influence, but the planet needs real action right now. British Columbia and the entire country are making this clear.

Where does my colleague see herself in this? What real action is taking place? Will the Liberals change their plan and take decisive action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

I am here to push that urgency. I really believe that our timelines need to be much closer. I want to see a 60% reduction in GHG emissions rather than the 45% that we previously committed to.

Again, this is what I am here to do. I am here to bring that passion for the environment and urgency on action and bring peace of mind to Canadians that there are strong voices on the government side who care deeply about what we need to do to protect the environment. I look forward to your collaboration on that piece. It is incumbent on all of us here to push those timelines and ensure action immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind the hon. member to address her questions and comments to the Chair, not to individual members.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the most important things we can do as members of Parliament is protect seniors in our communities and protect Canadians as we come out of the pandemic. In my community, seniors are being impacted by the clawback that the government has put on GIS payments for seniors. Members will know that these seniors are living in the poorest situations. They are the ones who are the most vulnerable, and it is often women who are most affected by this. The very cynical failure to provide this guaranteed income supplement has been incredibly problematic for my community and my constituents.

Why is the government choosing not to take the very easy steps to reduce the clawback and give our low-income and vulnerable seniors the help they need to get through COVID-19?

• (1145)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I am so happy to see the member in the House once again.

Seniors are incredibly important to us in New Brunswick and in Nova Scotia. We have the oldest populations in Canada. This is an

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issue we are hearing about across the country, but I think part of it comes to the CERB. When it was being laid out and people were applying to it, I was very clear with constituents within my riding about what the implications of that would be. It is important to understand that many people who applied for the CERB would have been in the black. They received more money over the last period of time than if they had just stayed on the GIS.

I think it is a matter of optics and clarification around the information for these programs and benefits, and I look forward to supporting the member and having these conversations perhaps with her constituents, because I think it is a critical issue. We do not want to see clawbacks, but we also want our benefits to be used in the way they were intended.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as this is my first time on my feet in the 44th Parliament, I want to thank everyone in Beaches—East York who sent me back to work here, and my riding association and the countless supporters who have really helped me do this work over the last six years. I want to give special thanks to my family in particular for putting up with me, especially my wife Amy.

My commitment to Beaches—East York remains the same. I will keep working across party lines. I will maintain a sense of independence, holding our government accountable to deliver on the promises we made and pushing for greater ambition.

Much of the work ahead will require greater ambition, but the throne speech rightly notes that the first priority remains getting the pandemic under control. It requires layers of protection, so the throne speech rightly identifies vaccinations, boosters and vaccines for our kids. My five-year-old will be getting vaccinated later today, and I encourage everyone to get themselves and their families vaccinated.

However, we also require other layers of protection. When we see ubiquitous rapid testing available in other jurisdictions, that rapid testing needs to be widely available here in Canada as well. The throne speech rightly identifies the importance of vaccine equity. We see around the world the concerns with respect to variants, and to address the global challenge requires better addressing global vaccine equity. Canada in some ways has been a leader here, but much more has to be done, not only by Canada, but by the world. It was important to see the government commit in the throne speech to increasing foreign assistance every year, but we really need to do more. Whether it is through a TRIPS waiver or tech transfer, we really need to solve these challenges for the world.

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Beyond the pandemic but related to it, we need to strengthen our social safety net. I say related to the pandemic because the chief public health officer notes that racialized communities have been more greatly impacted in my community of Toronto in the course of this pandemic. She states:

Members of racialized communities are more likely to experience inequitable living and working conditions that make them more susceptible to COVID-19, such as lower incomes, precarious employment, overcrowded housing, and limited access to health and social services.

The answer for us, as a lesson learned in this crisis, is a stronger social safety net, supporting the most vulnerable in our communities and working to reduce poverty. We have seen great progress and a significant reduction in poverty since 2015, but again, not enough. If there is a theme to my speech, it will be that we have made significant progress, but not enough, and that more needs to be done, so there are commitments to EI reform and to the Canada disability benefit. My ask of the government is simply that we realize these promises in the boldest way possible.

It is related to the cost-of-living challenge when we think of our most vulnerable communities. I know the government is going to see to bringing child care through. I have every expectation that the Ontario government will finally come to the table, knowing that its own election is in sight in June, but we also need to ensure that we address the housing challenge for the most vulnerable. We need to continue the work to end homelessness and to expand upon the rapid housing initiative, and there remains much more to be done to strengthen our social safety net and address the cost of living, especially for the most vulnerable.

I would note, by the way, that we increased the Canada workers benefit significantly in budget 2021, but there is an opportunity for cross-party collaboration. In the Conservative platform and its emphasis on the Canada workers benefit, there is an example that addresses the cost of living in a serious way for the most vulnerable.

Another important lesson learned, and a key lesson and key priority in the throne speech, is better health care. I mentioned poverty, and it is a key component of this conversation when we think of the social determinants of health, but so are better health care for our seniors via home care and long-term care, a strong rare disease strategy, the details of which are to come, healthy food in our schools for our kids, better mental health care and strong mental health care standards.

An issue that is dear to my heart and something I have worked on significantly over the last number of years is treating drug use as a health issue. We have listened to our public health experts in the course of this pandemic and we need to listen to them in the course of the opioid crisis. Experts on a special advisory committee of the Public Health Agency of Canada state:

A number of factors have likely contributed to a worsening of the overdose crisis, including the increasingly toxic drug supply, increased feelings of isolation, stress and anxiety and limited availability or accessibility of services for people who use drugs.

Fundamentally, we need to end the criminalization of people who use drugs so we can ensure they get the treatment they need. Members will note that the experts point to the toxic drug supply that is killing people. If we truly care about following the evidence, we need a strictly regulated, safer supply to ensure we save lives.

• (1150)

The throne speech also identified safer communities, and this is related to the conversation on the opioid crisis and saving lives, but it is also about saving lives as it relates to stronger gun control. Noor, a young Liberal in my community, has been with me ever since I started in politics. It was at her birthday party that we lost Reese Fallon, one of her best friends, in the Danforth shooting. When I spoke to her recently at our youth council meeting, she encouraged me to again raise stronger gun control when I came to Ottawa. I am glad to see that the government is prioritizing this issue in the throne speech. Again, though, we have made strong commitments, but are they strong enough? I would say no, it does not make sense to devolve the responsibility to cities. We need to show national leadership on handguns.

We also need to protect people in our online communities, and this is an issue that I will continue to work on in this Parliament, across party lines. I note the work of my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, and I have worked with Conservatives on this file as well, but we need to ensure that we have stronger platform governance and, as Canadians increasingly live their lives online, that our rules reflect that reality in a more serious way.

The throne speech commits to addressing inequality in a number of different respects, and I can talk about child care and homelessness, but there is another conversation that at times has been divisive in the House. The evidence is clear and overwhelming and there is a path we see through Bill C-22. We need to address diversity and inclusion by lifting people up, but also by reforming our outdated and ineffective criminal justice system. That means police reform, and it means recognizing that we are throwing people in prison in a really unfair and disproportionate way, disproportionately impacting people from Black and indigenous communities. We need to reform these rules. Bill C-22 is an important first step, but we need to move forward in a further way on mandatory minimum sentences.

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The two issues I reflect on are what are we going to accomplish in this minority Parliament. Minority Parliaments hold potential for greatness. I said this in 2019, and then the pandemic hit. We saw some moments of greatness and collaboration to deliver pandemic supports and benefits, but not enough. When we think of this Parliament and the two biggest issues this Parliament can look back on other than delivering affordable child care, it really is around advancing reconciliation and establishing a credible path to net zero, attacking climate change in a really serious way.

Advancing reconciliation means closing gaps in federal funding. It means clean water, obviously. We passed the legislation and now we need to do the hard work of implementing UNDRIP. In Toronto, fundamentally, those who represent urban centres need to raise our voices for urban indigenous people and ensure that federal supports flow. They flowed in the course of the pandemic, and we need to make sure they flow in a more permanent way to urban indigenous service organizations.

On climate action, the throne speech says we must go faster and further. A common criticism from opposition parties is that we have never met one of our targets. The original target for 2030 was 30% below 2005 levels. That works out to 512 megatonnes, for those keeping score. If we look at budget 2021, where is the trajectory added? If the Conservative government does not get elected in the future and all policies hold, we are at 468 megatonnes, so yes, there is a reason we advanced a new target. It is that the previous target, if all policies hold, would have been met. The new target is important. It will require greater ambition to get there. We see greater ambition in the throne speech and in our platform in relation to capping emissions in the oil and gas sector and in terms of driving electrification, but more needs to be done.

Again, I cannot emphasize this enough, but we have come so far, and while there is reason to be complimentary in some respects, I have to emphasize the need for continued and constructive criticism and saying we have yet to do enough.

I will close here by saying that in this Parliament we recognize the progress that has been made, but I hope we can collaborate across party lines and push this government to do more, because we need to do more on so many of these important issues.

• (1155)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the topics the member spoke on. He talked about quite a few different topics. One was housing, which is very important for people in the Kenora riding and across northern Ontario, specifically with addressing the housing supply. It seems to be an issue that is impacting people across income levels and at different places in their life.

In the last election, our party put forward plans specifically around supply, to help encourage development and free up more land for development. Does the member believe those measures would help address the housing supply? Would he be willing to work with our opposition party to help put that into action?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for identifying another area of potential collaboration.

Unquestionably, we need to work together to advance supply. Our platform, as an example, committed to a \$4-billion accelerator

that tells cities we will give them money if they push back against Nimbyism, build supply and adopt inclusive zoning and affordability. That is really important, and it is probably an insufficient number given the scale of the crisis.

I would also say that we should also work together on some other measures, including the excessive financialization of the housing market. New Zealand, for example, has put measures in place so that if an investor is going to get into the marketplace, they have to put a 40% down payment and the stress test is going to be that much more stringent. There are a number of measures we can look to around the world that have been quite successful and that would protect the stability of our housing market. It is incredibly important when looking at the scale of the increasing prices over the last number of years.

It is an issue I would be happy to work across the aisle to deliver on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is no hiding it: The Speech from the Throne is a bit like a paint by numbers. There is a general outline, but no colour. Since my hon. colleague wants to work with the other parties, I will take this opportunity to talk about health care funding.

This is about caring for people. Quebec and the provinces are asking that transfers for health care, including mental health care, be increased unconditionally to cover 35% of the system's costs. This means acting now, listening and respecting the Constitution, because health is an exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

Is my colleague willing to help his government understand that this is an exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces?

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, I understand the Bloc's desire for not having strings attached. My own view, however, is that where federal dollars are supporting provinces and municipalities, it is absolutely fair for us to establish standards that are delivering on federal priorities.

As I look to the child care agreements, I see an emphasis, with provinces that did not previously have child care, focusing on accessibility and affordability. When I see new health care transfers that the federal government wants to make, I see an emphasis on mental health and on long-term care. When I see a commitment to a national school food policy, \$1 billion over five years, there is going to be a commitment to nutritious food.

It is important to emphasize standards. Some provinces may already want to deliver on these standards, but some may not. It is important for the federal government to set priorities with federal funds.

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• (1200)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that during the COVID-19 crisis and the pandemic, the Liberals listened to the top medical health professionals for guidance on policy and direction, and they responded.

When it comes to the overdose crisis, those same top medical health professionals have made it very clear that the government needs to decriminalize and provide a safe supply. However, the Liberal government has failed to have the courage to listen to them. The Prime Minister says he recognizes the overdose crisis as a health issue, yet he will not listen to the same health professionals who would give him guidance. He lacks the courage. The stigma starts with the Prime Minister.

Does my colleague not agree?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, I agree that we need to decriminalize all drugs, treat drug use as a health issue and ensure a safer supply.

I would say the government has come a long way in a short period of time. I have seen it respond to my own advocacy on this issue and to the advocacy of others. Are we where we need to be yet? No. However, in the recent platform we see a commitment for \$500 million for advancing evidence-based treatment and supports, and we see a commitment for a new substance use strategy. We have already restored harm reduction as a pillar of that drug strategy. There is an organization in my own community, the South Riverdale Community Health Centre, that receives federal funds to deliver safe supply.

We are in the space, but are we in the space sufficiently? No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in the House again now, at the beginning of a Parliament that I must remind my colleagues should not exist. We should be continuing with the previous Parliament. Clearly, that was the view of both Quebeckers and Canadians.

All of us, all governments, all countries, all hospitals and all seniors' residences, are desperately trying to really, truly emerge, once and for all, from a crisis where the main issue, besides the economy and the pressure that the crisis is putting on the health system, remains a human issue: the fear, anxiety, illness and distress of loved ones. We seem to be having great difficulty in emerging from this crisis, and once again, this applies to all governments, but this does not free us from the solemn obligation to do everything in our power, at all times, to come out on the other side in better shape and, shall we say, with as many people as possible.

It was in the wake of this human tragedy with far-reaching economic impacts that the Prime Minister of Canada decided, out of the blue, to call an election in the middle of the summer, although it did not come as a surprise to anyone because the writing had been on the wall for a long time. He was kind enough to explain the concept of urgency to us. Obviously, this all-powerful being had to be given a strong mandate to tackle the pandemic head-on and get us out of it once and for all.

I had my doubts, as I am sure many others did, the day after that very poorly timed, extremely disorganized, ill-conceived election. Some polling stations did not have enough staff. Things were done in haste and risks were taken, particularly with regard to health measures. The directives were unclear and applied differently from one polling station to another. If this election had been urgently required, we would have understood, but it was neither urgent nor necessary. The credibility of the democratic system was somewhat undermined when some MPs were told that they had been elected, only to be informed later that they had not actually won. It was completely ridiculous.

In addition, Canadians and Quebeckers asked, what is this nonsense? They felt so strongly about it that they re-elected the same Parliament. It is almost the same in Quebec. The people told the government that they had given it a mandate, so it should get to work and stop bothering them. The government should not betray or pervert its mandate out of sheer ambition by saying it would like to outnumber the other party. Clearly, that is not what voters wanted.

We were sure all of this would be explained in the Speech from the Throne. It is not the Speech from the Throne; it is more like the speech from the timeout chair. I took the liberty of saying that, even read slowly, it was very short. Any college or university student, such as the former students of my esteemed colleague from Mirabel, who is here with us, could have written something more creative, clear and captivating.

That is the throne speech. That is why we went out and spent \$600 million. That is why Parliament shut down for five months. That is why it took two months to write something that could have been written in two hours and probably was.

• (1205)

People feel like the government is laughing in their faces. Is it any surprise that they are not engaged in our democracy?

The throne speech was an amateur job with no real substance. It did not offer a pandemic recovery plan or a specific agenda. I know we will be hearing more about that during and after this particular debate. There is no vision, no statement of intent. For crying out loud, it is a whole lot of nothing.

There is something of substance we have already touched on: Bill C-2 on pandemic recovery programs, which is quite a bit clearer and more specific. There is more in the first bill they introduced than there was in the throne speech, which was supposed to put us on a four-year path to glory, prosperity and good health, or so they would have us believe. That is a bit odd.

When the government puts forward a good plan, we respond positively. Bill C-2 is a bill that calls for collaboration, and we are ready to collaborate. Naturally, there is room for improvement; that is what the democratic legislative process promotes and demands.

In the meantime, the government's mandate, which was to manage and overcome the crisis and to pass this legislation much earlier, has not been fulfilled, and people have told the government to go do its job.

The Speech from the Throne contains the buzzword “collaborate”.

Not so long ago, there were expressions like “we walk hand in hand with Quebec and the provinces”. My God, I hope there were handcuffs involved, because the hands would not have been close for long.

We have everything but collaboration. Does the word “collaborate” in the Speech from the Throne, which was skilfully read out in several languages, mean “we will listen to what the provinces want”?

What the provinces and Quebec want is simple: an immediate, unconditional transfer of funding to cover 35% of health care system costs. Without this transfer, in the short term, the provinces and Quebec will have to divert resources to the health care system that should be allocated to other things and, in the medium term, some provinces will basically go bust, go bankrupt. This is because the great federal tradition, especially the Liberal one, is to try to bring the provinces, which are conquered territories if ever there was one, to their knees in exchange for a little money.

The Liberal approach is “sell us your jurisdictions”, which is why the throne speech ignored, or mentioned only very quickly, the fact that collaboration means a give-and-take on both sides. That left us dangerously dissatisfied and reveals something a little shocking. In the last few days and weeks, a lot of attention has been paid to the magnitude of the tragedy, to figuring out what led to such a high number of deaths.

Sometimes the media will also try to politicize it and point fingers—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I would like the members to tell me if I am bothering them. It is a little frustrating. Conversations should be taken outside the chamber.

• (1210)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It seems there are some conversations that are disturbing the person speaking. I would ask members who want to have conversations to do so outside the chamber, in the lobby for example.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that intervention.

Some people were tempted to say that it must be Quebec's fault, or the fault of any of the provinces that went through similar tragedies, and that was really hurtful.

Health care falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. If it had been properly funded, from the time and at the level it was supposed to be funded, we would have had the system and the resources needed to deal with the situation.

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I am not blaming any one individual, but rather a system: federalism. The main culprit is Ottawa, which withheld the money the provinces needed until it blew up in our faces. There is no other explanation.

It may be hard to hear, but that is all the more reason to say it: it is not right to deflect one's responsibility onto someone else. Enough with this ludicrous fantasy. Here we have a government that does not run a health care system, despite its statement about there being doctors in the army. Let us be serious. There are more doctors in Laval than there are in the Canadian army. This government has neither the constitutional jurisdiction nor the competence to run a health care system. It should leave that to the people who have the desire and responsibility to do so, especially if its own responsibility is to provide adequate funding. That is the way it should be.

This government wants to give us the impression that it is somewhat transparent or at least that it is not completely opaque. We suggested that instead of just talking about health transfers, we could expand the debate by talking about health care funding, and we could do it openly and publicly by holding a summit.

Unlike a first ministers' meeting, which takes place behind closed doors and from which ministers emerge without providing full disclosure and pretend they are pleased or displeased, the discussion will take place in front of cameras and microphones and in the presence of the Prime Minister and his Minister of Health. The other health minister of a province need not be there. Participants will include the premiers and Quebec's and the provinces' health ministers, the leaders of the opposition parties, their health critics and perhaps people from civil society who wish to address these people in a format to be determined. It will be a summit on health care funding where the Prime Minister can explain his vision to us in front of everyone. He was not elected to keep out of sight. We are not elected to Parliament to remain silent. That is rule number one, something the members opposite do not understand. That is what we are proposing.

I am just as outraged as I have been since 2019 about our society's disregard and lack of basic consideration for seniors. As I have said many times, seniors will have suffered the most from isolation, mental distress and eroding purchasing power.

I do not want to hear more claims that there is no more inflation, because no responsible person would say that. The government has not made any remotely significant increase to seniors' purchasing power, while inflation has been increasing every month at rates we have not seen in a very long time. Nevertheless, the government continues to ignore their plight. It is implementing complicated programs that seniors have a hard time accessing, that conflict with each other in terms of how to apply, and, on top of all that, that reduce the income of seniors who were receiving the guaranteed income supplement or who were exempt from taxes on the first \$5,000. That is completely ridiculous and straddles the line between lack of respect and incompetence. We will not give up on this battle.

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● (1215)

If I may, I would like to get back to oil. A few days ago, I was singled out by a Conservative colleague in a not-so-nice way. He came out with some nonsense about how Quebec would be cut off and would not get any more oil. I told him to take a hike, although in saltier language that I will not say here because children could be listening.

The Bloc Québécois thinks we need to do two things, and the first is not to ignore the evidence. If things do not change, the planet will not even be close to preventing global warming well beyond 2°C. We know what needs to be done, but there is no real commitment. The Bloc Québécois will tell it like it is.

When the government tells us that if it caps the industry's emissions and it performs well in reducing its emissions per barrel, then it can increase its production with money provided by the federal government to lower emissions, the federal government is doing indirectly what it cannot do directly based on its own commitments. I am glad to see that the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development came to almost the exact same conclusion. Using Quebecers' money, the government is encouraging increased production, consumption and export of oil that is toxic for the planet. It is as simple as that.

The second thing the Bloc Québécois is going to do, or rather, is not going to do, is tell the people who make their living from the oil industry to deal with their own damn problems. The Bloc Québécois has been proposing a series of measures for a long time now, including suggesting that the money from the aberration known as Trans Mountain could stay in western Canada and Alberta to fund the energy and economic transition that they will need. We are the first to say that we must not let the workers down. We do not corner people who do not think like us and hurl abuse at them in English, and find it funny.

We are looking for compassionate solutions, and I think we need to consider that. There is absolutely nothing in the throne speech about that and all the rest. We will make it our duty and pleasure to do something about that.

Quebec will come out a winner either way. Either the Bloc Québécois will make gains for Quebec based on the wishes of the Quebec National Assembly, which would be a win for Quebec, or we will not make any significant gains, which will show that there is no place for us in this federation that does not help us.

I therefore propose the following amendment to the amendment:

That the amendment be amended as follows:

(a) in paragraph (a), by deleting the words “(iii) increase production of Canadian energy to boost supply and lower gas prices,”;

(b) in paragraph (e), by deleting the words “including the energy sector,”; and

(c) by adding the following:

“(f) a public health crisis, caused primarily by a fiscal imbalance that is putting the economic viability of the provinces at risk, which requires

(i) a major investment that would cover 35% of health costs in Quebec and in the other provinces by the federal government through the Canada Health Transfer with a subsequent annual indexation of 6%,

(ii) abandoning the idea of imposing national health standards,

(iii) ensuring that the provinces that do not want conditional assistance in the area of health care from the federal government in Ottawa have the right to

opt out with full financial compensation for each of the proposed initiatives, and that it all be negotiated at a summit on health care funding; and

(g) the creation of two classes of seniors, which can be addressed by increasing Old Age Security for seniors aged 65 to 74”.

● (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment to the amendment is in order.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on being re-elected to the House.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois mentioned in his speech how important health care is. Of course, increasing federal health transfers requires additional revenue to ensure programs are sustainable.

Would the leader of the Bloc Québécois support removing inter-provincial trade barriers in Canada to help generate revenue to pay for increased health transfers?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, there are several parts to that question. First, it is a good idea to remove trade barriers. These restrictions do little good. The impact of doing that, however, meaning the possibility of generating the revenue needed for health transfers, seems to me to be a flight of fancy, as the other guy's father said.

However, programs obviously require money to fund them. The money has to come from somewhere. Ultimately, it always comes from some burst of economic prosperity, which results in less spending and more revenue for the government. In this case, and even if it were not the case, what we are dealing with is the good old fiscal imbalance, which comes back as often as Santa Claus. We may have stopped mentioning it, but it is lurking not far away. It lets the federal government keep the money based on its interests and power, to the detriment of the provinces and Quebec, leaving them in a precarious financial situation.

If we balance all that out, the health transfers will readily follow.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech by my colleague, the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

The NDP agrees that it was certainly irresponsible of the government to call an election this summer. The Liberals' only goal was to get a majority, but Canadians decided otherwise by electing the same Parliament as before. Despite the risk, the government decided to call an election anyway.

It took two months before we could come back to the House. Seniors who received emergency assistance during the pandemic are now losing their guaranteed income supplement. Back home, like everywhere else in the country, seniors are using food banks, and some are even losing their housing.

Can the leader of the Bloc talk about this huge mistake by the government, which is causing seniors to struggle in the middle of a pandemic?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I would be pleased to make a few comments. That will allow me to elaborate on what I was saying earlier.

In times of adversity, it is important to put yourself in someone else's shoes. In principle, that is what I have tried to do, but it is hard to put myself in the shoes of a Liberal Prime Minister of Canada.

In a context where there was enormous financial leeway, why such a lack of consideration for those most seriously affected by the pandemic in terms of isolation, psychological distress, purchasing power, and, I would even add, the capacity of navigating complex programs that experts have a hard time developing and applying?

Why this lack of consideration for seniors, when considering their needs could have cost very little in terms of clarity and funding?

• (1225)

[English]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is the first time I have had the privilege to rise in the House, I want to thank the constituents of Battlefords—Lloydminster who sent me here.

I represent thousands of energy workers. I am so proud of the work that they do and how they are providing Canadian energy to Canadians, to Canadian families and to the world under some of the highest environmental standards in the world. The need for energy is not going away. We need energy to get to where we need to go, and where it is expected of us. We need energy for transportation of food and to heat our homes. We need reliable energy.

My question for the leader of the separatist party is this: Why does he support energy that is unethical, that does not have, let alone meet, the environmental standards that our Canadian ethical energy meets?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, people should not be paid such compliments. I am both flattered and confused. I am the leader of the separatist party and member for Beloeil—Chambly, and that is an extraordinary honour.

If the highest environmental standards did not protect us against the most polluting energy in the world, my God, what would things be like? We have the common sense to not tell western oil workers to take care of their own damn problems. We want to work with them. We want to ensure they have funding; we even want to contribute to this funding in order to get people's heads out of the sand, I would even say the oil sands, for their sake and the sake of the entire planet, and to face the real challenges together, in solidarity.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind members they have had an opportunity to ask a question and should be listening to the answer. If they have other interventions to make,

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they should attempt to be recognized again and not interrupt the individual who has the floor.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

I think that COP26 clarified that the only government in Canada that is demonstrating leadership is the Government of Quebec, which is a member of the Beyond Oil and Gas Coalition. The organization only has an English name, which I found on the Government of France website. This coalition is co-chaired by the governments of Costa Rica and Denmark and also includes France, Italy, Sweden and Quebec.

I also want to thank my colleague because he is the leader of his party, and I want to thank the members for Repentigny and Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia for their leadership here in the House.

I am going to ask just one question. Quebec has gotten rid of one dangerous industry, the asbestos industry. Are there similarities between fossil fuel energy and the production of asbestos?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I have two things to say about that.

First, getting rid of something dangerous calls for economic action. I was very involved in the closure of the Gentilly plant. The Government of Quebec had to invest a lot of money at the time, and it went very well. I think that is comparable, I think it is doable, and I think we need to consider that.

More generally speaking, I would say that Quebec is blessed with respect to the environment. We have clean energy, wind, space and natural resources. We are lucky to have all that. Quebec can lead the way on environmental action. If Quebec can use green technology to create wealth, it is its duty to do so. Unfortunately—or fortunately—that will not happen within an oil-producing Canada.

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to lay out the scenario we are in right now. In the context of the throne speech, where the government laid out its vision for Canada, I want to lay out some of the realities Canadians are facing.

We are up against an affordability crisis, which means that people are struggling to put food on the table, pay their bills and, most of all, find a home to call their own. This affordability crisis is impacting all Canadians, particularly when it comes to the housing crisis. People who have good jobs cannot find housing. People who have low income jobs, people who have no income and Canadians across this country are struggling with housing, and we are in a real crisis.

The Address

Added to that, we are up against a climate crisis, and we are seeing the direct impacts of that climate crisis right now in British Columbia, where we are feeling the impacts right now of the devastation of extreme weather. The flooding that has occurred in B.C. has impacted people's lives in tremendous ways. People have lost their homes and their farms. People have lost their lives.

We know that the climate crisis has often been referred to as a problem for our future, and we talk about protecting the environment for our kids. We are up against a crisis about protecting the environment for the present, and we have to protect it for our lives now.

With these urgent housing, affordability and climate crises, we do not see the government responding with an urgency commiserate to the seriousness of the problems. We do not see that urgency in its action, and it is not sufficient to just point out that there is a crisis. If we acknowledge there is a crisis, we have to respond as if there really is one. When it comes to the climate crisis, the housing crisis and the affordability crisis, the government is simply not responding, and the throne speech did not provide the vision of a government that is responding appropriately to the problems Canadians are now faced with.

[*Translation*]

The crises we are dealing with are obviously hitting us hard. The climate crisis is hitting British Columbia hard, but it is not just British Columbia. We have been seeing extreme temperatures in this country for years: heat waves, forest fires and now floods. The climate crisis is not just something to worry about for the future. It is an issue right now, and we need a rapid, urgent response immediately.

I talked about the housing crisis, which is raging from coast to coast to coast. Let me share an example of what is going on in Montreal, Quebec. We know families are finding it tough to make ends meet. The rising cost of living is making that even tougher. Plus, housing costs keep going up, and this government does not understand the meaning of "affordable housing". The government thinks rent of \$2,225 a month is affordable in Montreal, but it definitely is not.

• (1235)

[*English*]

What Canadians need in this time of difficulty is a government that understands that the only way to move forward when people are in crisis is to respond with real action, not with symbolic gestures, nice words or an understanding of the problem, but with a concrete plan to solve the problem. That is what we need, and this throne speech failed to provide that commitment to Canadians. It failed to provide a commitment that the government will respond to the problems facing Canadians with an urgency equal to those problems.

Right now, Canadians are also looking at the pandemic, and they are frustrated, afraid and worried. They have been left feeling really uncertain about the future. The omicron variant obviously increases that uncertainty. While people are struggling to get back on their feet, and while we are pushing forward toward a recovery, people want to make sure that this recovery is one that is actually focused

on them, not on those at the very top. We have seen this before, and it is important to highlight why people are worried.

They are worried because they have seen previous governments, in times of difficult financial crisis, have recoveries that did not benefit workers, did not benefit people and did not benefit families, but they certainly benefited those at the very top, the wealthy and the powerful corporations, but they did not translate to real recovery for workers and people. That is the same fear that people are experiencing right now. They are worried that the government is not focused on a recovery for all, but is focused on one that will benefit those at the very top.

We have already seen that happen. The recovery is already moving in a K shape, where those who were well off or doing well before continue to do so, and those who were struggling are now worse off. We need concrete action. What does that mean? What is the concrete action we are looking for?

Let us start with the environment. Concrete action is what Canadians are calling for in the crises that they are dealing with. They want a vision and a plan to deal with the crises they are dealing with in a real, meaningful way. For the climate crisis, we know we have to tackle it broadly. We need to reduce emissions. We cannot see the government continue to set target after target just to miss those targets. We need real accountability. We need real transparency, and we need real, bold targets to reduce our emissions so we are doing our part to fight the global climate crisis.

We need to move toward a renewable energy future. There is no question about it. We need to make investments in that renewable energy future. One of the ways we can do that, a concrete and substantive way to do that, is to permanently and finally end all fossil fuel subsidies.

We have heard a lot from the Liberals. They have talked about ending fossil fuel subsidies for years. They have promised to do it for years, but instead of reducing fossil fuel subsidies or eliminating them, they have actually increased them to the highest level in our country's history. They have, in fact, increased them more than the Harper Conservatives did. This is a government that claims to care about the environment, yet its track record when it comes to its own promise on eliminating fossil fuel subsidies is worse than that of the Harper Conservatives.

We just had COP26, and all countries agree that we need to be eliminating fossil fuel subsidies. The reason is that our public money should not go toward subsidizing, with our public dollars, the fossil fuel sector, but should be better spent in investing and incentivizing renewable energy that does not increase our carbon footprint. We need to be investing in those technologies of the future with our public dollars so there would be a double impact.

We also know that we cannot fight the climate crisis if we leave workers behind, and the labour movement has worked really hard to make sure, when we talk about a future in which we fight the climate crisis, there has to be a just transition. That stands for a lot of things.

The Address

A just transition means that workers are at the heart of our climate change and climate crisis policies. It means that workers are always front and foremost. It means that workers know what their future will look like. It means a real plan for workers so they do not have the uncertainty of looking at the global markets rise and fall and the uncertainty of commodity prices. They need a clear plan. The government owes it to workers to provide them with a clear plan for what their today will look like and what their tomorrow will look like as well.

A just transition is about fairness for workers, and it gives priority to workers. It is vital that the plan is made clear. So far, this throne speech and what we have heard from the government do not provide that plan to workers. Workers are left behind, and left uncertain about their futures.

• (1240)

Tackling the climate crisis also means making sure that we are helping communities that are grappling with the impacts of extreme weather right now. Sadly, we know that with the climate crisis, extreme weather is going to become more and more common. If that is the case, then communities that have already been hit hard, and which are likely to be hit hard in the future, need investments in infrastructure to make sure that they are resilient.

We need to make sure that we are not only responding to crises, but that we are acting proactively to prevent those disasters from happening in the first place. That is something we are calling for. It is an opportunity to create good jobs, make investments in communities dealing with aging infrastructure, and build more resilient communities. That is a part of our plan and what we would have wanted to see in a throne speech, something that actually speaks to the realities of people.

[*Translation*]

I attended COP26, and it is clear that subsidies to oil companies must be eliminated. Everyone agrees. However, the Liberal government's record is the worst in the G20. It has increased subsidies to oil companies even though it committed to eliminating them.

We need to eliminate those subsidies and invest in renewable energy. We need to promote clean energy, and that is exactly what we will continue to promote, because it is essential. We also need to invest in communities dealing with extreme weather, which is increasingly becoming the norm, in order to create more resilient, more sustainable infrastructure.

[*English*]

We need immediate action on the housing crisis. Former Bank of Canada governor Mr. Poloz has stated very clearly that, in this housing crisis, the federal government absolutely has a role to play. We believe that too. We agree that the federal government has a role to play in tackling the housing crisis and needs to do so immediately. There are two key things the government needs to do, and they are what we would have laid out in a New Democrat throne speech.

First, the speculation and pressures that are driving up the cost of housing need to be tackled. If we look at the increase in prices for housing, they are rising astronomically. We need to see clear mea-

asures put in place to reduce those pressures. This could be a national foreign buyers tax. We need to see efforts to stop property flipping, which is driving up the cost of homes. We need to see real measures put in place to reduce those speculative forces that are driving up the cost of housing.

Second, we have a supply problem. It is clear there is not enough housing available for people within their budget. We need the government to massively mobilize to work with provinces and municipalities to build more homes that are within people's budgets. There are lots of things that the federal government can do. There is federal land across the country that can be converted into housing.

There are opportunities to work with municipalities, and with provinces and territories, to invest massively in housing. We need to ensure that we build at least half a million new homes. We need to invest in not-for-profit housing and co-operative housing. We need massive investments in housing now, and we need to help those who want to own their first home be able to do so.

We also need to specifically respond to the needs of indigenous communities. That includes urban indigenous, as well as indigenous communities living on reserve, or in rural and remote communities. We need a specific "for indigenous, by indigenous" housing plan that responds to the needs of indigenous people, and we need it immediately.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

It is clear that investments are needed in affordable housing and social housing, and they are needed now. We will continue to press the government for immediate, concrete action to address this crisis.

[*English*]

On health care, we are dealing with the impacts of this pandemic. People have seen how this pandemic has laid bare the pre-existing problems in our health care system. One of those fundamental problems is the fact that this Liberal government, as well as previous Conservative and Liberal governments, have been continually cutting the help people and provinces need by cutting transfers in health care.

Those cuts have hurt provinces, they have hurt people and they need to be reversed. All provinces and territories agree that we need increases in health care transfers, and this government needs to make that happen in a long-lasting, sustainable way.

We are up against nursing shortages and frontline health care worker shortages. We know that we need to expand our health care system to include dental care, pharmacare and mental health supports. Our public health care system is something that Canadians are very proud of, but it has to be protected. We have to be vigilant, and we need to invest in it to keep it public. We also need to expand it to provide the care that people need, which is what New Democrats are committed to doing.

The Address

We are committed to fulfilling the vision and dream of Tommy Douglas, who believed that health care should cover us from head to toe. When it was first imagined, our health care system was always imagined to include medication coverage, dental care and mental health services. We want to realize that dream and complete that vision.

[*Translation*]

It is essential that we fund our health care system properly to keep it public and universal. All provinces and territories agree that health transfers must be increased. The NDP will continue to push for this because our party believes deeply in our public and universal health care system.

We want it to be properly funded, and we want to expand it to include universal pharmacare, dental care and mental health supports. We will get this done and fulfill Tommy Douglas's dream of head-to-toe health care.

[*English*]

In terms of immediate action, we need immediate action on justice for indigenous people. We hear the government talk about reconciliation and make promises, but it has not delivered. It continues to take indigenous kids to court and it is fighting indigenous kids in court. These are the children of survivors of residential schools, and that same legacy of discrimination continues. We want to see an end to these court battles against indigenous children. We need to make sure that there is justice for the first peoples of this land.

We continue to see police violence against indigenous people. Specifically, we have called many times for a review of the RCMP, particularly on its actions when it comes to indigenous people and racialized people. Right now, we see extreme force being used on land defenders in Wet'suwet'en. We are deeply concerned about the use of force. We have already called for a review of those actions, and we will continue to call for reforms on policing to make sure that indigenous people and racialized people are not subject to violence and death at the hands of the police. We want to see a system that is overhauled and reviewed, and we will continue to push for that.

We need to see real reconciliation, and that means quality housing that is available in all indigenous communities. It also means clean drinking water, which is something this government promised but has failed to deliver. We are going to continue to fight to make sure that all people in this country, particularly indigenous people, have access to clean drinking water. That is a basic human right, and we will continue to fight for that.

I will wrap up with some actions this government can take immediately. I mentioned stopping the legal battles against indigenous kids, but it could also take immediate action to ensure that it fixes some of the problems that are going on.

Right now, there are GIS and child benefit clawbacks. Vulnerable seniors and families are not receiving the funds they need, because they needed help during the pandemic. That needs to end immediately. We also need to reform the EI system, which clearly does not work for the majority of Canadians. As well, we need sick leave passed before the House rises, and we need conversion thera-

py passed before the House rises. These are some concrete things we can do now.

The big question is who will pay for the recovery. We have believed all along that it should be the super wealthy, those at the very top, who need to pay their fair share. The burden should not fall on the people.

We need immediate action, and the New Democrats are committed to that. Canadians can trust us to fight for them and to make this Parliament work for them. Our vision is a Canada in which no one is left behind and we lift each other up. That is what we are going to fight for.

● (1250)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments from the leader of the NDP today, and I noted he talked a lot about affordability in particular for families. One thing I noticed he missed, which was in the throne speech, was \$10-a-day child care.

I bring this up because last year during the budget I asked the leader of the opposition whether he would support the budget because it contained that measure. His response was that it would most likely never happen because Liberals had been promising it for decades.

Now we are at the point where we just about have every province and territory signed on to \$10-a-day child care. I am wondering this. Can he comment on what impact that affordability will have on families?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, children from 25 years ago, when the government made this promise, have grown up and have kids of their own. Now finally they have received what the government has promised to deliver. I do not know if that is something the government should be proud of.

The Liberals have been promising this for 25 years. It has only taken them 25 years to realize it and they are asking for a compliment. Those kids have grown up. They now have kids of their own and the government is finally moving on something it promised to do 25 years ago.

What I want Canadians to know is that we do not think waiting 25 years for something is acceptable. We absolutely believe child care is vital and important. We want to move not just to have short-term deals signed, but to see this made permanent and long-lasting so everyone in our country has child care.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am interested to know if the leader of the NDP shares my disappointment that the speech fails to mention agriculture at all, considering the important role farmers and the agricultural industry play in this pandemic and our recovery. It also fails to mention our military, and to recognize the incredible work our Canadian Armed Forces have been doing in support of Canadians in need throughout the pandemic.

The Address

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge that our armed forces have done some really important work in this pandemic. They have done incredible work in this crisis and in supporting our loved ones in long-term care homes. That crisis in long-term care homes never should have happened. The forces certainly stepped up and provided incredible service, and I want to acknowledge that.

I also want to acknowledge that when we talk about our Canadian Armed Forces, a lot of serving members and people who have worked in the forces have been neglected by the government. This is because of a complete failure to fix the problems of sexual violence and sexual assault by following through on basic recommendations made in 2015, six years ago, to have an independent process.

We just heard a heartbreaking story from a woman who came forward with a complaint and was not provided any supports. Legislation was passed two years ago that should have provided this woman with support to navigate the system, and she was left to find legal representation on her own to bring forward a concern.

As well, agriculture is vitally important. Something we are proud of as a country is that we have such incredible farmers and agriculture. It is something we need to strengthen and provide more supports for. New Democrats have long been defenders of farmers and supporters of our agriculture sector, and we will continue to be.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's perspective and find out whether his party would support the Bloc Québécois proposal to hold a summit on health care funding, rather than allow the federal government to dictate conditions to the provinces, which have jurisdiction over health care under the Constitution. This summit would provide an opportunity to discuss restoring adequate, permanent funding that would give the provinces the necessary resources to look after health care properly.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, we always agree with the importance of talking to each other and working together.

We in the New Democratic Party believe very strongly that we need to fund health care properly, which means increasing health transfers. The government has been cutting these transfers for decades. We support a public universal health care system, which means that we must ensure that it is well funded. We support increasing health transfers to defend our public universal system.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Burnaby South for bringing the urgency to the House and highlighting the realities of people in our communities. You spoke of fear and uncertainty, and I certainly see that in my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam. People are worried about their future, and they need housing.

What can I say to them to alleviate these worries?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member she is to address all questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the member.

The hon. member for Burnaby South.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for her advocacy around housing and her constituents. I think they are going to be really well served with her in the House.

We are deeply concerned about housing. I understand how people in the Lower Mainland of B.C. and across Canada are deeply worried. What I want people to know is that we see them and we hear them, and we are fighting for them. We know that the federal government has an incredibly important role to play in tackling the housing crisis, and we are going to fight with everything we have to make sure that housing is made affordable, that we tackle speculative prices and the forces driving up prices, and that we invest in building more homes that are in people's budgets. We can do this. We know it is achievable. We need to mobilize all the resources possible, and I want Canadians to know that we are going to be fighting for them.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party for his response to the Speech from the Throne. I agree with most of what he said.

I am concerned though, and this is a tough issue. We have had a 1.1° global average temperature increase from where we were before the Industrial Revolution, and 1.5° is not a safe place land. It will also be increasingly dangerous.

The provincial government in British Columbia, like the federal Liberals, says one thing and does another. It has increased subsidies to fossil fuels and has increased fracking and LNG. I have not heard the hon. leader of the NDP call out the NDP in Alberta to say that it is time to stop construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline and to take those workers, who now work for us and are paid by us, and all the equipment they are using in exactly the areas of British Columbia where we need work in flood prevention and reconstruction, and convert the Trans Mountain Crown corporation to a climate action and resilience operation. They must stop TMX.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, we, as New Democrats, believe firmly in the importance of ending fossil fuel subsidies and using that investment in renewable energy.

There is an incredible opportunity here where we could invest in the future. We could invest in good jobs for today and tomorrow, and we could create good jobs for workers who are wondering and uncertain about their future. In this very difficult time, there is an incredible opportunity for us to invest in what is going to make sure workers have a good opportunity now and tomorrow, and to make sure that we are doing our part to fight the climate crisis. That is what we are committed to doing.

The Address

We want to see a just transition that is a real, clear plan for workers. We want to see Canada doing its part to fight the climate crisis with real investments and reducing emissions, and investing in renewable energy. That is what we are going to fight for.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague, the member for Burnaby South, about the impact on seniors, and the government's refusal so far to stop clawing back the GIS from seniors who also received emergency benefits during the pandemic.

Has he seen an impact? He has spoken a lot about it. What is the impact of the government's refusal to fix its mistake?

• (1300)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, the federal government's decision has really had a big impact on our seniors.

These are vulnerable seniors, who have shared horrific stories of not being able to pay their bills or being afraid of losing their homes or their housing. The impact of the government's decision is hitting hard, and the government needs to fix it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before resuming debate, we have a point of order.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, while the leader of the NDP was speaking, the member for Jonquière walked between you and our colleague, the member for Burnaby South.

[*English*]

As you know, Madam Speaker, this is a clear violation of the Standing Orders. Members cannot step between the Speaker and the person who has been recognized by the Speaker. I would ask that when we get to question period you could recall to all members the importance of following the Standing Orders. Maybe we are out of practice a little, because of COVID. Every single member has to respect that clear Standing Order and not pass between the Speaker and the person who has been recognized.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I greatly appreciate the hon. member's point of order. I will remind members of this right now and certainly ensure that the message is related to the Speaker, who will be here during question period.

I want to remind members that interrupting speakers or speaking while someone else is speaking is not acceptable. As well, crossing in front of someone while he or she is speaking is not proper. I ask members to be mindful and respectful of those regulations in the House.

The hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Don Valley East.

First, I would like to thank the citizens of Hochelaga for entrusting me with a second term. While walking around Hochelaga during my last term, I met with women, men, business owners, shop-

keepers, and representatives of community organizations who thanked us for all the help they received during the pandemic.

Now that we are in the recovery phase, their demands are clear. Canadians want us to increase the housing supply and access to home ownership, take bold action on climate change, ensure green, resilient and inclusive economic growth, defend diversity and inclusion, and ensure the survival of the French language. That is exactly what we announced in the throne speech.

We are in the middle of a housing crisis in Quebec and across Canada. Housing is an essential need, a fundamental right. I would like to remind the House that our government implemented the very first national housing strategy.

When I was a young adult, I was living in a two-bedroom apartment on the third floor with my mother and my two brothers, one of whom is in a wheelchair. My colleagues can imagine how hard it was for my mother to climb three flights of stairs every day for years.

Today, I am thinking about Fatima, Ali and Joanne, who are on a waiting list for affordable social housing. I think that it is our duty to work together, since the situation has obviously not gotten any better. For families, the stress and anxiety of having to find a place to live that meets their needs are real.

Consider students, for example. My riding has a large number of students—

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

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, we are all here to listen to our colleagues' speeches and clarifications.

There is a certain amount of respect we should all be able to show as adults. Even my teenage students in high school know to be quiet and listen when someone is speaking. It is a matter of respect.

• (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou for her intervention.

I have just advised members of the respect they must show in the House. If some members need to have a discussion, I strongly encourage them to leave the chamber and show respect for members who are speaking.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Hochelaga.

Mrs. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague across the aisle for her intervention.

As I was saying, in my riding, a large number of students are obliged to live together in small and increasingly expensive apartments.

The Address

There is also a real homelessness problem, and providing more housing is an obvious solution. I am thinking about the organization L'Anonyme, which, thanks to funding from the Reaching Home program, was able to offer housing to people who do not qualify for social housing, and the organization CAP-CARE, which used the \$1 million in funding it received to provide more than 22,000 overnight stays to people dealing with homelessness. Today, these people are living in uncertainty, not knowing whether they will be able to find a permanent home to meet their urgent need.

I would also like to point out the close connection between poverty, access to housing and drug addiction. Poverty and homelessness are among the major causes of the opioid crisis. Across Canada, 17 people die of drug-related causes every day, and in Montreal alone, 14 die every month.

Montreal's regional public health care department recorded a 25% increase in drug-related deaths between March 2020 and March 2021. Organizations such as L'Anonyme, Dopamine and CAP-CARE are on the front lines of the opioid crisis. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their commitment, their dedication and all the work they do every day on the ground.

The government and I are aware that there is still a lot to do, especially in the riding of Hochelaga. From coast to coast to coast, our government will work tirelessly in collaboration with the provinces and territories to improve access to housing, free up funds for more housing units and protect Canadians' rights.

Access to housing is an essential need, but access to high-quality green spaces close to home is good for physical and mental health. Access to a high-quality living environment is also a right. Our government is investing more than \$60 million to reduce pollution, adapt to climate change and support clean economic growth. These are our priorities.

Hochelaga and Montreal East are particularly affected by climate change. Our industrial past has left its mark, with highly contaminated land, heat islands, a lack of transportation infrastructure and bike paths, and, of course, a conspicuous lack of green spaces.

In fact, a group of doctors recently wrote the following in an open letter in *La Presse*:

...the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, such as Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, have a greater lack of green spaces and a higher number of heat islands.

Let us be clear: This is a deadly combination.

It is vitally important for all of us to move forward with strong, bold measures. That is why the government wants to cap and cut oil and gas sector emissions, invest heavily in public transit, and mandate the sale of zero-emission vehicles.

We need to support local initiatives so that all communities across the country can help fight climate change. One concrete example in my riding is the funding of a vertical greenhouse in a major industrial area. This is a first in Montreal East. This farm will eventually be able to grow 80 tonnes of vegetables for food banks and for the community. Not only do we need a roof over our heads and a high-quality green community, but we also need full refrigerators.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge organizations working in the food banks and on the front lines. We are lucky that they have been there to support everyone in the community, including seniors, families, and people experiencing homelessness. I want to thank them very much.

A resilient and inclusive economy means that we as a government will be there to help families, workers and businesses get through the pandemic.

We are people of action. We know that my colleague, the Minister of Finance, tabled Bill C-2 to extend certain programs to support the economic recovery.

We will continue to make sure that no workers are left behind by establishing the Canada worker lockdown benefit and extending the caregiving benefit and the Canada recovery sickness benefit.

Not a day goes by without employees, employers and community organizations telling me that they and their businesses were saved by the measures we took during the pandemic.

One important measure in the throne speech is the first-ever Canada-wide early learning and child care system. This will not only support the economy, but it will also help women get back to work. We know that women have been hit hard by the pandemic.

● (1310)

It is unacceptable that families should have trouble finding affordable day care for their children. It is unacceptable that fathers and mothers should have to choose between their career and their children. Our government has reached an agreement with the government of Quebec. This historic \$6-billion agreement will help improve Quebec's child care system, a system we have been very proud of for more than 20 years.

Many members of the House came to Canada as immigrants. We rely on many entrepreneurs, artists, restaurateurs, scientists, professors emeritus and workers from other countries, to name but a few. These people have helped build a resilient and competitive country, and they continue to do so.

Our economy's vitality will depend on our ability to welcome new Canadians, and our government is committed to streamlining that process. I would like to thank the team in my riding and my colleagues' ridings for their work. My team has worked on more than 400 immigration files since I was first elected.

The Address

The most important issue for our government is the fight against COVID-19, and I think that we can all agree that it is the number one priority. We have seen with the variants that we still need to remain vigilant. That is what we need to do and will do in collaboration with the other levels of government. We gave health care workers across the country the tools to fight COVID-19. I do not have strong enough words to thank our health care workers and frontline workers for what they have done. We can now be proud that 85% of Canadians aged 12 and over have been vaccinated. This is a good example of how we can do anything when we work together. We are aware that there is still work to do when it comes to access to health care. We need to work with the provinces and the territories to strengthen the health care system and find solutions to specific problems, in particular mental health issues.

As a racialized woman, I have been a victim of racial profiling. My children, who were born in Quebec, have also been profiled. We need to recognize that systemic racism exists and that we need to do something about it. It is time for a change, time to make sure that people are protected against discrimination. That starts with reforming the criminal justice system and policing.

As a proud francophone, I am pleased to see that the modernization of the Official Languages Act is one of our governments' priorities. We need to protect and promote the French language, which is a minority language in North America.

I will conclude my speech by talking about the Broadcasting Act. There is a climate emergency, but there is also a real francophone cultural emergency. I urge all of my colleagues in the House to vote in favour of the upcoming bills aimed at safeguarding the French language in Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have heard from a lot of people in the Kenora riding and across northern Ontario who are feeling the crunch because of the cost of living. Inflation has been skyrocketing. It is important that the government spends responsibly, controls spending, and pays down the deficit in order to help address that. The deficit and the debt were clearly not priorities in the throne speech. I wonder if the member can provide some insight into when or if the government plans to balance the budget.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague across the aisle for his question.

I would like to ask him a question in return. What the opposition members are telling us today is that, during the pandemic, we should have left Canadians across the country on their own.

The people in my riding thank us, because the measures we took helped save their industries and their jobs, and allowed people to continue paying their rent and buying groceries.

The question I would like to ask my colleague across the aisle is as follows: What measures would they have eliminated?

• (1315)

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, the speech by my colleague in the government contains several elements I would like to inquire about.

That being said, I will focus on the issue of the French language. It is important to cultivate and preserve our language and promote it beyond our borders. One way of preserving, cultivating and promoting the French language is to accept francophone students who come to study here and end up investing in our community. However, we have learned that there is a software program that systematically rejects more than 80% of visa applications from francophone students.

How can we protect the French language when a software program systematically rejects applications from francophones? The government blames the software, but we need to remember that the software was programmed by a human being and that the final decision is made by a public servant.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, at the beginning of my last term, I had the honour and privilege of serving as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Immigration, and I can assure my colleague that all the government's work is aimed at improving the immigration process. This process is a key pillar of the coming economic recovery, and I will be very happy to work with my colleague to make sure that more francophones immigrate to Canada, not only to Quebec, but to all parts of the country, so that they can contribute to francophone vitality in North America.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to start by congratulating the member for Hochelaga on her re-election to the House and also by taking this first opportunity to thank the voters of Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for returning me to the House for a fourth term to advocate on their behalf.

I was very glad to hear the member for Hochelaga raise the issues of housing and homelessness in Montreal. We have the same issues in my riding. I was also glad to hear her raise the issue of the opioid crisis and also for her awareness of the struggles families face every day trying to make ends meet.

What I did not hear from her or anywhere in the throne speech is the concern about the clawbacks that are taking place on GIS for seniors who have collected CERB and clawbacks of the Canada child benefit. What we have here is government action that is literally taking food off the table and threatening the roofs over the heads of families and seniors in both our ridings.

Has the minister raised this concern about the clawbacks from seniors and the Canada child benefit with her government?

The Address

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, one of the government's priorities is to support both families and seniors. I cannot guess what will be in future government budgets, but I can assure my colleague that we made commitments during the last election campaign. I will be one of the people advocating loudly for seniors. I can assure my colleague that my 73-year-old mother talks to me about seniors' issues every day.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a real honour to be here today. It is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak in the House and I am very grateful for that. I want to wish you, Madam Speaker, and all members of the House all the best and I look forward to working with everyone.

The vision laid out in the throne speech really is what I campaigned on. It is what I went to the doors and spoke to people about. It is what people talked to me about. I want to take this moment because it is the first opportunity I have had to speak in the House, to thank the people of Don Valley East for putting their trust and faith in me. I believe that they sent me here because I represent their values and their interests. I am truly grateful to the community for sending me here to speak on their behalf.

When I talked to people at the doors, the issues that are outlined in the throne speech came up constantly. Public safety, reconciliation, affordability, housing, building a fair economy, climate change and diversity inclusion were issues that were top of mind for people in Don Valley East and right across the country.

I love knocking on doors. I love talking to people during a campaign. It is not because of the prospect of winning, it is because it actually brings me closer to people. We learn more about people in our community, find out what their values are, more about their lives, some of the challenges they are going through, their ideas, their dreams and also their aspirations, what they aspire to do. Sometimes we may not share the same political philosophy or ideology or even the solutions to take on some of these problems, but at the end, we want one thing. We want what is best for our community and what is best for this country.

The throne speech set out a vision that this government campaigned on, a vision that Canadians voted for and a vision that reflects the priorities of this beautiful country and my community. One of the top issues that came up during the campaign was around reconciliation. Speaking to people at the doors about reconciliation was not an easy thing. Often it impacted them personally or people were just fed up because things have not moved fast enough in the history of this country to right the wrongs of the past.

One thing was clear. People want this government to move faster and they want us to take further concrete action toward building solutions when it comes to building those relationships with indigenous people and mitigating the impact of colonialism and the devastating impact it has had on indigenous people. They do not care which level of government or whether it is a school board, or a community, or a business; they want everyone to be on that same page and to work together to get this done. This government and I want to move closer toward reaching the goals of reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

It is not an easy pathway we are on, but through collaboration, transparency and trust I believe we can get there.

Another issue that came up was, of course, COVID and public safety. I think the throne speech really renews our commitment and focus on public safety. For 21 months, families were devastated, businesses and communities hurt and many constituents in my community were financially hit hard by COVID. People stopped getting their paycheques. Businesses had to close their doors, not knowing when they could open them again. That is why I believe the government immediately acted to implement support for people and businesses across the country.

The investments that the government made were historic and it was the right thing to do in such a challenging time. Individuals found relief, businesses could pay the bills and in return our economy made it. As of October, the three million jobs that were lost during COVID were recovered. The throne speech was clear that the fight against COVID is not over and there is much more work to do. That is why the government will continue to make targeted investments in people and businesses that are struggling, strengthening our health care system and partnering with provinces, territories and municipalities to finish the job. I am proud, when I stand here today, to know that when things got really tough for people out there, this government was there to back them up.

• (1320)

We also know that prior to COVID there were many other issues here. In some cases, they have not gone away and, in fact, COVID may have amplified some of those challenges. From the price people are paying for gas at the pumps to the price of groceries, it is becoming more difficult for Canadians to keep up with the cost of living. As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, the government is taking action. As MPs, we have an obligation to look for ways to make life more affordable for our constituents, and I am confident that the priorities outlined in the throne speech will ease the cost of living.

In my neighbourhood in Don Valley East, the average price for a home is about \$1.3 million to \$1.5 million. This has forced a lot of my friends whom I grew up with, a lot of people, to move out of the neighbourhood. They could go into more affordable neighbourhoods in Ontario, but even that is out of reach for many today as we see the price of homes go up drastically in the province. They are out of reach. People are also competing with investors. I read recently that if people who live in the GTA, which is where my riding is, want to enter the housing market, they have to earn around \$200,000 a year. Not many people in my community can do that. The government has responded to take on some of the challenges of this problem. It is going to build a more flexible first-time homebuyer incentive, implement a rent-to-own program and invest \$4 billion into a housing acceleration fund.

The Address

I also heard that child care has become a growing concern for Canadians. That is why the government, in the throne speech, introduced the \$10-a-day national program, which will help families in my community and across this country a lot. When child care costs as much as it does in Ontario and other parts of Canada, families are forced to make difficult decisions. No parent should have to choose between the quality of child care and going back to work.

Another issue that constantly came up, which is probably one of the number one issues that came up at the door, was around climate change. Canadians do not want to slow down. They want to put Canada on a sustainable pathway to protect our country and the next generation. Liberals believe that the job of government is to be alert to the change that is necessary and is coming and be in front of that change, and to use climate change as an opportunity to grow our economy. The throne speech lays out an ambitious and achievable agenda that means building a fairer, greener economy and providing young people with the skill sets they need to move ahead. That is why I was happy to see the investments into public transit and mandating the sales of zero-emission vehicles that will help us breathe cleaner air. Above all, it means working together with provinces and with municipalities; and strengthening our partnership with indigenous communities to protect our nature and to focus on our future.

Finally, I would like to reflect on one government priority that was in the throne speech, which was around diversity. I have spent most of my life fighting for diversity and equity and inclusion, looking for ways to level the playing field. It is what drew me to politics. I have always looked for ways to remove those barriers that may exist and open up opportunity. Unlocking the full potential of the individual is really about unlocking the full potential of this country. We must work together, regardless of our political stripes, to make sure that this country remains competitive and we maximize our full potential, a country where people feel safe, where they feel that their rights are protected, where they work hard and they know that at the end that hard work will pay off. That is what this throne speech is all about. It is about opening up opportunity and removing barriers because when our neighbour is successful, we are successful. That is the foundation that this country has been built on.

The vision the government has laid out in the Speech from the Throne is ambitious and it will not happen overnight, but if we are committed, and I am committed, we will see it through. We cannot afford not to.

● (1325)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his election. I am looking forward to getting to know him and I look forward to working with him, going forward.

My colleague mentioned child care, as many members of the government have been doing throughout the last couple of weeks. I would like to note that the Liberals have been promising child care longer than I have been alive. That just shows how seriously they are taking this issue. With the greatest respect to the member across the way, why should Canadians believe that the Liberals will actually deliver, this time around?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Madam Speaker, I do not know if the member knows about my history, but I came from the Ontario legislature. I resigned and put my name forward to run federally.

Ontario does not have a deal yet because Ontario Conservatives are blocking it. As a representative from Ontario, I hope we can put this plan in place. It has happened in most of the country, but the Conservatives are blocking it in Ontario. I hope the premier and his colleagues in the Ontario legislature move forward with a plan to support \$10-a-day child care.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, getting the economy moving again is not an easy task. It is urgently needed, but we need to proceed with caution so as not to increase inflation.

There are several ways to do that, which include promoting immigration and making it easier for people to become citizens and permanent residents. That could solve a lot of problems. However, some people in my riding have been waiting to get permanent resident status for two, three or four years, while others have been waiting 10 months for their citizenship ceremony.

We want to get the economy moving again. There are people who are already here and who are willing to work in a number of sectors, but the government is holding them back. When and how will it stop doing that?

● (1330)

[English]

Mr. Michael Coteau: Madam Speaker, I agree 100% that immigration is part of not only our economic recovery post COVID, but part of our larger competitiveness internationally. We need to improve the immigration system and, unfortunately, because of COVID, there have been a lot of delays in the system throughout the pandemic.

I agree 100% that if we are going to release the full potential of our country, immigration plays a significant role in that. I will do whatever I can as the member for Don Valley East to look for ways to contribute to that economic success.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.* I want to congratulate the member for Don Valley East for his election and also for mentioning the importance of reconciliation.

I want to ensure the member is corrected about first nations, Métis and Inuit wanting to work with all levels of government. They do care. They care tremendously. It is important that we always ensure that when we speak about first nations, Métis and Inuit communities, their relationship and their reconciliation is so important that it has to be in the language of reconciliation and about ensuring we are always promoting that we care tremendously.

The Address

Having said that, I would like to ask the member what commitment he can make to ensure that work the NDP has been doing toward ensuring indigenous-led housing is made a priority with the Liberal government.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Madam Speaker, when it comes to issues around reconciliation, it is not a party-led initiative. It is non-partisan. It does not matter which political party one belongs to, and this is the guiding principle I use when it comes to moving forward on reconciliation, unless the country cannot get to a point where it figures out its pathway toward reconciliation, it will never reach its full potential as a nation. This is the issue we need to work through as Canadians in order to move forward.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Carleton.

I want to thank the voters of Simcoe North for placing their confidence in me to advocate on their behalf in this special place. I thank all the volunteers who helped out on my campaign.

I want to recognize my fellow candidates and their volunteers for supporting the political process and making our democracy stronger.

I will remember that, standing here, I represent the views of all my constituents and will balance all sides of an issue for the best interests of my community and our country. The recent months of knocking on thousands of doors and talking to constituents has informed my views.

I must also thank Mrs. Downer's grade five class who welcomed me to my new role with letters reminding me of the continued need to work on truth and reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

I have large shoes to fill. Great people from multiple parties have stood in my place before me: Paul Devillers, who was an excellent representative for Simcoe North; and, of course, the great Doug Lewis, who guided me through both my nomination and general election campaigns. Most recent, Bruce Stanton, a man of integrity and who has immense respect for this institution, served Simcoe North admirably for almost 16 years.

Many of us would not be here without the love and support of family and friends, so I would thank my parents for providing a supportive environment at every opportunity; my sunny ways gang; and, of course, my amazing spouse, Jane. In fact, I like to say that I am already an expert in bipartisan compromise because if my spouse was in this chamber, she would be sitting across the aisle. There are also many people who took an interest in my professional career development over the years, such as Hugh Moncrieff, for which I am grateful.

My political mentor was the late Jim Flaherty, a man well known in this place for his fierce loyalty, great oratory skill, deft handling of crisis and an unwavering commitment to public service. In a letter, Minister Flaherty once challenged me to not forget the importance of public issues and to seize the opportunity to change the world for the better, sometimes for individuals and other times the public. He taught me the value of fiscal responsibility and public service.

It is with that context that I am proud to take my seat in this 44th Parliament and discuss the Speech from the Throne.

I have the benefit of having been in the Department of Finance during the last major economic crisis, the great recession. During that time, we learned that stimulus spending should be temporary, targeted and timely. With the Liberal government, we are batting about one in three. Even the great musician, Meatloaf, would not be satisfied.

Right now, economic growth is projected to be 5% in 2021 and 5% in 2022. This is hardly the time for additional spending. The Speech from the Throne lays out a \$100 billion of new spending, which will be deficit financed. The truth, when it comes to debt, is that we cannot say no and we just cannot help ourselves. All levels of government, persons and corporations have never been more in debt. If debt was a drug, we would be addicts. We should care about this because of what it costs to service the debt and how it impacts our ability to deliver services to Canadians.

If interest rates rise to 2019 levels, the costs to service the federal debt will go up almost 60% or about \$13 billion per year. That is before we include any measures in the throne speech. This money has to come from somewhere. It will either be taxed in the economy, services will be cut or we will have to take on additional debt.

This additional spending is creating a significant risk for our economy and for future generations. I have two young children, Davie and Cooper. I worry that the government they inherit will be permanently impaired from dealing with the challenges of their time. Our spending decisions today will impact future generations from paying for their social services on which all Canadians rely: our health care, education, supporting our seniors or even being prepared for the next pandemic or environmental catastrophe.

I would ask my colleagues to imagine for a moment if the government had been in power during the great recession. We would have spent multiples of what was spent and it would have meant we would have had less fiscal capacity to deal with today's pandemic. As it was, the government spent almost \$100 billion of money we did not have before the pandemic. It spent that money when unemployment was near record lows and the economy was growing well.

When times are good, it appears the answer is to spend money. When times are bad, the answer is to spend more money. The government spends money with no regard for the consequences for the future. Now some economists are warning the government to take its foot off the pedal, that we do not need to keep spending and that it may only make inflation worse.

• (1335)

Of course, the government needed to step up and help people during the pandemic. The government was right to do so and to support Canadians most affected. However, the spending had its time. It is now time to refocus on growing the economy and expanding the productive capacity of Canadians and businesses.

The Address

We could build up rural broadband much faster than the current plan, implement comprehensive tax reform, focus on productivity, economic growth, the labour shortage or even reduce internal trade barriers. All of these are important economic drivers that were absent from the throne speech. It is unfortunate that we are not here debating which programs work and which programs no longer serve their intended purpose. If the government were proposing to trim back in some areas to fund these new priority areas, we would welcome that discussion.

We have to be willing sacrifice and give some things up to focus on our priorities. Spending on everything is an easy way to govern; it is politically expedient.

One would think that with all this money being spent, nobody is being left behind. However, in my riding, there are small business owners, including a bowling alley, that find themselves on the outside looking in. They see other individuals and businesses and, in some cases, reports of even organized criminals taking advantage of the COVID supports, but Andy and Kathy cannot get the help they need to keep their business running.

Another example is independent travel agents. There are about 12,000 independent travel agents in Canada, 85% of whom are women. Throughout this pandemic, they have been on the outside looking in. It does not look like they qualify for the new COVID pandemic supports relief funding, even when the government is encouraging people not to fly. They have been overlooked for supports from the beginning.

We did have money to give billions of dollars to publicly traded companies. We gave hundreds of millions to air carriers. However, we told some of our smallest businesses that they were not important enough. Therefore, when the government does spend, it does not seem to do it all that well. It is important for the government to be measured, focused and effective, but, unfortunately, we do not see much of a plan.

If my colleagues are unpersuaded by what I have to say, I will offer a quote from a well-known Globe and Mail columnist who said, "Don't be fooled." The Speech from the Throne is "many things, but it's devoid of vision for an economic rebuild."

We need to do everything we can to unleash the economic opportunities for all Canadians and do so in a way that spends within our means. If we provide a coherent economic vision for our country, we will be far less reliant on government spending to support our recovery.

It is through increased economic activity of the private sector, small businesses and innovators that we will find wealth and prosperity for Canadians. We will not find prosperity by relying on excess government spending that will only restrict future generations. Our children's future depends on it. In fact, many times in the chamber we have talked about intergenerational equity with respect to the environment. I would submit that this same passion should be brought when we talk about fiscal responsibility.

I believe all members in the chamber want the same thing. We want to leave our country in a better place for our children and grandchildren. I look forward to working with members from all sides of the House on this shared objective.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the comments of the leader of the official opposition and now those of the member opposite. The concern I have is that I expect the Conservatives will vote against the throne speech, which would not surprise me, and I do not think it would surprise anyone in Canada.

When it comes right down to it, there is a very tangible plan for all of us. One of those plans is Bill C-2, which is a continuation of supports for Canadians to get through the pandemic, both for the individual and small businesses, in particular.

Anticipating that the member will be voting against the throne speech, could he give an indication of what he will be doing with the tangible plan that is being dealt with in Bill C-2?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a) I would like to indicate that for all remaining replies by members of the Conservative caucus to the Speech from the Throne, speaking slots will be divided in two.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, it would be nice to talk about Bill C-2 at committee if we could get it up and running.

Of course, we need to step up and help Canadians. However, we also need to make sure that the Canadians who need the most help are the ones getting the help. We would know this if we could get a discussion on Bill C-2 about who is falling through the cracks. I mentioned a few individuals in my speech, in particular the independent travel agents who do not seem to fall within Bill C-2. We would like to get some further clarification on that. I think it would be important to have a full understanding of the bill before we decide whether to support it or not.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, another issue that has surfaced in my riding of Vancouver East concerns start-up businesses. They have been excluded from pandemic support and many of them are struggling. We now have an opportunity before us with Bill C-2 to make changes so that start-up companies can get the support they need to survive the pandemic.

Would the Conservatives support such a change?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, this is exactly the kind of discussion we need to be having about a bill like Bill C-2 so we can talk about who is falling through the cracks. The start-ups and those individuals who cannot prove revenue prior to 2019 or 2020 are having a difficult time getting support from the government and have been throughout the pandemic. I agree with the point that my hon. colleague has raised and wish we could discuss it further with the government.

The Address

• (1345)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is lovely to be here. I would like to thank the member for a great presentation. I am sure his voters are very proud of what he has to say.

The member has struck on a number of points when it comes to the government's need to prioritize. The Liberal government, even before the pandemic hit, found difficulties when it did a cost-savings analysis and it said it needed to spend more. The member talked about the need to have a mindful eye. There are certain areas that suffer from cost disease. For example, labour-centric areas of provincial budgets such as health care require new technology and are heavily people-oriented. If the government cannot prioritize its spending in areas where it will go the furthest, we will lose control of those things because it is unable to budget.

The Liberals often call this austerity. To me it is called prioritizing. I would like to hear what the member has to say about prioritizing and making sure we have money for the important things in life.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, those who have too many priorities probably do not have any priorities at all. I suppose the former leader of the Liberal Party was correct when he said that it was very difficult to make priorities. That is why we need to choose what we want to spend our money on wisely. If we were standing here talking about wanting to trim down in one area because we think that child care is really important and other areas of government are important to invest in, we would obviously welcome that discussion.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been my practice to consider my response to the Speech from the Throne to be my maiden remarks in every Parliament, and I want to begin by thanking the good people of Carleton for electing me a seventh time to this chamber. They have vested their trust in me and I am deeply humbled by it.

I want to thank my wife Anaida, my daughter Valentina and our new son baby Cruz. Cruz was born eight days before the election. He was born premature. He rushed to get here and then they told him he had to wait 18 more years to vote. It is another example of the red tape and rules that are holding people back. The poor little guy could not even vote for his dad. We hope to fix that when we are in government. The other thing he found out is that he owes something like \$60,000 of federal government debt.

Those were two pieces of bad news, but all else has been good news for him. He has a wonderful and loving mother, and he is fortunate to look more like her than his father, which all members will agree is a good thing. As members can see, I was not elected for my good looks, but I am very thankful to have the support of my family.

I also want to thank my father Don, my mother Marlene and my brother Patrick, as well as the countless volunteers, workers and other supporters who have stood by me through thick and thin. I am very pleased to be back here on the floor of the House of Commons to work with everyone here in the service of the common people.

Today, I would like to speak about the question everyone is asking.

[*Translation*]

Why does everything cost so much? No matter where we go, prices have gone up. Young people who are still living in their parents' basements are wondering why housing prices have risen so much. The single mother doing her grocery shopping is wondering why it costs so much to buy food for her children. The worker trying to fill up his truck is wondering why he can only afford to buy a quarter of a tank of gas.

The answer is clear: inflation. There is too much money chasing too few goods and services. How did that happen? The Liberals are trying to blame COVID-19 and the resulting disruptions.

It is strange because the Minister of Finance and the current and former governors of the Bank of Canada said that COVID-19 would cause deflation. However, this week, we heard Stephen Poloz claim that COVID-19 is causing inflation, when he is the one who said that the problem we would have would be deflation. The same people who said that COVID-19 would cause deflation are now blaming COVID-19 for inflation.

COVID-19 is obviously not the main cause. We know this because many other countries have also had COVID-19, but they have a much lower inflation rate than here in Canada because they have printed less money than here. I am thinking of countries like Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, India, China, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, France and the United Kingdom. For its part, the Canadian government has decided to follow the disastrous policy of the United States and print money to finance a deficit.

• (1350)

In the United States, we have seen the result of this policy: the rich have become much richer. Their assets have increased. However, the wages of the poor and the working class are losing value. Their dollar buys less because of the supply of that currency. Of course, in the United States, the two main parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, agree on one thing and one thing only. Both parties like to print money. The Republicans like to fund Wall Street, and the Democrats like to fund Washington. One party likes big business, and the other likes big government. To finance both, they are printing a lot of money, and this has caused very negative effects for the poor. It has increased the gap between the rich and the poor.

Here in Canada, we have not followed this approach. During the Harper years, there was almost no inflation. After the great recession of 2008-09, we had the best economic recovery and we eliminated the deficit in five years. We were able to do that because we did not print money. We spent real dollars to help Canadians during the crisis, and we returned to a balanced budget soon after.

Statements by Members

Suddenly, in 2020, during the COVID-19 crisis, the government decided to start copying what the U.S. Federal Reserve has done, which is to print money to pay the bills, because Canada's deficits were the highest in the G20 and the government was unable to get the financing it needed from the traditional bond market. What this means is that the government increased the amount of money in circulation by \$400 billion, which is about a 25% increase.

Since then, inflation has been astronomical. For example, the price of a house has increased by 30%, which is strange, because one would have expected prices to go down in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. There was no immigration, which reduces demand. Wages went down, which limits the amount of money people have to buy homes. People were scared, which would normally make people think twice about purchases.

Prices did not just go up, however. Property prices increased at an unprecedented rate in Canada's modern history. International supply chains cannot be to blame since land does not have a supply chain. The land has been here for thousands or maybe millions of years. Land does not appear or disappear, so when the gross value of land increases by 20% in a single year, it has nothing to do with the virus or with the delivery of goods. Once again, land does not get loaded onto a ship to be sent to Canada. It is a question of demand. What caused this demand?

When the government printed the \$400 billion, it did not throw that cash out of a plane. That may have been fairer than what it actually did with the money. The government is giving that money to the banks and these banks are loaning it to homebuyers, which is causing the price of real estate to go up.

• (1355)

Clearly, the government is behind the whole situation, and this creates a great deal of unfairness. We need to stop printing money, pay down the deficits and let builders build homes. That is how Canadians will be able to live a dignified and respectable life.

[English]

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my friend from Carleton on his remarks today. It felt like I was hearing a leadership speech from him. I have had the chance to work with him for many years. He talked about family; there was a little humour and a lot of French. This is a good practice ground for him. He is doing quite well.

The member often talks about the economy, and rightly so. It is a very important topic of conversation for all of us, especially as we build our economy post pandemic. However, I did not hear him talk about child care and the value of child care as an economic policy that would allow women to fully participate in our economy. I would love to hear his views and perspective on that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his kind words. I have enjoyed conversations with him. In fact, I had the chance to meet his lovely children, who were on Parliament Hill just last week. I think he is preparing them to run for office, although he had better be careful, because he might not have long in his seat if one of them is too ambitious. That said, I congratulate him on his election and on his wonderful family.

The question about child care is particularly pertinent, because, as the government keeps reminding us, child care is more expensive than ever after six years of Liberal government. It is ironic, because every time the Liberals say they are going to spend money on a particular thing, that thing gets way more expensive. They said they were going to spend \$70 billion on housing, and what happened to housing? It got a lot more expensive. It went from about \$450,000 for the average house to \$716,000. Now homebuyers are paying more and taxpayers are paying more for the same thing that used to cost less for both.

I just hope the Liberals do not get the same results on child care that they got on housing, because God knows parents are paying too much as it is.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton will have three minutes for questions coming to him when we return. For now, we will go to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SENIORS

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people of Scarborough—Agincourt for placing their trust in me once again as their elected representative in Ottawa. Special thanks also go to my three sons and the many volunteers who were so supportive. I will represent my constituents on the issues that matter most to them: recovery from the pandemic, supporting families and workers, helping small businesses and assisting seniors, who deserve to age comfortably in retirement.

Recently, we welcomed the new Minister of Seniors in my riding, and we toured Senior Persons Living Connected, a local non-profit organization doing good work and servicing the diverse needs of over 2,500 seniors and caregivers in our community. We saw first-hand the positive impact of the New Horizons for Seniors program, including a hybrid exercise class for seniors to participate in together, both in person and virtually. I am delighted that the new intake for this program opened last week.

Initiatives such as these represent our government's commitment to supporting Canadians, and I look forward to continuing this work for Scarborough—Agincourt.

• (1400)

MEMBER FOR NIAGARA FALLS

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a tremendous honour for me to rise in the House of Commons today to give my opening remarks in the 44th Parliament as the re-elected representative for the beautiful riding of Niagara Falls. I want to sincerely thank the great people of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie for continuing to place their confidence in me by returning me to this incredible chamber, the people's House, to represent them and their issues. I want to also take a moment to thank the dedicated volunteers who supported me during the campaign. What we achieved on election night was made possible only because of the hard work of everyone involved.

I also want to thank my entire family, including my beautiful wife, Carol, and son, Daniel. I would not be standing here today if not for their continued love and support.

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Speaker on his recent election. I look forward to working with all my parliamentary colleagues in both chambers as we work to resolve the many pressing issues facing Canadians today.

Let us get to work.

* * *

FREDERICK B. ROWE

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a great man we recently lost in Newfoundland and Labrador: Mr. Frederick B. Rowe.

A father, a grandfather, an educator and a politician, he had a passion for politics and spent his life dedicated to improving grass-roots democracy here in our province. He leaves behind a strong legacy of community building.

Mr. Rowe had a long career in politics, including being elected as an MHA for two provincial districts and later becoming a long-time director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Party. He was known as a true grit with a lot of tenacity. He built many bridges of co-operation and friendship along the way. He was a lover of sea explorations and humorous stories, and a great lover of his children and grandchildren. He embodied a lot of the characteristics that make Newfoundland and Labrador so proud and unique.

On behalf of this entire Parliament, I want to send condolences to his wife of 61 years, Sandra, to his entire family and to everyone who was touched by his decades of public service.

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[Translation]

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN MIRABEL

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec alone, 600,000 people rely on food assistance each month, according to Food Banks of Quebec.

As the holiday season draws near, I would like to highlight the strong community spirit of the people in my riding. No fewer than eight fundraisers are being planned right now in the area.

Statements by Members

I would like to thank La Maison de la famille de Mirabel, the Knights of Columbus of Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, Pointe-Calumet and Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac, the Oka Optimist Club, the Comité d'action sociale de Saint-Joseph-du-Lac, and the firefighters of the city of Saint-Placide.

Backed by their invaluable volunteers, they make a huge difference in the lives of hundreds of families. I thank each and every one of them for this wonderful example of community support. With that in mind, I invite all the people of Mirabel to join in this great outpouring of support and to give generously.

* * *

MEMBER FOR SAINT-LAURENT

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House for the first time in this Parliament to thank all the constituents of Saint-Laurent. They placed their trust in me to represent them in the House of Commons for a third time.

[English]

I will continue to do my best to represent them as well as possible in Ottawa.

I would also like to thank my tireless team of volunteers, who made it possible to get our message out and to get the vote out. I could not have done it without them. I would like to highlight three people in particular, who were there every single day: Yasmine, Aldo and Kuddian. I thank them for their hard work and for the great laughs.

I thank my campaign manager, Pina, for all the time and effort put into our campaign and for being the best emotional support on the more difficult days. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family for their consistent support over the last four and a half years. I thank my mom, dad, Yanni and yiayia, for always being my number one fans.

* * *

• (1405)

CANADIAN WESTERN AGRIBITION

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week Regina hosted the Canadian Western Agribition. This year was the show's 50th anniversary. Often referred to as the best beef show on the planet, Agribition is the largest livestock event in Canada, serving as an agricultural trade hub for ranchers and agribusinesses.

Throughout the history of the event, millions of dollars of economic development have passed through Evraz Place in Regina as producers share best practices, innovations in agribusiness technology and, most importantly, our world-renowned Canadian livestock genetics.

Statements by Members

Those who attended the show this year said it was a rousing success and a great opportunity to again visit with old and new friends in person after the postponement of last year's show.

I ask members to join me in thanking Agribition CEO Chris Lane, his leadership team and all the hard-working volunteers who made sure the show ran so smoothly. I also look forward to once again having our leader and even more Conservative colleagues come out to the Agribition next year, because once they get a taste of our western hospitality they will be sure to not want to miss out on all the fun.

* * *

GIVING TUESDAY

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, November 30, is a special day. After Black Friday and Cyber Monday, it is Giving Tuesday, a global movement of generosity.

In my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, we see kindness every single day. We see it in the charities and non-profits that lift our community up; we see it in our courageous and selfless frontline workers, who continue to get us through this pandemic, and we see it in the wonderful volunteers who organize community events and programs, including the coaches who show up at 6 a.m. for our kids' hockey practices.

On Giving Tuesday, let us all find a way to be generous and to do what we can to keep our communities amazing. I ask people to consider signing up to volunteer with a favourite organization or make a donation. They can even perform random acts of kindness in their communities.

I am asking everyone across Canada to inspire each other to do good on Giving Tuesday and all year long.

* * *

MEMBER FOR RICHMOND CENTRE

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise for the first time as a newly elected member in this Parliament, on behalf of my constituents in Richmond Centre.

I would like to thank my community. I thank its members for exercising their right to vote and placing their trust in me as their representative in Ottawa. I am here because of all of them.

I also want to thank my friends, the volunteers and everyone who helped me during my campaign, as well as my family, especially my mother, Lisa, my two sisters, Jenny and Connie, my partner, Zoe, and my father, Michael, who is watching us from above.

Congratulations to all my colleagues across the floor on being elected and re-elected, and I would like to congratulate the Speaker on his re-election.

I look forward to working peacefully with everyone to resolve issues that matter most to Canadians and the constituents of Richmond Centre. As we move forward through these challenging times, our communities need this House to be more united than ever so we may create real change and meaningful process.

HANUKKAH

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jewish communities across Canada have welcomed the beginning of Hanukkah. For eight nights, Jewish families across Canada will gather to light the menorah and tell of the miracle of Hanukkah. The eight-day festival of lights celebrates the triumph of the Maccabees over their oppressors over two millennia ago. This week, Jewish homes and communities light up in celebration of the miracles that have upheld the Jewish people over the centuries.

Hanukkah is an opportunity to reflect on life's blessings and honour the resilience of the Jewish people in the face of immense adversity. It is also a time to recognize the challenges still experienced by Jewish communities, including unacceptable acts of anti-Semitism in our communities.

Canada is blessed to be home to such a vibrant and engaged Jewish community that has enriched our society. From my family to theirs, I wish all celebrating tonight a very happy Hanukkah.

Chag Chanukah sameach.

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● (1410)

JOSÉE FOREST-NIESING

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are heart-broken to hear of the tragic passing of our colleague and friend, the Hon. Senator Josée Forest-Niesing. Her ambition to help others was embedded in her DNA. She was a fierce advocate and champion for the most vulnerable, promoting the abilities of people and protecting our environment.

[*Translation*]

She shared the passion of her parents, Normand and Marie-Paule, for protecting the French language and heritage. Her incredible accomplishments, her generosity, and the many people she touched and helped will never be forgotten.

A fund has been created in memory of Josée Forest-Niesing at Place des Arts in Greater Sudbury. We will always remember her beautiful smile and her joie de vivre.

I offer sincere condolences to her husband Robert, her children Véronique and Philippe, her mother Marie-Paule, her sisters Sylvie and Dominique, and to all those who knew and loved her.

Rest in peace, Josée, dear friend to all.

* * *

[*English*]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was growing up, forestry fed my family. Forestry remains vital to the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Six days after the Prime Minister visited Washington, D.C., the United States doubled tariffs on Canadian softwood lumber. This incident demonstrates what we have learned over the past six years: The Prime Minister has no influence over our largest trading partner. He is not respected on the world stage and he does not care about our natural resources.

Thousands of people in my community depend on forestry and these tariffs put their homes, families and livelihoods in jeopardy. Our forestry workers deserve to have someone in their corner, and I want the people in my community to know that Conservatives will fight for their jobs and their families even if the government will not.

* * *

FLOODING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yet another atmospheric river is hitting B.C. We are bracing for and actively experiencing even more flooding. I will be pushing the recently formed federal-provincial B.C. flood recovery committee for the critical infrastructure small communities cannot afford, dike repairs and a revamp of our emergency response policy to learn from our mistakes.

It goes without saying that highways and railways remain washed out, and many in our rural and predominantly indigenous communities are stranded with more unpredictable weather on the way. This lack of control can lead people to feelings of hopelessness, but we must not despair. We are more coordinated than we were last week, and we will be better next week. I thank the volunteers, emergency workers, military personnel and everyone who has donated financially across Canada. Canadians banding together to help each other make Canada the best country on earth.

I will be positively relentless in my pursuit for the resources British Columbia needs today and tomorrow.

* * *

AUSTIN HUNT AND GORDON WAINDUBENCE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Manitoulin Island recently lost two political titans.

Earlier this month, the Township of Billings lost legendary municipal leader Austin Hunt. From his earliest days as Lester B. Pearson's driver, to a 65-year municipal career that saw him retire as the longest-serving politician in Canada, Austin was a force. His vision for municipal politics resonated throughout the north, including his work as a charter member of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities.

Last week, Anishinabek Nation head Gordon Waindubence began his journey into the spirit world. A resident of Sheguiandah First Nation, Gordon worked to unite the Anishinabek Nation and preserve the culture and language. He sought to bring back the traditional clan system and create the Anishinabek Constitution in order to strengthen the traditional governance structure. Anishinabek Grand Chief Reginald Niganobe said Gord's teachings and kindness will continue to be shared well into the future.

Statements by Members

Our deepest sympathies to the families and communities of these leaders who left indelible marks on Manitoulin's political culture.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

BATTLE OF HILL 355

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, we marked the 70th anniversary of the battle of Hill 355, which took place in 1951 during the Korean War. Hill 355 was the strategic point to be defended. This long, desperate battle was fought in the mud, snow and cold and could not have ended in victory without the heroic participation of French-Canadian soldiers from the 22nd Regiment, including one Léo Major.

Only a few years after single-handedly liberating a town and capturing 93 enemy soldiers during the Second World War, Quebec's own Rambo carried out another military feat. With his courage, know-how and stubbornness, Léo Major guided his troops to another military success at Hill 355.

This conflict may be called the forgotten war, but in Quebec, we remember.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we enter the holiday season, Canadians have unwrapped that we are an inflation nation and that our housing costs are the second highest in the world. In Bay of Quinte, a newly retired senior reached out to my office this week asking for help to get additional funding because her dream of retirement had become a nightmare. She lives in a modest home, but with rising costs she cannot survive on her CPP and OAS. She takes home over \$820 a month, and does not know if she can afford to live in her home much longer because of the inflation tax on housing. Mrs. Hannah wrote to me, "Everything has increased in cost and we're not able to afford some groceries or heat our home." She worries that she is going to be homeless.

It is not fair to say that it is just inflation when it comes to housing, and that it is just world problems when it is Canadians' right to afford to put a roof over their heads and to afford a home. We must work together to fix this inflation tax on housing to ensure we keep roofs over the heads of our seniors and all citizens of Canada. That is the gift Canadians want to see from their government this season.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***OPERATION RED NOSE**

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the holidays fast approaching, Operation Red Nose's safe ride service will once again help keep our roads safe.

This year, Operation Red Nose of Vaudreuil-Soulanges is once again looking for teams of three dedicated volunteers to provide safe rides home every Friday and Saturday night in December.

Once again, the team from my office and I will be among them. I invite everyone in Vaudreuil-Soulanges to join us by signing up as volunteers at operationnezrouge.com.

[English]

I also encourage all members of my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges who are planning an office gathering, or are simply having a few friends or family members over to celebrate the season, to please continue to do their part and plan ahead. Booking their Nez rouge ride is easier than ever through the free Nez rouge app, and can be done the night of.

Let us spread the word and spread the cheer, and together we can make sure this holiday season is safe.

The Speaker: Before going to questions, I want to remind the hon. members that the statements in Statements by Members are 60 seconds long. They are good will and good statements. I do not want to have to cut them off, so please be prepared for the next Statements by Members.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months now, all Canadian families have been suffering from the ever-increasing cost of living. This is called inflation and, unfortunately, it is not getting any better. This morning, in Washington, the president of the U.S. Federal Reserve spoke of persistent inflation. Enough procrastinating. Reality is hitting us hard.

The first thing the government must do is rein in spending, something it has not done in six years. Will it do it now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the number one economic priority for Canada is to put this pandemic behind us, to do everything we can to finish the fight against COVID-19, because it is causing damage throughout our economy and around the world.

The last two years have been hard on Canadians. COVID-19 has disrupted our lives, our families and our businesses. Due to inflation caused by global supply chains and this pandemic, Canadians are facing rising costs, which is especially difficult as the holiday season approaches. We will be there for Canadians during these tough times.

• (1420)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, runaway inflation and rising prices are making these tough times a reality for Canadians right now.

I will be a good sport and give the Prime Minister credit for one true thing he said a few months ago. He said, "I don't think about monetary policy." What he said was true, but it is not the right thing to do.

If the government really wants to help Canadian families and curb inflation, what we would like it to do is not stop spending, but rein in government spending, which it has not done in the past six years. Will it do so now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the best way to help grow the Canadian economy and help Canadian families is to get COVID-19 under control. That is what we have been doing from the start with investments—which the Conservatives opposed—to support students, families and workers.

We will continue to be there for people who need help, and we will forge ahead with vaccination, a tool that will help us get through this. Almost all of us know that vaccination will enable us to overcome COVID-19, but, sadly, the Conservatives still do not seem to understand that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for Canadians, this government's inflationary policies are leading to nothing but higher prices. Germany, Australia, England, France and Japan are also struggling with COVID-19, but they do not have an inflation rate as high as what Canadians are currently experiencing.

I will ask a very simple question again: Will the government finally do what any good manager would do, which is to control spending, something it has not done for six years?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those countries that the hon. member just cited are also facing an inflation crisis, because it is a global problem caused by the disruption of our supply chains due to COVID-19.

Canada is well positioned to help families, as we did during this pandemic, by fighting the housing crisis, helping with child care and investing to help families overcome this crisis and rebuild the economy.

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): There you have it again, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister talks about land prices with relation to the supply chain. Our land is not affected by supply chain prices. The Prime Minister has, in fact, overseen the largest increase in home and land prices of any prime minister. It is driving home ownership out of reach for Canadians, but it is also driving the price of rent up for Canadians, meaning that they cannot afford food for their families or gas for their cars to get to work. They certainly cannot save for their dreams.

The question is very simple for the Prime Minister: Is he going to pass the buck on this housing bubble, or will he admit that it is “just inflation”?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, supply chains have an important role to play in the global inflationary crisis we are facing right now, but so too does this pandemic we just came through. This is something the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes did not mention at all. We know that the pandemic has had a significant impact on housing prices and on challenges faced by families. That is why priority one on fighting inflation and on growing the economy needs to be ending the pandemic once and for all. It is something the vast majority of Canadians understand goes through vaccination. Unfortunately, Conservatives do not seem to get that.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really excited to tell the Prime Minister that the folks who elected this Conservative for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes have the highest vaccination rates, not just in the province, but in the country. If the Prime Minister wants to play games, he should be thinking about monetary policy. Instead, he does not.

I am going to ask the Prime Minister a question. It is very simple. Is he going to pass the buck and play political games, or will he finally admit that this is “just inflation”?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of playing the kind of political or word games the opposition does. We will stay focused on being there for Canadians.

The number one way to support Canadians through the challenges they are facing right now is to end this pandemic once and for all. That means making sure that everyone gets vaccinated. I congratulate the constituents of the member opposite for being so strongly vaccinated. Maybe he could use some of his constituents to convince some of his colleagues to get vaccinated.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 18, the Prime Minister was at the three amigos summit. We would expect a relationship between “amigos” to

Oral Questions

be frank and sincere, not complacent and weak. On November 24, the United States doubled its punitive duties on Canadian softwood lumber.

I have a simple question for the Prime Minister: What did they talk about?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the meeting with the U.S., we talked about a lot of issues that are important to Canadians, including COVID-19, cars, softwood lumber, and potatoes. We talked about all kinds of mutual interests that we are going to be able to work on together and settle our disputes.

We once again pointed out that the unfair duties on softwood lumber are not working for Canadians or for American consumers. We will continue to be there and fight for our forestry industry.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the Prime Minister is not as good with softwood lumber as he is with potatoes. I realize that it is tough to trade with a giant, but the giant still wants our lumber, our electricity, and our lithium.

Canada's international weakness at the moment is utterly deplorable. It would obviously be better for Quebec to speak for itself with its own voice internationally, but in the meantime, will the Prime Minister demand that the U.S. President withdraw these punitive duties?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber duties are unjustified and are hurting workers and businesses on both sides of the border. The Minister for International Trade has raised this issue with the U.S.

We will always vigorously defend our softwood lumber industry and its workers, just as we were able to defend our steel industry and our aluminum workers when the U.S. was going to slap punitive tariffs on that sector. We will always be there to defend the interests of Canadians and to advance our economic interests.

*Oral Questions**[English]***HOUSING**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are facing a housing crisis that is striking hard at all Canadians across the country. It is so difficult for anyone to find a home within their budget. The former governor of the Bank of Canada has stated really clearly that the federal government has a role in tackling this housing crisis. We agree. The federal government needs to tackle the pressures driving up the cost of housing, end the speculation, and address the supply side of the issue by building more homes that people can actually afford.

People are desperately in need of help. Why is the Prime Minister not responding to this crisis with the urgency necessary?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, housing is a major priority for this government. We will deliver with programs such as the housing accelerator fund, which will help municipalities build more and better, faster.

Whether it is building more units per year or increasing affordable housing, we will work with partners to get real results for Canadian families. We will also help families buy their first home sooner with a more flexible first-time homebuyer incentive, a new rent-to-own program, and a reduction in the closing costs for first-time buyers. We will respond to this housing crisis in ways that support Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis is hitting us hard. People cannot find affordable housing.

The former governor of the Bank of Canada clearly stated that the federal government has a role to play in tackling this problem, and we agree. The federal government needs to tackle the pressures driving up the cost of housing and build more affordable housing and social housing.

People are desperate. Why is the Prime Minister not taking the urgent action needed to solve this problem?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, housing is a major priority for our government.

We will deliver with programs like the housing accelerator fund, which will help municipalities build more, better and faster. Whether it is building more units per year or increasing affordable housing, we will work with our partners to get real results for Canadian families.

I encourage all members of the House to work with us to address the housing crisis with targeted investments for Canadians.

- (1430)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, housing prices have increased by 22% in Canada since this minister was appointed to the finance portfolio. This is not due solely to the pandemic or supply chain issues, because land prices continue to rise.

Why will this government not recognize that it is “just inflation”?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the election campaign, the Conservatives put forward a housing plan that would have made homes more expensive for Canadians.

Let us review their proposal. They proposed a tax cut for selling rental properties that would have encouraged speculation and created a financial incentive for wealthy Canadians to turn houses into investment vehicles rather than places to live.

We on this side of the House have a clear plan.

[English]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the problem: Land does not have supply chains. It is already underneath our feet, yet land prices have inflated 20% during a year, driving housing inflation.

Other countries had COVID disruptions, yet according to Bloomberg, Canada has the second-worst housing bubble. Toronto and Vancouver are more unaffordable than almost every city on earth. Why does Canada have the second-worst housing bubble in the world? Is it “just inflation”?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the election campaign, the Conservatives put forward a housing plan that would have made homes more expensive for Canadians. They proposed a tax giveaway for selling rental properties, which would have encouraged speculation and created a financial incentive for wealthy Canadians to turn houses into investment vehicles rather than places to live.

Politicians in glass houses should not throw stones.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the challenge: If the only answer is government subsidies and assistance, then the government is further distorting the market, which means for every family it helps, it is pushing house prices out of reach for another family. The Liberals are spending all kinds of money to make housing more expensive for taxpayers and homebuyers.

Why does Canada, with among the most abundant supply of land in the entire world, have the second-worst housing bubble in the world? Is it “just inflation”?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: In our six years of being in government, we have spent \$4.5 billion a year to build more housing in this country for Canadians. The Conservative record is \$250 million a year. Those are the facts—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to hear the answer because it was a good question. Maybe the minister could start over, right from the beginning. This way we will be able to hear it.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, in our six years in office, for every year that we have been in power, we have spent \$4.5 billion investing and providing more housing for Canadians. What is the Conservative record? It is \$250 million a year.

Second, when we brought in the Canada housing benefit to put money directly into the pockets of Canadians so they could pay their rent, Conservatives voted against it. When we brought in help for co-ops, the best form of housing for middle-class Canadians, they voted against it. When we put forward rapid housing initiatives for cities to build permanent housing solutions for the most vulnerable, they voted against it.

● (1435)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us get this straight. When Conservatives were in power, according to the minister, we spent \$250 million on housing, and the average house cost Canadians \$450,000. With Liberals now in power, they are spending 27 billion tax dollars, and the average house costs \$720,000. Housing is now not just more expensive for taxpayers, it is more expensive for homebuyers. Failing is bad. Failing expensively is even worse.

Why do we have the second-biggest housing bubble in the world?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can see through that partisan rhetoric. The fact is that Conservatives invested zero dollars in co-ops, and they unloaded housing costs to municipalities and provinces. The reason we have a housing crisis is that they had no leadership in housing for their time in office.

Here are some more facts: We brought in federal leadership in housing. We introduced the national housing strategy. We are working more than ever before with municipalities, and we are bringing in a first-time homebuyer incentive to make sure we are turning Canadians into homebuyers.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he seems to be bragging that he is the most expensive housing minister in Canadian history. Not only are Canadians spending more when they buy a house, but now they have to pay more on their taxes for the failed programs that this minister and the government put in place to inflate the housing bubble to begin with. Canada has the second-biggest housing bubble in the world, behind a tiny island in the South Pacific called New Zealand. Every other country has less housing inflation.

What is causing this massive bubble? Is it “just inflation”?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the member for Carleton has referred to inflation, let us do a little fact checking of what we heard in the House earlier today. The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent referred to Germany having higher inflation than Canada. I would urge the hon. members to check their facts before they come into this House, because this morning Germany reported 6% inflation. The eurozone this morning reported 4.9% inflation.

Even the Leader of the Opposition has admitted he understands that inflation is a global phenomenon. I wish other members of his party would listen to him sometimes.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the Prime Minister will listen to the Deputy Prime Minister's book, and in that book she could explain how she has managed to create the second-biggest housing bubble in the world. In fact, Vancouver has the second-highest home prices on earth. Toronto is number five. They are more expensive than Manhattan; San Francisco; London, England; and other places with far less land, far more people and far more money. This is housing inflation that has resulted since the government unleashed a torrent of money printing.

Will the finance minister finally tell us what is causing this housing bubble? Is it “just inflation”?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives really disagree with Stephen Poloz, appointed by Stephen Harper as governor of the Bank of Canada, and they really believe that COVID was the time for austerity, then it is time for them to come clean with Canadians and talk about what they would have cut.

Would they have cut the CERB, which supported nine million Canadians who lost their jobs? Would they have cut the wage subsidy, which supported 450,000 employers and kept 5.3 million hard-working people on the payroll? Would they have cut CEBA, which supported nearly 900,000 businesses? Canadians need to know.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fossil fuel industry plans to drill 1,363 new wells in 2022. Most of them will be for oil. However, Canada is fully supplied; there is no demand for more oil. Clearly, that oil must be intended for export, and a pipeline will be needed to reach global markets. However, the only new export pipeline project is Trans Mountain, which is owned by the government.

Oral Questions

In the midst of a climate emergency, will the minister denounce the increase in oil production and confirm that his government will not promote it through its pipeline?

• (1440)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, a global effort is under way to stop climate change, including greenhouse gas emissions. As Her Excellency the Governor General mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, our government will cap emissions from the energy sector in a way that will protect both jobs and the environment. We are committed to capping and reducing emissions in the energy sector by 2050, and the entire country will, of course, be carbon neutral.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is defending the indefensible. I want to continue talking about Trans Mountain. The flooding in British Columbia unearthed entire sections of the pipeline and exposed them to debris. Trans Mountain is now at an increased risk of spills because of climate change. The project is doubly harmful. On the one hand, it is accelerating climate change and, on the other hand, climate change is increasing the risk of spills. It is a lose-lose situation for the environment.

How can the minister support an increase in dirty oil exports through his pipeline that is doubly harmful?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is working with the industry, including Trans Mountain, to decarbonize the energy sector and cap emissions while still remaining competitive and maintaining energy security, affordability and market access. The Trans Mountain expansion allows us to use the resources we have now and the revenue they have generated to fund tomorrow's green energy solutions. We must work together with all Canadians and all regions across the country.

* * *

[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, historically, Nova Scotia has been excluded from softwood lumber duties and tariffs imposed by the U.S. because any exemption earned in litigation is carried forward to future agreements. These exemptions have always been defended by Canada, until now. Nova Scotia has not received a firm commitment from the government that this exemption will be preserved.

Will the government commit to Nova Scotia's lumber workers that this exemption will be defended?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always defend the interests of the forestry sector and the workers it employs. In a relationship as large as the one we have with the United States, we will always work together to solve and resolve issues. I will be speaking to my counterpart, the U.S. trade representative, later this afternoon, and I am pleased that tomorrow I will lead a team Canada group, which includes members from all sides of the House, to Washington to continue our government's advocacy and to stand up for Canadian interests.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were once again blindsided by the doubling of tariffs on Canadian lumber. This is another example of the Prime Minister failing Canadians and failing Canada's natural resource sector. In my own riding, there are mills that continue to suffer as a result of the Prime Minister's failure on international trade. Historically, New Brunswick has been exempt from these tariffs, and the operators believe they should still be exempt.

When will the Prime Minister get off the backs of Canadian workers, including those in the natural resource and forestry sectors, and stand up for their interests, including those in New Brunswick?

• (1445)

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian softwood lumber is an absolute priority for our federal government. I am looking forward to tomorrow to take a team Canada to Washington, where we will stand up for Canada. We will continue to advocate for Canadian businesses, for the forestry sector and for the workers they employ. We have done this before and we will continue to stand up for Canadians.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, U.S. trade representative Tai has been waiting since May to start negotiations on softwood lumber. Yesterday, the Minister of International Trade stated in the House that the softwood lumber industry will provide her with a mandate on negotiating with the United States.

U.S. tariffs on softwood have been in place since 2015. It has been six years. Please do not tell me the minister does not yet know what the industry wants.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has taken up this issue through CUSMA, at the NAFTA panel and at the WTO. In 2020, it was ruled that Canada was indeed a fair trading partner. We are going to continue to stand up for the rights of Canada's forestry sector and its workers.

I have shared with the U.S. trade representative and U.S. interlocutors that of course we would be open to an agreement that will bring predictability and stability, but we are not going to take any agreement. We are going to negotiate an agreement that is a good agreement for Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the agreement we have for Canada right now under the government is pretty bad. I mean, they doubled the tariffs.

Given that the most noteworthy trade event the minister has been involved in was an ice cream parlour in Beijing, can she please let the House know if she intends to give the Americans notice that we intend to litigate under chapter 10 of CUSMA regarding the tariffs, or if we intend to give notice on any other retaliatory measures and what those are? It has been six years. It is time to act.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have consistently defended the forestry sector, whether it is at the NAFTA panel or through CUSMA. I would remind the hon. member that we have chapter 10 in CUSMA only because we preserved the dispute settlement mechanism in CUSMA.

We will fight for Canadian businesses and the softwood lumber industry. We have done a pretty good job in the work of defending steel and aluminum from tariffs. We are going to continue standing up for this sector and industries all across the country.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are outraged by the Liberal government's failure to protect our allies and the women, religious minorities and people who are most vulnerable in Afghanistan. Experts have stated that Afghanistan is now among the world's worst humanitarian crises. There are 23 million Afghans who are at risk of starving, but the UN World Food Programme has said that the government's response has been like a drop in the ocean.

Will the minister act with the urgency and scale required to prevent a humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the escalating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. As winter approaches, it is critical that that the international community work collectively to meet the needs of vulnerable Afghans.

Canada continues to collaborate with allies and others in the region to address the humanitarian crisis. In fact, I was just on a phone call with the special representative, Deborah Lyons, today to look at the next steps of what the international community can do.

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DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I recently spoke to the mayor of Princeton, whose community of 2,800 suffered damage when the Tulameen River overflowed. He is deeply concerned that his community will not be able to rebuild under traditional disaster funding, which forces municipalities to pay 20%. A \$10-million restoration would cost Princeton \$2 million, a bill it would struggle to repay.

The impacts of the climate crisis are getting worse every day, so will the government help small communities by waiving or reducing this requirement?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr.

Oral Questions

Speaker, that is a very important question. Just last week, the Prime Minister and I travelled to British Columbia and visited with many of the impacted communities. It is very clear that it is going to require an extraordinary effort to recover and rebuild from the devastating flooding that has taken place in British Columbia.

We have announced that we are forming a joint committee, working with both the provincial and federal governments and bringing indigenous leadership to the table. Communication and coordination with those municipal leaders is going to be a critical part of our response.

We know there is a great deal of work to do, and we are prepared to be there for the people of British Columbia as they recover and rebuild from these devastating floods.

* * *

● (1450)

HOUSING

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the doorsteps in Halifax West, I heard loud and clear that housing was a pressing issue for my constituents.

[Translation]

According to the Canadian Real Estate Association, the average cost of a home increased by about 20% in Nova Scotia in the past year. This is a big challenge, especially with the impressive growth in my riding.

[English]

We know we need to build more housing and ensure that young people and new Canadians are not shut out from buying their first home. Can the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion update the House on the government's plan to add to our housing stock, maintain affordability and unlock home ownership?

[Translation]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Halifax West for her question and I congratulate her on her election.

[English]

We know that many Canadians struggle to find a safe and affordable place to call home. That is why we are introducing an ambitious plan to make housing even more affordable. We will introduce a \$4-billion housing accelerator fund, enhance the first-time homebuyer incentive and introduce a groundbreaking and innovating rent-to-own program that will turn Canadian renters into homeowners.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the wave of deadly violence in Montreal has cost the lives of three innocent teenagers in the past few weeks. The Premier of Quebec and his public safety minister are calling on the Liberal government to take its responsibilities.

For years we have been trying to convince the Prime Minister of Canada that violent murders are committed by street gangs and criminal groups, not by law-abiding citizens. It is time to stop going after hunters and sport shooters.

When will the government take action against the true cause of the problem?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken significant measures to combat gun violence. We have made significant investments to improve investigative capabilities. We set up a working group with the United States. That is the work we did last week when I had the opportunity to meet with my U.S. counterpart and have a very constructive discussion with him. We will work with the Government of Quebec to combat gun violence.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I would like the Minister of Public Safety to confirm that the problem in Canada right now is due to illegal guns, guns that cross the border, including ghost guns, as they are called, and not due to law-abiding hunters and sport shooters.

Is the minister prepared to state clearly that the problem is those people, the criminals?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this file presents many challenges. That is why our government has taken meaningful action. We continue to find and implement meaningful solutions such as banning military-style weapons, investing in the border to improve our police resources, or investing in our communities to create spaces. We must prevent this problem, and we will continue with our approach.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a radio interview with CBC Calgary on Friday morning, the member for Calgary Skyview suggested he and his team are under investigation by the Commissioner of Canada Elections for stealing campaign literature from Conservative candidate Jag Sahota. His reference to the team being investigated is new information that suggests there was an organized effort on the part of his campaign team to engage in widespread stealing of Sahota's campaign material.

I have a simple question for the Prime Minister. If the member for Calgary Skyview is found guilty, will the Prime Minister remove him from caucus?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has apologized. He

is fully co-operating with Elections Canada as it goes through this process. That process will continue.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really a simple answer, and that answer should be “yes”.

Again we see the hypocrisy of the Prime Minister operating on a different set of rules. Jody Wilson-Raybould was booted from caucus for not wanting to interfere in a criminal prosecution, yet by his own admission and compelling video evidence showing the member for Calgary Skyview stealing campaign material and replacing it with false information, he gets to stay in caucus.

I will ask again. Will the member for Calgary Skyview be removed from caucus if he is found guilty?

• (1455)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the member has apologized. He is working with Elections Canada as it moves through its process. It is incredibly important, as these processes work their way forward, that they be allowed to do so, and obviously the member will be continuing to co-operate with that process.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we all share the responsibility for taking action against the shootings plaguing Montreal. That is why, yesterday, my colleague who is the public safety critic proposed creating a joint task force to combat firearms trafficking.

Instead of taking the hand extended by my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety took the opportunity to engage in a partisan attack. Is that a responsible approach?

Our young people are being killed in broad daylight on the streets of Montreal in the Prime Minister's riding.

Could the minister take a different view of this and accept my colleague's offer of help?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that my heart goes out to the friends and family of Thomas Trudel and all families grieving as a result of the violence caused by weapons of war.

We remain very focused and promise to invest at least \$1 billion to help the provinces and even municipalities ban handguns.

Absolutely, I am always ready to work with my Bloc Québécois colleagues.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite all the measures that the minister mentioned, the reality is that illegal guns are still on the streets of Montreal. That is the reality on the ground.

The minister cannot tell us that his government is doing everything it can to crack down on firearms trafficking at the border, just as I have never said that it is not doing anything.

The reality is that his government needs to do more. He can count on our support, because this is not a partisan issue; it is a public safety issue.

What is stopping him from accepting our proposal to create a joint task force to combat firearms trafficking at the border?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: We have invested \$125 million to combat smuggling. We have also transferred \$46 million to Quebec.

As I said before, we continue to work closely with the U.S., as well as with the Quebec government. My door is always open to work with all members of the House.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, about a month ago Mayor Braun invited the members of Parliament whose ridings touch his city of Abbotsford to a meeting to talk about the aging Sumas Prairie diking system. He explained that the cost to repair would be about \$500 million, but the economic impact of a breach of those dikes would be devastating, measured in the billions. About two weeks ago, the nightmare came to pass.

Can the Minister of Emergency Preparedness tell us what the plan is to make sure that this never happens again?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just last Friday, I visited again with Mayor Braun, along with the Prime Minister, and we heard first-hand the problems they have had. They acknowledged at the time, as did the premier of British Columbia, that many years ago the responsibility for maintaining those dikes was downloaded to the municipalities and they did not have the capacity to do it. We have made a commitment to British Columbia and to the people impacted by these floods that we will be there for them during the rebuild. We will ensure that we are adaptive and create a greater resiliency for those communities, rebuilding in a way that is respectful of the impact that so many of these climate-related events are having on that community.

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DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister announced that the government would match flood relief donations only for the Red Cross. Local agencies with actual boots on the ground that are helping displaced families have been denied matching funding. The Salvation Army, the Mennonite Central Committee, Archway and churches are feeding and housing victims and cleaning up the mess left behind by the floods, yet none will receive matching funding. Why?

Will the Prime Minister now commit to matching funds for all qualified agencies that are helping out the flood victims?

Oral Questions

• (1500)

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. It gives me an opportunity to acknowledge the extraordinary generosity of Canadians who have been there for the people of British Columbia impacted by these floods. We are very grateful and want to acknowledge their generosity.

Just last week, the Prime Minister announced that the federal and provincial governments will match each and every dollar raised by the Canadian Red Cross. To date, they have raised \$14 million. That means \$42 million will be available to help the people of British Columbia. The funding will be used by the Canadian Red Cross to support evacuated families. They have done it before for us in Fort McMurray. It is an organization that is well positioned to meet the needs—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, twice in as many weeks, my constituents in the Fraser Valley and the Fraser Canyon have been impacted by widespread flooding. Washed-out highways, flooded fields and swamped barns have impacted agricultural production. Canadians are incurring huge losses across the board. Food security and our livelihood depend on federal support.

Can the minister responsible for Pacific economic development please outline the concrete actions this new agency will take to support the reconstruction of B.C. roads, dike infrastructure and other critical infrastructure?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know this is a question very much on the minds of people impacted by these floods. It is why we have established, with the British Columbia government, a joint committee to make sure that all of the ministers whose portfolios have been impacted by these devastating floods are at the table and working collaboratively. It also gives us an opportunity to recognize the importance of engaging with indigenous leadership on these important discussions as well.

We will ensure that all orders of government and indigenous leadership come to the table to make sure that we provide the support and assistance that British Columbians need as they rebuild and recover from these devastating floods.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a person's sexual orientation or gender identity cannot and should not be changed based on a narrow ideal of what is considered normal.

Can the Minister of Justice explain to the House why banning the cruel and degrading practices known as conversion therapy is a priority for the government and must be implemented quickly?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne is absolutely right. Many survivors have described this heartbreaking process and the terrible physical and mental toll it took.

I hope all members of the House agree that no Canadian should be tortured in order to change who they are or who they love. That is why we have introduced a bill to ban conversion therapy, and I hope we can count on the support of all parties in the House to support Bill C-4.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are exciting energy projects happening across the Prairies that are both sustainable and innovative: projects equipped with carbon sequestration units, new low-carbon hydrogen and helium facilities, and a Regina company that is getting lithium from mature oil wells. Conservatives are committed to seeing beyond Liberal environmental rhetoric and providing results for Canadians.

My question is for a yes or no answer from the activist environment minister. Will he come with me and tour some of these facilities or will he keep his head buried in the sand and continue to wrongfully demonize western Canadian energy?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been hard at work since 2015, to support the transition in Canada with the transformation of our energy sector, our transportation sector and our industrial sector to a low-carbon economy for all Canadians and for all sectors of the economy, as well as the nation.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while many children across Canada look forward to Santa visiting in less than a month, many parents have already woken up to their stockings filled with coal, not houses. Parents reflecting on the gifts of massive cash for housing have not just seen rising heating bills and small business workers have not just had worker shortages, but they can see that it is “just inflation” also making housing the second most expensive in the world because there is no supply.

Will the Liberals fix the inflation tax on housing by producing supply, rather than inflation-causing cash, or will they be the grinch that steals Christmas?

• (1505)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely do believe that increasing supply is an important part of addressing the housing challenge, but all of us have been talking a lot about the economy today. That is entirely appropriate, so let me propose one thing we can all do to support Canadians in this difficult moment, when the omicron variant has appeared. It is to support Bill C-2, which would provide essential targeted support for tourism and hospitality, and critical lockdown support, should we need it. Let us set aside partisan posturing and support this essential and urgent legislation.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne left rural Canadians hungry and out in the cold. It ignored their concerns, like labour shortages, rising inflation and the skyrocketing costs of basic necessities, like gas, groceries and heat for their homes and their barns. Rural Canadians, like those in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, deserve to be a priority.

Why is the Liberal government always ignoring rural Canadians and leaving them behind?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is my first time rising in the House in the 44th Parliament. I would like to congratulate the Speaker on his seat, all of my colleagues here and, of course, the members of the Long Range Mountains for electing me a third time. I would like to congratulate my colleague opposite in her new role.

We do understand rural Canadians, and the number one thing we promised is connectivity in rural Canada. We have a plan to connect 98% of Canada by 2026. We are well under way to do that.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the discovery of insulin in Canada, we raised the World Diabetes Day flag in Brampton to raise awareness. In June, the House passed Bill C-237, which will lead to a national diabetes strategy.

Oral Questions

Can the Minister of Health tell us what steps the government is taking to ensure that Canada is leading in the fight against diabetes?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like first to thank the member for Brampton South for her strong advocacy on behalf of the diabetes community in Canada. We want to recognize the severe impact that diabetes has on three million Canadians who live with the disease and their families.

Thanks in large part to the hard work of the member of Parliament for Brampton South and her bill, Bill C-237, we are now developing a national framework for diabetes, strengthened by a \$25-million investment from budget 2021. There is much more work to do, but thanks to the member and what we are going to do to prevent diabetes and care for people, we are going to get there.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, media reported that a law guaranteeing the rights of sexual assault survivors in the military has not been fully implemented by the current Liberal government. For six years, the government has ignored the Deschamps report, which outlined concrete actions to fix the toxic culture in the armed forces. In that time, thousands of service people reported sexual misconduct.

How many more people will have to be abused before the government acts? Will the Prime Minister commit to implementing all the Deschamps report recommendations by the end of next year?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say, first off, that our government takes all allegations of sexual misconduct very seriously. The Canadian Armed Forces must be an institution where all individuals feel safe, respected and protected. As the member opposite knows, I accepted the interim basis recommendation of Madam Justice Arbour on November 4 to transfer cases from the military justice system to the civil justice system. We are preparing the groundwork to accept the recommendations of Madam Justice Arbour when she provides them to us next year.

* * *

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

In my riding of Spadina—Fort York, people have raised concerns about the rise of racism in our community. They are worried about the violence and harassment they are witnessing online and in person. To someone of Asian heritage, anti-Asian hate is a sad reality. Many of my neighbours in Spadina—Fort York also know this far too well. That is unacceptable, but whether it is anti-Asian racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or any form of hate, hate is hate, and any strategy developed must eradicate this whenever and wherever it rears its ugly head.

Could the minister update the House on the vital work in combatting racism and anti-Asian hate?

• (1510)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2019, our government has committed close to \$100 million through Canada's anti-racism strategy, including \$70 million to support community organizations across Canada, addressing issues of anti-racism and multiculturalism. We are the first government in Canadian history to listen to Black Canadians when they said that they needed capacity-building funding and funding for infrastructure.

That is why I am happy to report that through the supporting Black Canadian communities initiative and other initiatives, we are, for the first time, investing in building the capacity of organizations that have done so much for so long with so little.

[Translation]

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for oral question period.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean on a point of order.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and I really, truly hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

Given the credible reports and testimony indicating that the Chinese government is arbitrarily detaining more than one million people in the Xinjiang region, thereby committing crimes against humanity against the Uighur minority and the Turkic peoples living on its territory and violating every provision of the United Nations Genocide Convention; given that China denies the existence of any crime against the Uighurs and the Turkic peoples of East Turkestan; given that the international community asked China for immediate, meaningful, unimpeded access to Xinjiang by independent observers, including the United Nations High Commissioner, specifically during the 47th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in June 2021; given that, in the past, other Olympic Games have been postponed on reasonable grounds, such as pandemic or war; and given that the 7th general assembly of the World Uyghur Congress resolved on November 14 in Prague to ask the International Olympic Committee to postpone or relocate the Beijing 2022 Olympic Games, the House of Commons hereby asks the International Olympic Committee to (1) postpone the Beijing 2022 Olympic Games by one year to 2023 so that an independent international observation mission can go to the Xinjiang region; and (2) find an alternative and relocate the Beijing 2022 Olympic Games to a location outside of China if (a) China refuses to allow an independent international observation mission; (b) an independent international observation mission concludes that there have been violations of the human rights of the Uighur minority or other Turkic peoples.

The Speaker: Just as an observation, I remind members to be as concise as possible when presenting something.

The Address

This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will ask only those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Some hon. members: Nay.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*English*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton has three minutes remaining for questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like everyone else, I was listening carefully to the speech by the member for Carleton right before question period, and we asked the government a lot of questions about what it plans to do about inflation. Unfortunately, we heard all kinds of talk, but no real action.

We can all see that the federal government has absolutely no plan to address inflation. What is worse, when government members are presented with the truth that Canadian families are all suffering so long as the inflation rate stays at 4.7% and that this inflation is one of the highest in the world, especially among our partners, the government keeps pointing out that the rate is comparable to that of the United States. However, the United States has an inflation rate that is much higher than Canada's.

Could the member for Carleton explain how the current government's economic policy compares to the U.S. government's?

• (1515)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. What is the cause of real estate inflation?

First, it is not COVID-19. It should actually have driven housing prices down. There is no immigration, so there are fewer consumers buying houses; wages are lower, because people have lost their jobs; and there is a lot more uncertainty, which usually discourages people from buying anything at all; yet prices have gone up.

Second, international supply chains are not the issue, because that does not include land, since it is already here.

Third, Canada has the world's second-highest real estate inflation. We have the second-largest housing bubble after New Zealand. Other countries also have COVID-19, but real estate inflation is not as high elsewhere.

What is causing it? The government printed \$400 billion in the last year and a half. The money went to the banks and was loaned to buyers, specifically to very wealthy investors, to inflate real es-

tate prices and keep the dream of home ownership out of reach for many Canadians.

This means that we need to stop printing money to drive out inflation, and start building housing instead of printing money.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Carleton and I can at least agree that inflation is a problem for the financially vulnerable and that there are things that the federal government could do. However, there is much that we disagree on in his analysis.

I wonder why the member does not talk about some of the market forces, such as Canadians who did maintain their income but instead of spending money on travel decided to invest in real estate being one of the causes for inflation. I would go on but, unfortunately, his colleagues and the member have run out the clock.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member thinks that somebody cancelling their \$3,000 vacation is what caused housing prices to rise 25% in one year, one-third since COVID, then he needs to pull out his calculator and do a little more math.

What actually happened is that mortgage lending went up 41%, most of it going to rich people and wealthy landlords, after the Bank of Canada began printing its \$400 billion. Too many dollars chasing too few houses equals house price inflation.

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his remarks this morning on the Speech from the Throne.

In September, Canadians gave the government a very clear direction. They want us to finish the fight against COVID-19 once and for all and put forward bold, concrete solutions to meet the other challenges we face. As shown in the Speech from the Throne, that is exactly what we will continue to do.

During this election campaign, we presented Canadians with a clear vision to fight COVID-19 even harder by making sure that everyone on planes and trains is vaccinated, which has in fact become a reality, in addition to bringing the same intensity, expertise and energy to bear on our other challenges, such as the housing crisis, climate change, intolerance and reconciliation. That is exactly what we promised Canadians, and that is exactly what we laid out in our throne speech.

[English]

Of course, job one remains ending the pandemic. We will always put the health of Canadians first. From the very first day of the pandemic, we had a straightforward message to Canadians: We would have their backs. That is what has guided us every step of the way.

Having people's backs was not just about making sure we were handling the health crisis. It was also about making sure that we were giving the economic supports to Canadians that they so desperately needed while we made sure they could stay safe through the first wave of the pandemic. Every step of the way and through the subsequent waves, the guiding principle of being there to support Canadians, to allow them to do the necessary things to keep themselves and their families safe from this health crisis and make it through the economic crisis, meant that we were there to support Canadians every step of the way.

Now, Conservative politicians kept telling us in the House that we were doing too much, that we were making a mistake by investing so much to support Canadians: to support families, to support workers, to support small businesses and to support students. However, not only did we know that investing in Canadians would be the right way to ensure that our economy would come back as quickly as possible as we made it through the worst of the pandemic, but we knew that showing Canadians they had a government they could count on, that would have their backs and could deliver income supports, deliver health supports and deliver the vaccines that were necessary, would give people confidence to continue being true to our values as Canadians.

When a storm hits it is easy to want to hunker down and just take care of ourselves, but Canadians are really, really good at stepping up in a crisis. That is what Canadians did because they had confidence that governments were there to support them. It was not just the federal government either, although the federal government delivered eight dollars out of every \$10 to Canadians to help them through the pandemic. The provinces and the municipalities were all there working hand in hand to make sure we were delivering for Canadians. The fact that Canadians could be reassured that their institutions were there to support them, our health professionals were working hard for them and political leadership in all orders of government were there for them gave them the confidence to do the right thing and continue to step up to be there for each other.

Even as Canadians were watching their governments and front-line workers be heroes to keep them safe during the pandemic, Canadians themselves, from small business owners to young people to seniors, were there to support each other through this time. That, quite frankly, has been the story of the pandemic: Canadians have been there for each other.

As we continue to deal with the pandemic, which is going through new phases now, and even as so much of our economy has been able to come back and many people are now safely vaccinated and feeling a lot more confident about how they and their families are, we know there is still more to do. That is why in the throne speech we talked about everything from implementing enhanced border measures to address variants of concern; to securing boosters, doses for kids and the next generation of COVID-19 vaccines;

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to investing in more opportunities to create vaccines and health products in Canada.

● (1520)

These are the kinds of things we need to do not only to get this pandemic behind us as quickly as possible, but also to ensure that Canadians can continue to thrive into the coming months and years. That is why we need to finish this fight against the pandemic. The single most impactful thing we can do to help Canadians grow the economy and create opportunities for themselves and their kids is to end the pandemic for good. That is why we are so focused on ensuring that people have access to life-saving vaccines, that science guides our way every step of the way and that we work with the provinces and territories to ensure that if lockdowns and more public health measures are necessary, the federal government will be there to support small businesses, families and the people who need help to get through the pandemic. That is how to ensure we will continue to do well.

That is what Canada laid out as a plan from the very beginning, and not on our own. We cannot take full credit for knowing that investing in Canadians was the best way through the pandemic. Those were the recommendations of international economic organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD and a range of others. They said countries that have the fiscal capacity to support their citizens should do so as we enter the pandemic and get through it.

Of course, Canada had the best fiscal capacity of any of our partners in the G7, with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio, and we continued to move forward in ways that supported Canadians every step of the way. Unfortunately, members opposite, such as the member for Carleton, said that we were doing too much too fast to support Canadians. We disagreed, and what we have shown is that our economy has bounced back faster than the economy in the United States, for example. We have recovered over 100% of the jobs lost during the pandemic while the U.S. has only recovered about 81%.

There is much more to do, so we have a real plan to keep building a strong, resilient economy that works for everyone. At the heart of our work is continuing to tackle the rising cost of living. We know that families across the country are looking at rising costs with real concern. They are facing significant inflation, which is a reality right around the world. However, Canadians also have the tools to get past it.

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We recognize that a huge part of the costs that families bear these days is the cost of child care. That is why we moved forward to build the first-ever, Canada-wide child care system that will provide \$10-a-day child care to families within five years. We also know that families need help now, so the money we are putting forward to invest in child care in places right across the country will result, in many places, in immediate reductions of child care costs. Indeed, the Province of Alberta has announced that as of January 1, because of the investments made by the federal government and the deal signed with the federal government, they will be able to cut child care costs in half for families across Alberta. They are not the only ones; other provinces are doing the same thing.

This really does beg the question: If governments in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and other Conservative provinces across the country have stepped up so strongly in moving forward on child care and reducing costs for families, why are the Conservatives here in Ottawa so opposed to signing child care agreements? They promised in the election that they would rip up child care agreements signed with the provinces. If they are actually concerned about costs and expenses for families, reducing child care to \$10 a day is one of the best ways to do exactly that.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

We also know that the housing crisis is a reality for middle-class families across the country. The cost of affordable housing and the cost of a home are higher than ever. Families need help.

The big challenge we face in Canada is that, for 10 years, Stephen Harper's Conservative government kept saying that the federal government had no role to play in housing and no obligation to invest in housing. Ten years of nothing, with no leadership from the federal government, has long-lasting effects.

That is why, when we took office in 2015, we made a promise to Canadians that we would recommit to housing and deliver ambitious plans.

That is exactly what we did in 2017 when we created the national housing strategy, a plan that started at \$40 billion and is now up to \$80 billion. Through that strategy, investments have provided hundreds of thousands of families with more housing, more spaces and the ability to find affordable housing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to interrupt the Prime Minister, but a member is being disrespectful.

I would ask the member for Carleton to wait. He will have an opportunity later to ask questions and make comments. I would ask that all members be respected when they have the floor.

The hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, we have put in place measures that have made a real difference in helping Canadians access home ownership over the last few years. However, we definitely know that we have more to do.

[*English*]

One of the commitments we made during the election was a \$4-billion housing accelerator fund for municipalities. That \$4 billion will help them move faster in building supply, issuing permits and developing low-income and middle-class housing, creating the supply that is so needed to take the pressure off families and communities. This is in addition to the other initiatives we have had, whether it is the Canada housing benefit or the rapid housing initiative that has worked with municipalities.

However, we will also do more. We will help families buy their first home sooner, with a more flexible and generous first-time homebuyer incentive and a new rent-to-own program, and by reducing closing costs for first-time buyers. These are all concrete, tangible solutions that will help move things in the right direction for Canadians.

Even as the Conservative politicians these days are rending their shirts about the housing crisis, they offer no solutions. Indeed, the only concrete solution they had in their platform during the 2021 election was, get this, to give a tax break to wealthy landlords to help them sell their buildings. It really takes a federal Conservative to think we are somehow going to help people rent or buy homes they cannot afford by giving tax breaks to wealthy landlords. That simply does not work. What we have is a comprehensive plan that will indeed support Canadians in buying affordable housing and finding lower-priced places to stay. We are working on housing affordability.

Every step of the way our focus has been on supporting Canadians, whether it is by indexing the Canada child benefit to the cost of inflation or through a child care program that is not only going to help families with their costs, but also get more women into the workplace while giving kids the level playing field they need to succeed. We are making investments for the longer term of our future. We are standing up for the middle class, and will continue to address the labour shortages by boosting economic immigration levels and investing in skills training.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Obviously, Canadians are concerned about the economy, and they want to know that we are there to help them. We are going to be there to do that, and we are going to be there to invest. However, there are other issues that Canadians expect us to work on, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

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Canadians want concrete action, and that is what we will do. They want us to take action on climate change, to innovate in new technologies and clean energy, and to create green jobs. They want us to build a more inclusive country and move faster on the path to reconciliation.

We recognize that climate change exists. Furthermore, we have long recognized what the Conservatives refuse to recognize, even today in 2021, which is that we cannot have a plan for the economy if we do not have a plan for the environment.

The Conservatives refuse to address climate change. They refuse to build an economic future for Canadians that will achieve net zero by 2050, not just for our country, but for our planet. We need to make the investments necessary to transform our economy in order to have lower carbon emissions, more innovation, more green jobs and, most importantly, green careers.

Unfortunately, these are the issues that the Conservatives continue to block, from putting a price on pollution to capping greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector until they reach net zero by 2050. This is how we will prepare our economy, our industries, our workers and our energy needs for the 21st century.

These are investments we are making, not only for the economy and jobs, but also to protect nature.

When we took office in 2015, barely 1% of our coastlines and oceans was being protected by the Harper government. In just a few years, we brought that up to 14%, and we are on track to reach 25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030. The same goes for our lands, 30% of which will be protected by 2030.

We know that protecting the environment means more than just preserving its beauty and resources for future generations. It also means taking meaningful action to fight climate change now. That is our vision. It means understanding that by protecting nature, wetlands, and our rivers, lakes and oceans, we can ensure a better future with less climate change, while making unprecedented investments to transform our economy the right way.

As for reconciliation, we know that we need to build partnerships and that we need to find solutions to address climate change. In fact, we would not have been able to protect as much of our coastlines and oceans if not for the leadership of indigenous peoples and our partnerships with them. I am thinking specifically of the Inuit, who have shown a solid understanding of the fact that addressing climate change and spurring economic growth in their communities and across the country must go hand in hand.

● (1535)

[English]

I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition raising reconciliation in his address to Parliament a little earlier. One thing we can all do concretely in the House is work towards the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Unfortunately, however, the Conservative Party voted against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the last Parliament. I hope that the indication by the Leader of the Opposition that reconciliation is important to him means that the Conservatives are going to change their approach on UNDRIP, and actual-

ly realize that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an important thing for Canada and the world to lead on. We will also continue to work with all parties in the House on these sorts of issues as we move forward.

I want to respond to a few of the points the Conservative leader made in his approach this morning. Unfortunately, he did not really demonstrate all that much in the way of leadership as much as he tried to score cheap political points.

We all know that the best thing for our economy is to put the pandemic behind us, yet the Conservative Party will not even confirm how many of its own MPs are vaccinated. That is simply not leading by example. We can hear from the members opposite that they hate it when people bring this up. At a time when we know the way through this pandemic is through vaccinations, they cannot be unequivocal on the need to get vaccinated and the need to lead by example. It is really disappointing. If the Conservatives had won in this past election, right now people would be travelling on planes and trains without the need to be fully vaccinated and would be putting Canadians at risk. That was a commitment the Conservatives had made to Canadians: that they would not have to be fully vaccinated to travel on a plane or a train.

That is simply not the kind of leadership Canadians expected. It is certainly not the kind of leadership they chose. It is also something that would be bad not just for the course of the pandemic in our country, but indeed for the economy. The Conservatives continue to demonstrate that they do not understand that the best thing to do to grow our economy is to finish this pandemic.

The members opposite have spoken a lot today about Canada's relationship with the United States as well. We will continue to stand up for Canadian interests. We will continue to stand up in the fight for the removal of softwood lumber tariffs, the fight to continue producing electric vehicles in Canada and the fight to continue making sure that our products, such as potatoes, continue to have access to the United States.

When the Conservative leader talks about the fact that we are not doing enough to go at the United States, it reminds me of what he said when we stood up for steelworkers and aluminum workers against the last American administration. His comment was that those retaliatory tariffs were dumb. That was the word he used. He said that it was a dumb thing to push back against the United States when they were imposing tariffs on steelworkers and aluminum workers and threatening massive waves of protectionism.

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We did not listen to the Leader of the Opposition then. We went ahead in standing up strongly and firmly for Canadian interests, and that U.S. administration backed down. We protected our steelworkers and our aluminum workers, so members will understand that I am not going to take lessons from the leader of the official opposition on how to capitulate to the Americans. We will instead stand up strongly and firmly every step of the way.

Our government is focused on concrete solutions that deliver results. We have one of the most successful vaccination campaigns in the world. This reminds us, again, of the complaints and the partisan, personal attacks made by members of the official opposition, the Conservative Party, that when we were getting our vaccines they were not coming fast enough, we did not do well enough and we were not covering Canadians. Here we are, with one of the top vaccination rates in the entire world, and the party that spent all its time complaining that we were not doing enough to get vaccines into this country is now the only party in the House that did not bother to get fully vaccinated. That sort of playing political games and scoring cheap rhetorical points while not actually following up on the substance of what needs to happen to keep Canadians safe is, unfortunately, par for the course for the Conservative Party of Canada.

Despite all the talking down of the Canadian economy and our approach to supporting Canadians during the pandemic by the Conservatives, we have now recovered over 100% of the jobs we lost during the peak of the pandemic and have created new jobs on top of that. That is something that happened because we have been investing in Canadians and supporting small businesses across the country.

Over the past few months I could not go into a small business or a restaurant across the country without someone telling me, “Thank you for that wage benefit,” or “Thank you for the support that you were able to give us to get through it.” In return, I thanked them for hanging in there and staying open, and now for getting going again. I say yes, we will continue to support them in fighting the labour shortage that we are facing.

We had a year of closed borders to immigration when we were able to accept only a small number of people as immigrants. We now know that we have to get back to bringing people in to continue to grow our economy. We need to work on skills training. We need to give young people opportunities. We will continue to work not just to make sure people have jobs, but that jobs are filled. Growing the economy requires a government with a commitment to do what we have said from the very beginning: that every step of the way, we will have Canadians' backs.

We continue to be there for the economy and for small businesses. We continue to be there for families, with the Canada child benefit indexed to inflation and \$10-a-day child care.

We will provide targeted support for the hardest-hit sectors, such as tourism. The leader of the official opposition talked about support for the tourism industry. I hope his party will work with us and we will get their support, because right now coming before the House we have Bill C-2, which will have targeted supports for the tourism industry. This is a sector that is very worried about what

consequences the omicron variant might have for its industry and people's plans.

We have a piece of legislation we are putting forward that would make sure we are there to support those industries that are hardest hit. It would make sure we are there to support small businesses or businesses that are facing challenges, but would also make sure that we have lockdown supports if provinces have to move forward with targeted measures.

We will be there as a federal government, as we have been from the very beginning, to allow Canadians to make it through this health crisis knowing that their government has their backs and that we will bounce back and come roaring back stronger than ever. That is what is in Bill C-2 that we are moving forward. I certainly hope that the Conservatives and the other parties in the House realize that Canadians deserve a Parliament that is focused on them and is there to support them every step of the way.

We are committed to establishing the Canada mental health transfer to expand the delivery of high-quality free mental health services. We know that Canadians, like people around the world, have suffered because of the pandemic. The isolation, the pressures, the anxiety and the challenges they have faced have left their mark, and that is why investing historic amounts in mental health supports across the country will go a long way to help Canadians.

• (1540)

In the first days of this Parliament alone, we have introduced legislation to bring in 10 days of paid sick leave for workers in the federally regulated private sector and we will work with the provinces on echoing that across the country.

We want to protect health care workers from unacceptable intimidation. We are going to ban conversion therapy. However, there is always more to do.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Of course, we know that there is always more work to be done, but Canadians expect us to work collaboratively and respectfully in the House of Commons.

They fully understand that there are different points of view and that there will always be robust debate about how best to help and serve Canadians. I look forward to these discussions.

However, Canadians expect to see parliamentarians who are there for them, who think every day about how to serve them better and how to provide them with support and growth that they can benefit from. That is what they expect, and that is what this government is prepared to do.

I am reaching out to all parliamentarians with this Speech from the Throne, which focuses on concerns that we agree on. As I said, I look forward to the debates on how best to meet the expectations of Canadians.

The key question is whether we will be there for Canadians. I can assure the House that on the government side, the answer is yes.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been a member of Parliament for a little over six years now and I have heard many allegations in the House that the Prime Minister has no great respect for Parliament, and sometimes I have seen some evidence of that.

Today, I note he went well over 20 minutes, which is normally the amount of time members have to speak. I would direct you, Madam Speaker, to Standing Order 50(2), which gives the Prime Minister the right to speak longer, and it is nice to see the Prime Minister engage today with Parliament.

If he is in the mood, I would seek unanimous consent of the House to extend the question and answer period by another 10 minutes, for a total of 20 minutes, so he might continue this engagement.

Before you seek that unanimous consent, Madam Speaker, it would be appropriate to hear the Prime Minister on this point of order. Therefore, I would invite you to ask him for comment and then seek unanimous consent of the House to extend his question period by a further 10 minutes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to allow for 20 minutes of questions and comments?

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Prime Minister's presence here today to share with us his response to the Leader of the Opposition.

Canadians want to see a little more statesmanship when it comes to the big issues they have. I must confess, and maybe it is the smallness on my side and my character, but I found the Prime Minister's speech today very partisan. Actually, maybe it is for the best, because when the Leader of the Opposition is getting under the skin of the Prime Minister, it is probably because there are some legitimate criticisms.

I would ask the Prime Minister to consider those criticisms, because usually we hate in others what we do not like in ourselves. Maybe that might drive him to take a bit of a different stance, be more conciliatory and be a little more prime ministerial.

I am going to give him the opportunity to talk about something I hope we both can agree on and I think Canadians want to hear. Obviously my province of British Columbia is under a tremendous amount of pain right now, and I do appreciate the help the Prime Minister and his cabinet have extended to British Columbia and the conciliatory way that they are trying to be there for people in a very difficult time.

The mayors, Spencer Coyne from Princeton, B.C. as well as Linda Brown from Merritt, B.C. have both said to me that the bill required to fix what is necessary to get people back in their homes

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will be in the tens of millions of dollars and those communities do not have it. Under the DFA, the 80/20 sharing, where 20% is paid by municipalities, will be beyond their ability to pay.

Is the Prime Minister willing to help these communities? It will take years to restart, and I hope we will get a positive response.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I regret the partisan tone of the introduction to the member's question, but I recognize that he has been a solid voice for his community, which has been hit very hard by these extreme weather events.

I highlight that I know we need to not only be there for people right now, as I told Mayor Brown of Merritt, who I spoke to a few weeks ago, that we would be there for her and her community, as we will for people right across British Columbia, but we need to do more in fighting climate change into the future as well, on ensuring that we are cutting our oil and gas sector emissions, that we are moving forward on investing in clean, renewable energies and that we are building climate-resilient infrastructure. These are the things that matter.

On the disaster response support, I have simply said that the federal government will be there. We will work hand in hand with British Columbia and we will support Canadians who need help.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Prime Minister for his speech. However, I must say that the people of the Lower St. Lawrence and Gaspé, the region I represent, were a little disappointed with what was in the throne speech.

Several things were left out. There was nothing about farmers, health transfers, or the need for EI reform, especially for a region like ours. As well, one segment of the population was particularly overlooked: seniors 65 and over.

I represent a large region with four constituency offices, and every week, if not every day, we get calls from seniors asking us to explain why this government does not think that they deserve proper support.

There were \$500 cheques sent out, randomly, just before the election. Some seniors were very happy to tell me that they took some of that money and gave it to my party, because we are the only party that stands up for seniors.

However, it is not too late. The increase in the guaranteed income supplement for seniors 75 and over has not been brought in yet. Why not give it to seniors 65 and over?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, when we came to power in 2015, one of our first initiatives was to increase the guaranteed income supplement by 10% for the most vulnerable single seniors.

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This truly helped lift tens of thousands of seniors out of poverty, and we will continue to help seniors, whether it is in this pandemic, during which we have paid record amounts to Canadians, or with the promise we made several years ago to increase old age security for seniors 75 and older.

We all know that seniors are living longer, which is very good news, but we must recognize that costs increase as well. That is why we chose to target those whose costs are increasing. It was to help them even more.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians expect their Prime Minister to take climate action that matches the scale and urgency of the crisis, but instead the Liberal government has been increasing fossil fuel subsidies to big oil and gas companies, the very companies that are fuelling the climate crisis.

In 2015, the Prime Minister promised to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies; he increased them. In 2019, he promised to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies; he increased them to the tune of \$900 million a year. In 2020, he promised again; he broke that promise.

When will the Prime Minister stop breaking his promises to Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, we have long committed to eliminating fossil fuel subsidies by 2025 and, indeed, have now brought that timeline forward. We know how important it is to reduce our carbon emissions to move forward in the right way.

However, I will point out that Canadians watching the House are used to people flinging accusations back and forth, making grandiose claims about their party's leadership or climate actions. It is better to look at the experts.

The member opposite should know full well that when it comes to climate action and a plan to fight climate change, her party's plan was completely panned by all the experts. Indeed, leaders like Andrew Weaver, the former Green Party leader, or Mark Jaccard, climate economist, gave the Liberal Party top marks for our ambitious, concrete and powerful plan to fight climate change. That is what we are delivering.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, housing is increasingly unaffordable across the country. In my community, for example, prices have gone up 35% in the last year alone. Homes should be for people, not commodities for investors.

While I was glad to see mention of a housing accelerator fund in the throne speech, I was also concerned by what was not there. There was no mention of proven tools like investments in co-op housing, including some that the current government has previously promised like a vacancy tax on empty homes.

Could the Prime Minister share if the government intends on following through on introducing a vacancy tax in 2022? If so, does it plan on introducing it at a level that would meaningfully have an impact on the housing crisis?

• (1555)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, we are very concerned with the rising cost of housing across the country, and we

have been since 2015. We set up the national housing strategy in 2017, with \$40 billion on its way up to \$80 billion in investments that will help Canadians. Whether it is the municipal accelerator we have invested in, or the first-time home buyer initiative, or the affordable housing Canada benefit, or rent to own programs, or the rapid housing initiative or the foreign buyers tax, they are things that we are moving forward on concretely. We look forward to getting the support of the member and all parliamentarians as we stand up for Canadians and support them through this housing challenge.

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I represent a riding in a province that has not signed up for the child care agreement. What can we do to encourage the remaining provinces to join the child care agreement?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Madam Speaker, we have seen families across the country rejoicing about the savings in costs over the coming years, which will save them thousands, in some cases, tens of thousands of dollars a year in child care costs because we have finally moved forward on a national initiative for \$10-a-day child care.

Conservative-led provinces like Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and others are moving forward. They have heard directly from stakeholders, families and organizations that moving forward on child care is not just good for kids, it is not just good for families and moms, but it is also good for our workforce and for our economy because people have more choices to get into the workforce.

I am very optimistic that Ontario and New Brunswick will be able to sign the deal so their families are able to save thousands upon thousands of dollars and build a better future for their kids and their communities.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise and deliver my first-ever speech in this place. I will begin with my congratulations to you on your re-election, and to all of the other 336 fellow members in the House, each of whom has a story that brought them to this chamber, a reason that led them to initially put their name on a ballot, and motivations for service that are as distinct as the diversity of our country.

If I may, I would like to take a moment to thank the people who have played such a major role in my own journey to this seat in the House, starting of course with the voters of Thornhill, a remarkable, thriving, growing community in the GTA. I thank the voters who elected me to be their Conservative member of Parliament for putting their trust in me. I would say to those who voted for one of my opponents that I have work to do to bring them onside.

In the meantime, I plan to be the best representative for our entire community because to look at Thornhill is to look at a community that represents so much of the future of Canada. It is a community that contains incredible diversity and families that have immigrated to Canada from all over the world, including the Lantsman family. I am the grandchild of a man who came to Canada and started one of the community's most iconic small businesses.

He came to Canada, to Thornhill, to ensure that his children and grandchildren would have a better life than the one of repression and poverty in Communist Russia. When my parents arrived here, they did not speak English. They learned to. They faced the sometimes direct and sometimes subtle bigotry of anti-Semitism, a hatred far older than our country, which is sadly tolerated by far too many far too close to this House. They persevered and taught their daughter how to persevere. That perseverance was tested during the last 18 months.

I lost my mother during this journey. I know that she is watching, and if anyone likes anything I say in this House at all, it will almost entirely because of her. My father was truly far ahead of his time. He never answered, "No, you can't do that." He and my older brother are foundational to my success and embody the spirit of hard work and empathy in this country.

I have a chosen family that has been instrumental in my achievements, and most important, I have a partner who is eternally patient, unconditionally supportive and who I am absolutely nothing without.

I want to pay tribute to the remarkable team of volunteers who brought me to this seat. Everyone knows that it takes a village, but a political village of volunteers is a particularly remarkable place, starting of course with my predecessor for this seat, Peter Kent, who taught me so much about how to serve our community and the high standard that I need to strive for as its MP.

I also want to thank my incredible campaign team, each and every one of them helped and gave their time and trust to put me here. Many supported this journey long before I ever knew I would embark on it. That is the summary of the path that brought me here, but I want to use the rest of this time to talk about the road ahead.

I know, as do hon. members, that to serve in public office is both an honour and a privilege, but it is also not easy. We take on these challenges because all of us have causes that we champion and communities we are committed to serve. I know this chamber is supposed to be a place where we recognize and reconcile those differences because I worked on Parliament Hill long before I was elected to come here.

That is how representation and democracy is supposed to work, but I come here questioning if it is really working. At the time of Confederation, Canada had its democratic structure, but also its democratic deficiencies in how women, indigenous people, immigrant populations, religious minorities and others were often relegated to second-tier status, or worse, and denied the fundamental, political and social rights held by the elites.

Parliament back then was often a talking club, where political elites spent their time talking only to one another and very little time talking to the public, and still less time listening. While we

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have so much work to do, we have come a far way to correct these injustices. I am standing here today as a Jewish woman who identifies as LGBTQ, and it is hopefully indicative of that.

However, truly inclusive politics is not about who can collect the most identity politics baseball cards, though that is too often how elected politicians and their cliques approach this job. It is about solving the fundamental challenge that is our Parliament, that is our government, as this is still too often a bunch of elites talking to each other.

There is much missing from the discourse here. In fact, there was much missing from the throne speech. On the fight against climate change, many in this House, and those close to it, care only about how many tweets and endorsements they can get from single-issue activists and NGOs rather than a truly inclusive effort to fight this challenge.

● (1600)

When it comes to families that are stuck holding the bill for promises made and repeated, or displaced workers in the energy sector, whose future livelihoods are being sacrificed, the chattering classes are silent.

How about the million Canadians who are motivated by faith in public life? Many in politics, who so routinely embrace the hip social cause of the day, will also gleefully sign off on, what I see as, a deliberate attack that targets the faith of Canadians, including so many members around me, for the crime of daring to express their values in the public sphere.

How about the cause that is so foundational to me and my dream? That is the place of Jewish people in this country. Our country's commitment to human rights, diversity and respect quickly evaporates because some close to this House believe that not every minority deserves equal protection and respect. If I asked members how many Jews were elected to the House of Commons, remembering that we elect 300 at a time, over 44 Parliaments, what do they think that number would be? It is 38. I am number 38. That is fewer than one per Parliament, and nobody can ever tell me that Jewish voices are overrepresented in corridors of power.

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If that were the case, it would not be socially acceptable for so many in official Ottawa to freely denigrate the Jewish people under the guise of criticizing their homeland as part of some perverse social justice performance theatre. We have seen it. If this had been about indigenous people, the LGBTQ community, Canadians with disabilities or so many other groups, many would have impaled themselves on a microphone to grandstand the condemnation of such intolerance, but apparently the Middle East is complicated. However, the thing is, it is actually not that complicated.

There is a rising tide of anti-Semitism in this country, in my community and in all communities across the country, and it is not just rising out of some far-right-wing chat room on the Internet. It is rising out of faculty clubs, social justice organizations and too many government offices.

When there is an attack in Paris or London, it matters. It matters to how we set the rules, fund basic security and protect our citizens, but when terrorists launch rockets targeting civilians on the other side of the world, we can count on two things: politicians trying to play both sides and, the usual suspect in the social justice community, victim blaming.

It is not that complicated. There is right, and there is wrong. Self-defence is right, and terrorism is wrong. It needs to be said. The mistake I will not make is believing that moral clarity will prevail because sadly it has not. Why cannot a Canadian born in Jerusalem, like those in my family, have that in their passport? Why is the world's sole Jewish state also the sole state that is told it cannot choose its own capital city? If that does not make members think, then maybe it should. Any responsibly thinking Conservative knows the capital is Jerusalem, and this country should say so.

A few years before I was born, Joe Clark promised to move the embassy to Jerusalem. I have been there. I know where it is. It is not there, and yes, this is not a partisan failure. This is Conservative and Liberal governments alike that have failed on the original promise. However, I am not going to be quiet about it, because where I come from, it is a matter of right and wrong, and it is not that complicated. I am a proud Canadian, a proud Conservative and a proud Jew, and it took a lot of work and a big fight for me to get here.

Now that I am here, this fight and this work does not end, and I will be unrelenting in holding the government to account whenever it chooses to expediently coddle the prejudiced instead of defending the principled, and when it excludes those who do not conveniently fit its narrative. However, in the same breath, I am prepared to work constructively across the aisle, should members be prepared to change their ways. I stand, a part of this caucus, because I believe that the best protector of my community is a Conservative government, but we cannot afford to wait until the next election, so I implore those who have a voice to take their concerns and the concerns of my community seriously and recognize that their past record is just not good enough.

If they ever choose to do so, they can count on allies from this side of the House, including from the member of Parliament for Thornhill.

• (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if we take a look at the throne speech, we will find a very ambitious plan. Part of that plan is the materialization of bills that are so important to all Canadians. I am talking about one that we were debating yesterday, Bill C-2. Canadians understand the sacrifices that have been made over the last 18 months and the importance of government stepping up to the plate to be there for small businesses and individual Canadians, to support health care workers and Canadians in general.

This is something I believe Canadians want us to do. Does my colleague across the way see herself recognizing the need to see Bill C-2 advance? The principles of Bill C-2 would continue to provide the support Canadians want, and it is just a part of what we saw in the throne speech.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I want to see Bill C-2 advance to committee so we can discuss it. I encourage the member to reconstitute committees.

There is so much missing from this throne speech. There are so many voices that are not heard: the voices of rural Canadians, the voices of those who work in the energy sector and the voices of those who have been impacted by the floods in B.C. The government can do more. The government can always do more.

I implore the member to include everybody in the throne speech and not just the select few of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Thornhill on her first speech. We did actually attend the Senate building together to hear the Speech from the Throne, which was very underwhelming. In fact, it left out major chapters that were talked about before as major features of the government, including broadband Internet.

My question to the member and her party concerns the spectrum auction that is coming up with regard to 5G and where they stand on Huawei. We have been opposed to Huawei's participation. Are they the same on that? More importantly, what regulatory elements could the CRTC have to bring down pricing for Canadians? Right now we pay some of the highest prices and have some of the biggest charges for broadband Internet connections. Would her party agree with a regulatory process to actually bring those in check because it is too costly for Canadians?

• (1610)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, this is a party that has brought forward many ideas and many plans on expanding broadband and rural Internet. We welcome any work that we can do together on lowering the cost of Internet. I realize that none of this was mentioned in the throne speech. None of these things for rural Canadians were mentioned in the throne speech.

I welcome the work with members of this House to hold the government to account, to include every single Canadian in its throne speech.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Thornhill and commend her on her remarks. I noticed that she made reference to the importance of recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. I think that is so important. I appreciate her remarks on that.

Could the hon. member speak further to the importance of the relationship that historically exists between Canada and Israel and go into the future potential of that?

I also appreciated her remarks related to those who were left out of the speech, that they need to be at the table, including those who live in rural Canada and work in our resource sector.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I look forward to expanding on that in this House for as long as the constituents of Thornhill will allow me to.

This is an important relationship. It is an important relationship to Canada. It is one fundamentally based on the shared values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It is unfortunate that some members in the House do not see the importance of the value of choosing democracies over dictators and not listening to the despots of the UN, frankly, to decide our foreign policy based on what is convenient and not on what is principled.

I look forward to many conversations about this issue and the importance of this issue for the people of Thornhill.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED NON-COMPLIANCE WITH AN ORDER OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising to respond to a question of privilege raised on November 23, 2021 respecting an order of the House made on March 25, 2021 in the previous Parliament.

The matter the member is raising emanates from the 43rd Parliament, which was dissolved on August 15, 2021. That terminates all business of the House of that Parliament. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states, in relation to the effects of dissolution:

With dissolution, all business of the House is terminated.

It goes on:

All items on the Order Paper including government and private Members' bills die. The government's obligation to provide answers to written questions, to respond to petitions or to produce papers requested by the House also ends with dissolution.

The members opposite have relied on a 500-year-old precedent cited in the 20th edition of *Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament* that refers to a concept carrying over from one Parliament to another. It is worth noting that this reference no longer appears in any version of Erskine May's treatise because, I submit, the context of the 16th and 17th centuries no longer applies.

This citation refers to a time that predates representative and responsible government and was used for the purposes of imprison-

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ing a privy councillor for crimes committed during a parliament. The sanctions provided in these times generally exceeded the duration of a parliament, which were far shorter in length than our current parliaments, and the new parliaments had to reinstate these sanctions to ensure that the individual in question could be recommitted to the Tower of London for the duration of their initial imprisonment. This context no longer applies, and it would be a travesty to impose such a precedent on a situation that bears no resemblance to the current situation.

I submit that any business that died in one Parliament which members would wish to resurrect in a subsequent Parliament would require the adoption of a substantive motion for which notice would be required, and the facts before the previous Parliament would have to be resubstantiated. We no longer live in a world where a sovereign would order the execution of a member of Parliament or of a privy councillor, who is not a parliamentarian, without due process offered by a court of law. As tempting as it might be to hunt for precedents to suit an argument, the context of the precedent is at least as important as, if not more important than the precedent itself.

Having said that, I will respond to the substance of the member's arguments. I would like to begin by making it clear that ministers are accountable to the House of Commons for duties carried out within their departments and for the actions of their political staff in their political offices.

Page 30 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states the following regarding the fact that ministers are responsible to Parliament:

In terms of ministerial responsibility, Ministers have both individual and collective responsibilities to Parliament.

It goes on:

The principle of individual ministerial responsibility holds that Ministers are accountable not only for their own actions as department heads, but also for the actions of their subordinates; individual ministerial responsibility provides the basis for accountability throughout the system. Virtually all departmental activity is carried out in the name of a Minister who, in turn, is responsible to Parliament for those acts.

This is not a new concept. To reinforce this assertion, allow me to quote the former prime minister, who, in the 2006 publication entitled "Accountable government: a guide for ministers", stated, "Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the exercise of their responsibilities whether they are assigned by statute or otherwise," and "Ministers are personally responsible for the conduct and operation of their office."

● (1615)

Former Conservative House leader, Jay Hill, strongly made the case on behalf of the former Conservative government on May 25, 2010. Mr. Hill stated:

In our system of government, the powers of the Crown are exercised by ministers who are, in turn, answerable to Parliament. Ministers are individually and collectively responsible to the House of Commons for the policies, programs and activities of the government. They are supported in the exercise of their responsibilities by the public servants and by members of their office staffs.

It is the responsibility of individual public servants and office staff members to provide advice and information to ministers, to carry out faithfully the directions given by ministers, and in so doing, to serve the people of Canada.

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He went on:

Ours is a system of responsible government because...ministers are responsible to the House for everything that is done under their authority. We ministers are answerable to Parliament and to its committees. It is ministers who decide policy and ministers who must defend it before the House and ultimately before the people of Canada.

I could not agree more with the remarks of the former Conservative House leader. Ministerial staff have no authority to make decisions on behalf of ministers. As I have said, they report to and are accountable to ministers. Ministers are accountable to Parliament for their actions. Ministerial staff did not put their names on the ballots. They were not elected. They do not have the same rights and privileges as MPs.

The opposition will likely point to the ministerial staffers called before committee in 2010. There is a big difference here. There was clear evidence of staffers breaking the law. The Privacy Commissioner subsequently issued two reports that found that Conservative ministerial staffers had interfered with the release of records under the Access to Information Act.

It is critical to point out that there was much debate about the decision by the government to send ministers to committee, rather than staff. Ultimately, this position was accepted by the Liberals, who formed the official opposition at the time. We accepted that, and it was the right thing to do. There was a clear acceptance of the principle of ministerial responsibility.

Again, on this very important point, Mr. Hill stated:

This is no substitute for ministerial responsibility. When ministers choose to appear before committees to account for their administration, they are the best source of accountability and they must be heard. Public servants and ministerial staff support the responsibility of their ministers. They do not supplant it. They cannot supplant it.

By using its majority on committees, the opposition attempted to deflect accountability from the minister to the ministerial staff. That was and continues to be unacceptable.

I will end my remarks with some words from the former Conservative government House leader, whom I have quoted extensively today. He stated the following about staff.

They bring to us many talents and I expect many of them, when they accepted their jobs, never imagined that one of the skills required was to stand up to the interrogation of a bitterly partisan parliamentary committee.

Our government will continue to defend the constitutional principle that ministers are accountable to Parliament. There is no appropriate substitute for ministers to be accountable to Parliament for the activities of their department or for the activities of their political staff.

● (1620)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the hon. member for the additional information he has provided. We will certainly take it under advisement as the decision is being made.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, after hearing the throne speech drafted by the Prime Minister's Office and read by the Governor General, my reply will be as short as its content. Was it really worth putting Canadians through an election that cost \$600 million, in the middle of a pandemic when inflation is at an all-time high and Quebec businesses are desperately short of workers? The answer, obviously, is no.

The Prime Minister lost his bet. He gambled at the expense of Canadians, hoping that the polls would be right and he would win a majority in the House. The member for Papineau, the Prime Minister, gambled and lost.

I will therefore offer the people of Mégantic—L'Érable my own opening speech to thank them for placing their trust in me for a third time. I intend to use every resource available to me to defend the people, businesses and organizations in my riding.

One of the things I will use is statements by members, which allow us to bring issues of concern to the House. Here is an example:

"Madam Speaker, for more than 100 years, the people of Thetford Mines and the surrounding area survived thanks to the miners who worked hard to search, dig up the ground and break stones to extract what, for a long time, was described as white gold. Over the years, scientific advancements would turn this white gold into public enemy number one, which had to be eliminated at all costs. The white gold that had lined the pockets of provincial and federal governments was asbestos. Although this fibre has some extraordinary physical properties, it turned out that, when it was misused, it caused cancer in the miners and workers who handled it.

After a years-long battle to ensure that the chrysotile fibre could continue to be used safely, the anti-asbestos lobbies ultimately came out on top and the use of asbestos was banned in Canada. After claiming victory, the lobbyists moved on to other things, leaving the region of Thetford Mines without jobs and with mountains of asbestos tailings, mine shafts that were slowly filling with water and facilities that still sit rusting in the middle of town.

I am urging the new Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who was once one of the activists who wanted to shut down asbestos mining, not to abandon the people of Thetford Mines."

That was an example of a member's statement.

I am also going to use question period to get public answers to questions that go unanswered when we write to certain ministers who are too busy promoting their own political agenda to look after the people in every region of Canada, including mine.

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Here is an example of a question that might be asked during question period.

“Madam Speaker, people in the region are proud of their mining heritage, which has contributed to our economic growth for almost a century. However, this heritage has left an indelible mark on the region's landscape. What is to be done about these huge mountains of asbestos tailings, the land that is considered to be contaminated and the crumbling abandoned warehouses?”

The Liberal government killed asbestos mining. What does the Prime Minister intend to do to support the people of Thetford Mines?”

Most of the time, the answer to a member's first question is a talking point, and so I will rise again and ask the government a second question, such as the following:

“Madam Speaker, the asbestos tailings present in the Appalaches RCM have significant economic value. Many projects could be developed, which would help to diversify the region's economy. I wrote a letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change asking for a meeting, but I still have not received an answer. Will the Minister of Environment and Climate Change meet with the stakeholders of the Appalaches RCM to finally clean up the damage caused by 100 years of asbestos mining, yes or no?”

We will use question period to get answers for the people of Mégantic—L'Érable. I will never hesitate to ask these types of questions and if I do not get answers, I will ask a question during adjournment proceedings so that the voices of the people back home are heard once again.

What might an adjournment debate look like? I will give an example of a debate we might have at the end of a sitting. When all the other topics have been exhausted, we have the opportunity to speak to a minister or their representative to talk about something going on in our region or a question we raised earlier in the day. Let us pretend it is the end of the day and time for the adjournment proceedings to begin.

“Madam Speaker, today during question period, I asked the Minister of Transport for more transparency on the Lac-Mégantic rail bypass file. Six years after the tragedy that cost 47 people their lives, no new tracks have yet been laid to get the railway out of the downtown core. Worse yet, no agreement has been signed for the home owners who will have to give up their property for the bypass project.

● (1625)

I brought this issue to the attention of the Minister of Transport when he was appointed last January. In May, concerns were raised about probable delays and the inability to meet the deadline, which governments had scheduled for 2023. The minister publicly upheld that deadline, maintaining that the bypass would be in place for 2023.

I reiterated my concern after the last election. The minister said again in early November that the 2023 deadline would be met. Shortly thereafter, the president of Canadian Pacific himself questioned the deadline, given the current pace of work. I have yet to hear back regarding my request for a meeting.

Of course it is important to act swiftly, but it is even more important to do things right, out of respect for the residents of the three municipalities involved, namely Lac-Mégantic, Nantes and Frontenac. Lac-Mégantic bore the brunt of the tragedy, and the rail bypass route will go through the two other towns, to keep a tragedy like this from ever happening again.

Over the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to meet with elected representatives and citizens who are worried about the lack of information on the project. I think we should do whatever we can to provide answers to their questions about the route, rights of way, costs, the proposed compensation scheme and timelines.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government said nothing about the project in either the throne speech or the latest budget. I feel that the agreement between the government and Canadian Pacific about the steps for completing the bypass construction should be made public.

When will the minister deign to meet with elected officials in Lac-Mégantic, Nantes and Frontenac, as well as their federal MP?

On Facebook, the newly elected mayor of Nantes wrote that, given how difficult it is to talk to or meet with a politician or even a government official, the meeting should include three people whenever possible. He also wrote that he received an invitation by phone to a meeting on Friday. He was given 24 hours' notice. He rejected the invitation, provided his availability and was still waiting for a response. The mayor said he wanted to know what was really going on with the project and that he had many questions he wanted answers to.

A meeting, some respect, transparency and, most of all, the facts. That is all the elected representatives of Lac-Mégantic, Nantes and Frontenac are asking of the government with respect to the Lac-Mégantic bypass. Is it too much to ask the Minister of Transport to hold that meeting as soon as possible so those elected representatives can provide information to the people of these three municipalities? Will the Minister of Transport agree to my meeting request so the people can get the straight goods?”

That is what a late show looks like. A question was asked sometime during the day, and then later in the day, it can be unpacked to provide more details and explanations. That is what I just did with respect to the bypass issue.

MPs can highlight aspects of the issues in these debates that they cannot address during question period. We have members' statements, oral questions, adjournment debates and speeches like the one I just gave. Those are the tools opposition MPs can use to let everyone know about the issues that matter in our regions.

The Speech from the Throne did not mention these matters that are of the utmost concern to people in my region. It also had nothing about compensation for supply-managed producers in the wake of the disastrous agreement the government signed with the United States and Mexico. It also had no solutions for the labour shortage that is hitting businesses in Mégantic—L'Érable hard.

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Of course, there is absolutely nothing in it about the skyrocketing cost of living due to the runaway inflation rate. This may seem like a national issue, but Canadians in each region of Quebec and Canada are having to spend noticeably more money each week. They simply do not have the extra money to do other things, because that money is gone.

This is how I do my job, the same way I have been doing it for six years. I will rise often, again and again, to hold this Liberal government accountable.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the intervention from my colleague across the way and took note especially when he spoke about asbestos. To his point, although we know that asbestos might be safely extracted, it is used and has been previously used in thousands of different materials that could be extremely toxic to individuals who inadvertently breathed it in, whether through construction practices or whatever it may be.

I can recognize the fact that in his particular part of the country this may have been an extremely lucrative business, but is his position and the Conservative Party's position now that we remove the ban on asbestos so that it can be reintroduced into the marketplace?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleague to listen carefully. We are not asking that asbestos be reintroduced. We are asking that the government, which benefited from the taxes paid by the miners of Thetford Mines, Asbestos and all the other municipalities that operated asbestos mines for 100 years, give them fair compensation. I invite my colleague to take a tour of Thetford Mines.

Thetford Mines is a town inside a mine. A century of mining has left mountains of tailings. We are just asking for help to process the tailings, but the government refuses to answer.

I would like my colleague to adapt and come take a look around Thetford Mines and Asbestos. I would like him to see what our communities look like after 100 years of asbestos mining and after 100 years of tailings being left behind, because these governments are refusing to assume responsibility.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments. However, I would like him to tell me why there is such meddling in provincial jurisdictions in the throne speech.

Take, for example, housing, the reform of policing, mental health, human resources management and the prevention of violence, among other things.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, it is simple. This government believes that it must and can do absolutely everything in Canada. It has no respect for provincial jurisdictions and believes it is the best at everything. It believes that its money will solve every single problem across Canada.

Unfortunately, that is not the case. I believe that there are experts in Quebec, particularly in the health sector, who are capable of properly managing the money that Ottawa must transfer.

The government should remember that, if it transfers money to Quebec, there should be no conditions imposed so that Quebec can manage its own affairs.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to recognize my great Conservative colleague from Quebec. The Liberal member across the way who has criticized the member does not seem to understand what he is asking, which is why the Speech from the Throne did not recognize our natural resource sector and the people who are employed in that natural resource sector. They are looking for a government to defend them and defend the jobs that come from those natural resources being developed.

I would ask my great Conservative colleague from Quebec to answer that question.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the Liberals like to pretend that they are more green than green. For 100 years there were miners in Thetford Mines in my region who worked hard to extract asbestos from underground, but the tailings are still there. They fight us. They banned asbestos, but they left all the tailings and all the residue there. We just ask for help to bring that back where they were and to give back nature and ground and land to the people who live there. It is simple, but it must be done in the fastest and greatest way.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to say I am visiting the unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation from the traditional and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples including the Katzie, Kwantlen, Matsqui and Semiahmoo first nations. I would like to thank Her Excellency Mary Simon, our new Governor General, for her statements concerning reconciliation in the Speech from the Throne. I will be splitting my time today with my colleague, the member for St. John's East.

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This throne speech echoes so much of what I heard at the doors this past summer, including pushing forward positive, diverse and inclusive politics, getting beyond the pandemic, moving forward faster on the path to reconciliation, addressing biodiversity loss through increased protection of our lands and waters, setting and acting on ambitious climate targets, and addressing inflation and the rising cost of living. This includes the two priority areas of creating \$10-a-day child care across Canada and implementing a comprehensive plan on housing.

This last issue of affordability is a top priority in Cloverdale—Langley City. As the second-youngest riding population-wise in British Columbia, action on housing affordability and \$10-a-day child care will have huge, positive impacts on our community.

As a resident of British Columbia, which has been seriously affected this past year by extreme heat, fires and now floods caused by back-to-back-to-back atmospheric rivers, I understand that climate action including adaptation and resilience has never been so urgent. As someone with an extensive background with Parks Canada, I know that the need to address the loss of biodiversity has never been so apparent. The loss of habitat, the heat dome, wild-fires and the devastating floods in B.C. demonstrate that we cannot afford to wait.

Cloverdale—Langley City is a diverse riding with many faith groups, cultural and linguistic identities. People there come from across the country and around the globe. In the last election, voters called for their next member of Parliament and government to create an inclusive future that holds diversity as a symbol of strength, and our cabinet is the most reflective of Canada in our history.

I heard loud and clear that our government needs to be more ambitious on climate change, and we demonstrated that ambition at COP26. Voters called for more affordable and accessible child care, and our government is ready to work with B.C. to cut costs in half by 2022 and create 40,000 additional spaces. This will be transformative and so important in the community of Cloverdale—Langley City.

I heard, at door after door, that a legitimate housing plan that addresses the insufficient housing supply and makes buying a house more affordable is needed. We created a housing ministry to act swiftly on our housing plan. We are going to help put home ownership back in reach for Canadians with a more flexible first-time home buyer incentive and a new rent-to-own program, as well as by reducing closing costs for first-time home buyers.

The throne speech reiterated and advanced our commitment to reconciliation. It recognized that:

Reconciliation is not a single act, nor does it have an end date. It is a lifelong journey of healing, respect and understanding. We need to embrace the diversity of Canada and demonstrate respect and understanding for all peoples every day.

This is the commitment we need.

When I was elected to the 42nd parliament, my private member's bill, Bill C-374, passed unanimously in the House. It was to implement Truth and Reconciliation Commission call to action 79. Unfortunately, my bill died in the Senate, but I am committed to continue pushing along and participating in initiatives to further reconciliation.

The Speech from the Throne also illustrates the urgency in finishing the fight against COVID. We acted quickly with the federal vaccine mandate, and we will act quickly to support those who are still financially impacted by COVID-19, while ensuring businesses continue to drive our country's economic recovery. We will continue to support provinces in the delivery of vaccines, including for children, to ensure everyone who wants a vaccine is vaccinated as quickly as possible.

Immigration is another focus in the Speech from the Throne that is so important for my riding. Increasing immigration levels to meet labour demands, reducing wait times to make the process easier for approved applications, family reunification to bring families together again and a world-leading refugee resettlement program that helps the most oppressed are all important issues in Cloverdale—Langley City.

Business owners in my riding have come to me about labour shortages they are experiencing, like many throughout Canada. I have had conversations with them about how we can use our immigration system to help ease their shortages. Family reunification continues to be important for my constituents, and is a policy I continue to fully support.

● (1640)

Reducing wait times is particularly important at this time. The beginning of COVID reasonably caused a significant slowdown, but now we must reduce those wait times. This is critical for driving our economy and for reuniting families.

New Canadians deserve to be reunited with their families and loved ones; they bring economic empowerment and strengthen diversity and inclusion. I have witnessed this first-hand in my community. Over the last several years, my community has grown to be one that is culturally diverse. We have benefited from this. As a member of Parliament in the 42nd Parliament, I held interfaith meetings in Cloverdale—Langley City where we learned from each other and grew stronger as a community. I have committed to holding these interfaith meetings yet again in this Parliament.

The Address

This throne speech reflects many of the commitments I made to Cloverdale—Langley City in my local platform. Our government's infrastructure investments will help deliver the SkyTrain to Langley City, a much-needed transit lane that will shorten commuting times, reduce emissions and better connect the Lower Mainland. I will work with provincial and municipal partners to ensure the SkyTrain and other projects that support the current and future needs of Cloverdale—Langley City are prioritized and completed.

This throne speech reaffirms our government's support for positive politics. I will take immediate action to restore positive, progressive and inclusive politics to Cloverdale—Langley City so everyone can feel safe, respected and included, regardless of race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability or income.

I am working to convene a fairness, diversity and inclusion council to create solutions that reduce inequality in our community. The council would provide advice and insights so I can tackle the inequalities that Cloverdale—Langley City residents are facing.

The throne speech highlighted the urgency, backed by investments, to transition to a green economy. With these announcements, I will ensure Cloverdale—Langley City is included and leads in the emerging green economy. I will promote real climate change solutions and work with the B.C. Centre for Innovation and Clean Energy to secure investments in clean, zero-emission technologies and create sustainable jobs in Cloverdale—Langley City. This year, more than ever, has illustrated how both adaptation and mitigation policies are needed in our riding of Cloverdale—Langley City, in our province of B.C., in our country of Canada, and indeed globally.

Our government is committed to reconciliation with indigenous communities. I have the same commitment for indigenous peoples in the constituency I have been elected to represent. I will be pursuing, with appropriate consultations, an indigenous-led urban cultural space and service delivery centre in Cloverdale—Langley City for indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous persons living in our urban and suburban neighbourhoods. I will work with indigenous leaders and local partners to create a place for delivery of indigenous services and celebration of indigenous culture in Cloverdale—Langley City. I will also advocate for federal support for local indigenous history, education programs and cultural celebrations.

We have committed to helping communities to thrive as our economy roars back from COVID-19. Part of the strategy, in my community, will be supporting the development of the performing arts in our region. I will secure federal support for accessible, sustainable spaces where the residents of the lower Fraser Valley can celebrate and experience our vibrant performing arts community. This will become a cultural and arts centre for the greater region, and will fill a much-needed void in our rapidly growing community.

Fighting for the needs of the agricultural sector and farmers will continue in this Parliament. In Cloverdale—Langley City, I have been working to start consulting with an agricultural advisory council of farmers and other agricultural industry partners to share insights and advice to ensure that there will be support for strong and sustainable agriculture in Cloverdale—Langley City.

Our government's support for mental health and drug addiction was reiterated in the Speech from the Throne. Both, especially finding solutions to drug addiction, are critical for my province and many in my community. We must work quickly and fiercely to end the opioid crisis that has taken too many lives.

This throne speech represents our ambitious plan to make life more affordable, reduce our emissions while building an economy for the future and act on reconciliation. As we resume this work in Parliament, I will be listening to and advocating for my constituents. For every step of progress we make in this House, I will fight to have that progress delivered to Cloverdale—Langley City.

Most important to me is that this is the moment to stand up for diversity and inclusion. When I heard the former Conservative member of Parliament for Cloverdale—Langley City use scripture to attack the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and lesbian activity with derision in this very chamber, I knew that my work was not done. I have received a proud level of support as I fight for inclusion.

• (1645)

To wrap up, this is why I am proud to be back. These are all of the reasons I believe the Speech from the Throne will help the residents of Cloverdale—Langley City.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member briefly talked about housing. The throne speech actually only mentioned one housing program, the first-time homebuyer incentive. I called it an election gimmick when it was introduced just before the 2019 election. I hope the member would recognize that the program has massively failed.

We are about to undertake the third change to the program's criteria. Last year, in 2020, 550,000 properties changed hands among Canadians, homes that were sold to other people who wanted to purchase the properties. Over 9,000 Canadians have used the FTH-BI program. That is 1.6% of the total number of homes that changed hands in 2020. This program has been an election gimmick since the very beginning. It was designed to help 100,000 Canadians. The government has even failed to meet that metric and it has one year left to try to reach the 100,000.

Will the member admit that the program is a failure? Will the Liberals abandon it and actually adopt the Conservative proposals from this past election?

The Address

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, housing is a huge issue not only in my riding, but in many ridings across the country. I was very proud to be running again with this government on a platform that included many facets of a national housing strategy to help us deal with the issues of affordability. While I think all of us would like to move further and faster, we have a plan in place. We are the first government at the federal level since the 1970s that has worked on housing. With the creation of the housing minister, we are going to deliver on those commitments to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your reappointment. I would also like to congratulate the member opposite on his re-election.

When I heard him talk about the labour shortage, I thought he was a Conservative member of Parliament who was sarcastically saying that there sure were nice measures in the Speech from the Throne concerning the labour shortage. I was wrong. He is a Liberal member of the government. I am really intrigued now. What are the good measures to address the labour shortage?

One important development since the election has been the elimination of the Canada recovery benefit, or CRB. I have had companies tell me that since the end of the CRB, they have received five résumés, the first time they have had job applicants in months. Another received 15. This is having an impact on the labour shortage.

What are the concrete measures? I want answers for foreign workers, for seniors, for young retirees who want to return to the labour market without being penalized, and for young people too.

• (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, our government has a very strong plan. I was not here for the last Parliament when we saw a number of COVID reliefs come in to help Canadians, including businesses, get through a very difficult period. We are now working through the Speech from the Throne and legislation coming out of it, such as Bill C-2 that was introduced earlier this week, to help Canadians continue to thrive and survive, to deal with issues such as labour shortages and get people into the workforce. That is why I am so proud to be part of this government moving forward through COVID relief and doing the work that needs to be done in Canada.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, lacking in the throne speech is any mention of the opioid crisis. Too many in Nanaimo—Ladysmith, family, friends and neighbours, have tragically lost their lives in this opioid crisis. Despite this, we have seen inaction on the part of the government to address this crisis and to save lives. The pandemic has further exacerbated this crisis. Mental health concerns have increased, there is isolation and there is lack of affordable housing, to name a few.

When will the government take this crisis seriously, declare it for what it is, a public health emergency, and prioritize the supports that people need? People's lives depend on it.

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, as another British Columbian, I am painfully aware of the devastating effects that the opioid crisis continues to have in British Columbia. We have lost

too many individuals as a result of this, which is why I am committed to work with our government, with my colleagues in British Columbia and across the floor to end this opioid crisis. My heart goes out to anyone who has lost a member of their family. I do not think that there are many in B.C. who are untouched by this tragedy.

It is so important that we work together, and our government is committed to deal with the issues of the opioid crisis and try to end it as quickly as possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that they have to stand to be recognized, otherwise I go to whoever is up. In order to be able to speak in the House, members have to stand up, because I do not know who is interested in speaking.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. John's East.

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with a deep sense of pride that I stand for the first time in the House as the newly elected member for St. John's East. I would like to begin by congratulating you on your election, and I will take this opportunity to congratulate all my colleagues. We have a critical job in front of us to serve the people of our diverse ridings all across this incredible country, and I am humbled to work among such committed representatives.

I owe the people of St. John's East a debt of gratitude for placing their trust in me. I am humbled by their support and am committed to delivering results by representing their voices, priorities and concerns.

I thank my campaign team and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly to secure my win. To my family, in particular my husband Pat, my three children Paddy, Conor and Mara, and their loved ones, with all my love I give my thanks.

St. John's East, perched on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, represents a diverse cross-section of what makes Newfoundland and Labrador so unique. It is a thriving urban business hub just 10 minutes from vibrant rural communities, with colourful row houses in the shadows of business towers and a growing tech industry alongside our vast natural resources.

However, I must also note that alongside those who live with socio-economic ease, there are individuals who struggle for the most basic necessities of life. I am an entrepreneur and registered nurse who worked on the front lines of the pandemic, leading a team in the delivery of health, social and housing supports at a street level community health centre. I say with urgency and conviction to my colleagues that never in my lifetime has so much depended on Parliament to deliver results for all Canadians.

The Address

The Speech from the Throne for the opening session of this 44th Parliament reflects the pillars that were clearly outlined in our platform. It is with great pride and humility that I provide a response to the Speech from the Throne. I worked on the front lines during the first three waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, and alongside my team, I witnessed the courage, compassion and care that was demonstrated through a shared commitment to a greater good. We ensured support to persons who could not shelter in place or afford food, clothing and other essentials.

To build a healthier today and tomorrow, we must first finish the fight against COVID-19. With omicron as a World Health Organization variant of concern, we must all continue to follow public health guidelines. In my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador, over 84% of adults are double-vaccinated, and on November 25, the first doses were administered to our province's children. Simply put, it was a day that brought a deep sense of relief for many parents. This, alongside a standardized vaccine passport, has assisted in keeping outbreaks contained and positive cases comparatively low.

We know that no one is safe until all are safe, and to this end, Canada will continue to work with all provinces and global partners to ensure fair and equitable access to vaccines. As we finish the fight against COVID-19, grow a more resilient economy and tackle the rising cost of living, we have a plan that includes \$10-a-day child care, transitioning to net zero and a robust housing strategy. These are all issues that I heard as key priorities when I was on the doorsteps and on the phone with people in St. John's East.

No family should have to struggle with paying for high-quality child care space versus the cost of food or housing, an issue we know continues to disproportionately impact women. As a mother of three, when we started our family business I felt first-hand the real challenge of child care costs and the impact they have on a family and the availability for work-life expectations.

We can no longer deny the effects of climate change, and as a government we have moved beyond conversations surrounding climate change to real, bold action. One of my sons lives in British Columbia, and like many parents across the country, I watch with sorrow over the devastation, loss and pain of so families.

• (1655)

In my home province, just this past week we witnessed a catastrophic storm on the island's west and southwest coasts. Extreme weather events have become far too common. This underscores the urgency of the transition to net zero. We can and must do this while also supporting workers.

The Liberal Government of Canada's robust housing strategy supports housing needs across a continuum. From homelessness as an entry level through transition and supportive housing, to housing availability and support for first-time homebuyers, we are ensuring there is a real opportunity for more Canadians, especially young Canadians, to become homeowners.

This past Friday, alongside my colleague for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Minister Seamus O'Regan, I proudly attended the opening of the Memorial University of Newfoundland's—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to interrupt the hon. member. I want to remind her that she is not to use the first or last names of any members who sit in the House. She can talk about the ministers of the different ministries, but she is not to state their names.

The hon. member for St. John's East.

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Madam Speaker, I proudly attended the opening of the Memorial University of Newfoundland's core science building, a home for research and a laboratory teaching space that combines the faculties of science, engineering and applied science in a facility that prioritizes collaboration and co-production. This government has supported innovation, education and partnerships that are creating and delivering on greener solutions.

Strengthening and supporting access to health care is a cause close to my heart. I have worked to build a multidisciplinary primary health care team, and defined outcome metrics are critical to the evaluation of our system. I am proud of the public health supports for seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities, vulnerable persons and those who have faced and continue to face discrimination. This government is committed to supporting access to and supports for mental health and addiction treatments. Senior care and long-term care are priorities. Support for health information systems that allow for the use of data for quality, safety and performance gains is a priority for "improving data collection across health systems to inform future decisions and get the best possible results."

The most frequent requests made to my office are immigration-related, and great work is being done in this area. On October 28, more than 100 Afghan refugees arrived in St. John's, made possible through federal government support. This government continues to increase immigration levels and reduce wait times, support family reunification and deliver on a world-leading refugee resettlement program.

This government understands that safer communities require action to strengthen gun control. Simply put, assault-style weapons have no place on our streets and in our communities.

We also need to continue to invest in the empowerment of Black and racialized Canadians and indigenous peoples. All Canadians need to be safe. We must ban conversion therapy and respect and celebrate our diversity and unique cultures. Reconciliation will require a whole-of-government approach. I will requote what my colleague just stated: "Reconciliation is not a single act, nor does it have an end date. It is a lifelong journey of healing, respect and understanding."

In closing, I echo this government's call for unity and collaboration to strengthen, rebuild and move our country forward with compassion, courage and determination.

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• (1700)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite spoke a bit about reconciliation, which is very important to me, to the people of the Kenora riding and to those across northern Ontario. Of course, a major component of reconciliation is ensuring that all first nations have clean drinking water on reserve. Despite some very good progress through some great work by the Liberal government, it has failed to meet the promise it set out in 2015.

I wonder whether the member knows if there is a new deadline or timeline for when her government will finally ensure that every first nation in the country has access to clean drinking water.

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Madam Speaker, that is an incredibly important question. Clearly, we all have a responsibility to ensure the rights of all Canadians, especially indigenous people, and that all have access to clean drinking water, housing and safe communities.

This is absolutely an urgent matter, and I certainly will continue to work to ensure that we move along the path of reconciliation and that it is indigenous-led.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for St. John's East on her speech. Many years ago I lived in that riding, so I am very familiar with it. I am also familiar with Newfoundland and Labrador and the transitions that they have had to go through over the past decades, going from cod fishing to offshore oil.

We are facing another transition away from fossil fuels, yet there was nothing in the Speech from the Throne about the just transition. It should have been the number one priority of the speech. This is what our country is facing, and I am wondering if the hon. member can comment on why it was left out.

• (1705)

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Madam Speaker, I did not reference this in my speech and I am not at all concerned that it was not part of the Speech from the Throne. During the election, the platform and conversations I had with the Prime Minister indicated that transitioning to a green economy was central to the working relationship between the provincial government in Newfoundland and Labrador and the federal government.

We are seeing that in the rapid advancement of amazing projects within the community. We are also seeing it in the work that is being done in partnership with oil and gas to begin to move to net zero, and in the real work that is happening to build industries now so that we can meet timelines in the future and create much greener technologies.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member referenced immigration in her speech. Before I get to my question, I note that we are experiencing a record backlog of delays that is hurting families, preventing them from getting reunited. Many farmers are suffering from this and small businesses are suffering from it too. This is a Liberal-made backlog, because it was not inherited from the previous government, so the government cannot place blame. It has destroyed our industries because of the backlog it created.

Can the member admit that the Liberal-made backlog is hurting families, hurting our farmers and hurting our business people?

Ms. Joanne Thompson: Madam Speaker, COVID-19 changed how businesses moved forward and how files were able to move through government offices. We are seeing the results of that now. We are also seeing shifts in border entry, in the flow back and forth of physical goods and in people being able to respond to work needs in Canada. It is a complex problem, but it is not a Liberal-made problem.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to stand in these hallowed halls of this great House to deliver my inaugural speech.

The people of Miramichi—Grand Lake truly motivated me to fight on their behalf. I thank them for placing their trust in me. My efforts here will always be on their behalf. They will get the best, the Miramichi very best, of what is in my head, in my soul and my heart, and this heart is embedded with the success of our region and its people, our province and country, and the Canadian dream for every single one of them.

I thank my family, both immediate and extended, for supporting me in this endeavour. I thank Shannon, River, Roman, Leia, Meadow Rose and Sky for putting up with me all these years and for their support, once again. There are sacrifices that each of them undertook that allowed me to embark on this journey.

My friends are the best. Regardless of which political stripe they come from, they have always supported me every step of the way, with passion and enthusiasm. It gives me confidence, humility, comfort and still, great pride. My team of dedicated individuals have had my back for many years, some for 12 years now. I realize thanking them will never quite be enough, but the truth is that their kindness, volunteerism and unparalleled efforts to support me and the Conservative Party of Canada do not go unnoticed, and they do not go underappreciated.

I am beyond grateful and with a full heart even mentioning it. Many nights I lay awake thinking how I could ever thank many of them, knowing still that their ambition was not to receive but simply to help me sit in this green chair for the people of Miramichi—Grand Lake. They, too, shall always get my honesty, my integrity, my energy and my deep will to be better for the people of Miramichi—Grand Lake.

I began my political journey as a municipal councillor in 2008 in my hometown of Blackville, where my family and I continue to make our home. After that, I spent 11 years in the provincial legislature of New Brunswick. This is now the third chapter of my life in politics, as a member of Parliament. Regardless of the roles I have held, the principles have been the same for me: to stand up for those I believe in, give a voice to those in need and to defend our way of life.

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Analysts and pundits often speak of economic issues in abstract terms. Whether the topic is inflation, or recession, or housing costs or even the cost of groceries, the commentary is often generic, but we as elected representatives see these effects daily in our interactions within our own communities. Canada is in a very precarious position at this moment.

As costs continue to rise, the quality of life for Canadians becomes threatened more and more. They are under enormous strain right now. Year over year, housing inflation in New Brunswick alone is 30%, and that is from a *Globe and Mail* article this week. Canadians are having to make the choice between heating their home or buying their groceries, yet, in Canada, we are rich with natural resources and a motivated hard-working labour force. As the leader of our party noted this week, “other countries are launching ambitious plans to unleash innovation, lower taxes and slash red tape to get their economies surging and we see nothing from [the government].”

Small businesses are looking to the Liberals to bring forth a plan to address critical supply chain issues they are facing in advance of the holiday shopping season. Unfortunately, the Liberal Speech from the Throne is a complete failure for these small businesses. Instead of presenting an economic plan for small businesses, they have been simply left behind, and they have been the backbone of each and every one of our constituencies.

The Prime Minister's approach means more deficits leading to higher taxes. At a time when Canadians are barely making ends meet, they are getting higher taxes and inflation. This is a classic tax-and-spend Liberal government, and the business community in Miramichi -Grand Lake is feeling the impacts of it daily. As predicted, small businesses are an afterthought for the government. There is but little mention of them in the Speech from the Throne.

• (1710)

The dangerous Liberal climate agenda is destroying the very economy that has supplied Canada with decades of opportunity and wealth. As a result, it is putting hundreds to thousands of jobs at risk, and it is cutting into the revenue from the natural resources that have put food on our tables for decades. It has driven up inflation, making Canada a much more unaffordable place to live, and thus making it harder to attract new citizens. All Canadians believe in protecting the environment for today and the future, but we are a world leader in the development of our natural resource industries, and we have gotten away from taking pride in that. We have developed our industries in a safe and responsible manner, and it has driven our country for decades.

It is a well-known fact that hundreds to thousands of my constituents are rotational workers. These individuals travel in and out of western Canada and other provinces to work in natural resource industries such as oil, gas and mining. Anything truly economical in Miramichi—Grand Lake that would have yielded direct and indirect jobs, wealth and opportunity was sidelined, cancelled, dragged out in bureaucracy or simply not supported. The evidence to support this claim is vast, and the Liberal government along with its New Brunswick Liberal MPs are now put on notice. Every detail of that will be on the floor of the House and every single one of them

will answer to it. Miramichi—Grand Lake is going to be heard. That is without question.

Another role of the federal government is the cultivation of national unity. Every region of the country feels that its identity is understood and appreciated, thereby allowing us to come together as Canadians. Former prime minister Brian Mulroney once said, “You accumulate political capital to spend it on noble causes for Canada. If you're afraid to spend your capital, you shouldn't be there.” I agree with him. It should be acceptable then, and in fact encouraged, to celebrate Canada. We have so much for which to be thankful. We are a beacon to the world of democracy and freedoms. Armed forces that fight for that freedom are worth celebrating. We have a Prime Minister who condemns every bit of it.

From 2018 to 2020, I served as New Brunswick's minister of aboriginal affairs and, frankly, it was one of the greatest experiences of my career. To witness the determination of first nations people, often in the face of adversity, was tremendous. Every single day was an opportunity to learn.

What kind of message was sent to the indigenous peoples when National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was not important enough for the Prime Minister to attend? What kind of message was sent to all Canadians when Canada Day was cancelled? Essentially, neither national holiday held any importance for the Prime Minister or the Liberal government, further adding to the hypocrisy of the push to convince everyone in the nation of their vast Liberal humanitarian efforts. It is shameful, and it is shameful for everyone in the country. We are a country of values, stemming from the origins through decades of generations, and we will always feel the compassion of those wrongs that exist in our history. If the government wants to truly help the indigenous peoples, then lift their boil orders with sufficient drinking water, install proper sewer systems, help lift nations up on their path to self-governance, self-determination and build economies for first nations and indigenous peoples as willing partners in our country.

Canada Day is more than Confederation, the decisions made and the merits of those decisions as reviewed all these years later. It is a defining moment in our collective history, and of that much I am certain. Better yet, it is a celebration of Canadian values and the people who defend those values. Cancelling Canada Day is a rejection and an insult to our Canadian values. The Prime Minister of Canada has no recourse for history, none whatsoever, but even still, history cannot be cancelled because it already happened. As Canadians, we must learn from it. We must aim to be better together.

Truth and Reconciliation Day was needed, and I venture to say it was greatly overdue. However, to not accept the personal invitation to attend the commemoration on that day, only to use it as a personal holiday is a major failure. There is no greater shame a nation can bring upon itself than to disrespect its own flag, the people who fought for it and the country that loves it. Canada's Conservatives are ready to—

• (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments; the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome my colleague to the House. His predecessor voted in favour of a ban against conversion therapy. We know that in the previous Parliament, when we were voting on this issue, 62 Conservatives voted against a ban on conversion therapy, of which 52 of those Conservatives are still in the House today.

I am curious if the member can comment as to whether he plans to vote in favour of a ban on conversion therapy as did his predecessor did?

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, any member of the House would be against barbaric and ancient practices that are harmful to human beings. However, like any member of the House, I will be taking a good look at the bill and I will probably vote to send it to committee. I am in favour of it going to committee at this point in time.

However, with respect to the word “conversion”, this is a great conversion to the reality that the Liberals are killing our energy sector. While the cost of housing went from \$450,000 for the average cost of a Canadian home to now \$750,000 just over the Liberals six years in government, that is the conversion we want to talk about in here.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Miramichi—Grand Lake. I heard him talk about Canada being a beacon in many areas. Well, it is certainly not a beacon for environmental protection.

We in the Bloc Québécois have been looking at this issue for a long time now. We have been calling for a profound, necessary and urgent energy transition for several months, if not years. We are experiencing an unprecedented and indescribable climate crisis.

What would his party want to do with oil energy if they were in power? What does it want to do to improve the environment while investing in oil extraction?

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, sometimes what gets lost is how many things we use that are made from petroleum, oil and gas. I will not deny in the House that at some point in time we may be able to store enough energy to use it, but I do not think I will ever see it.

I am a salmon fisherman. I was the 14-year-old kid diving off the 14-and-a-half-foot boat and digging the beer bottles out of the bot-

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tom of the Miramichi River because I loved it that much. I care about the environment and every day I think about it, but our country was built on natural resources, and we are a world-renowned leader in the development of those industries. We need to shift, yes, but it is going to be much slower than the people on the other side of the floor and the Bloc are talking about today.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard the member speak about the need for support for small businesses. One of the groups of small businesses that has been left out of the throne speech, but also left out of pandemic supports for the past two years, are start-ups. These people poured their life savings into their businesses, only to open during a global pandemic.

Could the member speak to how we desperately need to save start-ups and that we support these hard-working small businesses?

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada was asking for the CEBA to be reorganized so it would include supports for start-up businesses, which are often the backbone of our economies. In Miramichi—Grand Lake, start-ups are one of the most important things that fuels the Miramichi city, which then funnels out into the rural communities of Blackville, Boiestown, Rogersville and the surrounding areas.

The Conservative Party of Canada agrees with the member. We were asking for those supports, and we are hoping the Government of Canada will be able to open their eyes and put those supports in there.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, my heartfelt congratulations on your appointments.

Weykt.

It is a profound honour to rise in this honourable House for the first time and to be surrounded by colleagues. I look forward to what we can all get done. While at the end of the day we may agree to disagree on certain things, I look forward to working with everybody in the House for the betterment of all Canadians.

My parents came to Canada in 1952 and 1957, respectively, yet their son stands before you speaking to the House for the first time. It is not something that I will soon forget.

With that, to my colleagues in the House, I want to say:

[*Member spoke in Italian*]

[*English*]

That is about all the Italian I know.

The Address

First, I want to thank my wife, partner and best friend who is watching on CPAC, I hope: Odette Dempsey. I thank my children who have sacrificed so much. To the voters of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, I will do my best to earn and retain their trust. Thanks to my parents, Alba and Joe Caputo, and my sisters, Ellie Bradley and Rosie Caputo. Thanks as well to my staff who, by helping me, are helping Canadians: Stephanie Rennick, Michael Friesen, Anita Price, Brenda Thomson and Tracy Gilchrist.

I hope in this speech to speak to the wonderful people in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo communities such as Savona, Clearwater, Barriere, Forest Grove, 100 Mile House, 108 Mile Ranch, 70 Mile House, Blue River, Vavenby, Clinton and Kamloops.

I would be remiss if I did not start my maiden speech with a point on reconciliation given that the thrust of our current discussions really started in my riding in May of this year. I was stunned to find out about the 215 previously undiscovered and unmarked graves. I can tell the House that I went to that monument and I wept like I had not wept before. It was with that in mind that my first phone call after the election was to Kukpi7 Casimir's office of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, to recognize what had been discovered.

I am committed to reconciliation, both personally and as a member of Parliament. It was with that in mind that one of my first letters was an invitation to Pope Francis to visit Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I will now recognize Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment as well.

Reconciliation was touched on in the Speech from the Throne, and really embodies two components.

Moving forward with reconciliation, we are looking at righting past wrongs, but as the hon. Leader of the Opposition stated today, it is also about building economic prosperity to move forward. This is why I was so pleased to see a “by indigenous, for indigenous” component in the Conservative policy during the last election.

By my count, the word “veterans” only appeared once in the Speech from the Throne. Veterans are an area of passion for me. Freedom is not free. It is the work of veterans, some of whom stand over my shoulders here, that has entitled me to speak freely in the House, to live freely, to worship freely and to think freely, so I thank those veterans. Because of their sacrifices, we can be people who agree to disagree. My love, compassion and desire for the best for veterans was really solidified and meant so much when I was named shadow minister for Veterans Affairs. This is why it was such a significant honour in that role to spend a day with people from our local legion and Anavets. I look forward to working with the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs to lower wait times and to address issues that are germane to that portfolio.

• (1725)

Prior to my election to the House, I was a Crown prosecutor and taught at our local law school. It is through that lens that I viewed the Speech from the Throne. On my reading, I did not see the word “victims” in the Speech from the Throne. Victims of crime are all across the country, and in my work as a prosecutor, I focused on the discrete area of Internet and sexual offences against children. It was

not work that I enjoyed, but it was work that I found fulfilling. It is work that somebody has to do.

I had the privilege of working with people throughout my riding on this point, and hope to table a Private Member's Bill to speak about victims and recognize the harm done to victims of sexual offences. I implore the House, when it is the right time, to change the name of child pornography to child sex abuse material. Pornography implies consenting adults choosing to perform acts. Children do not do this. Children cannot consent. We need to call it what it is, and that is child sex abuse material. I hope to have the unanimous consent of the House when I do so.

Regarding those victims, I hope that we as a House and as a society can start thinking about these types of offences differently. For instance, the maximum sentence for break and enter, for robbery or taking something by force from somebody is life imprisonment, yet the maximum sentence for sexual assault of an adult is 10 years and of a child is 14 years. Stealing property by force has a higher maximum sentence than stealing somebody's sexual inviolability without consent. I will call on the House to change that.

I have been repeatedly contacted by people in my riding about crime. Downtown Kamloops has seen a significant change since the Zora decision on bail. The House has not responded to that decision. I am hearing from people in my riding, particularly on Victoria Street. I have met with people from business associations and other people who are just living in the area, and they want something done about the fact that our bail provisions, in their eyes, are simply not protecting Canadians.

I spoke earlier in my Standing Order 31 presentation about softwood lumber, and I call on the Liberal government to negotiate vigorously. I would have expected that a proactive, rather than a reactive, solution would have been taken so that one of our vital resources and one of our greatest elements of trade would have been protected.

With that, I wish to thank the students of Thompson Rivers University where I was teaching a sentencing course with the venerable Judge Koturbash. I am sorry I cannot be with them; however, I was called to the House, which is one of the greatest honours of my life.

• (1730)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member concluded with remarks about a very important issue that I concur with: the issue of trade.

The Address

Trade and the economic activity it creates are overwhelmingly positive for us as a nation. We have recognized this since 2015. If members check the records, they will find that no government has signed more trade deals than this government. I take a great deal of pride in that fact because we have been out in the world, making sure that Canadian-made products have access to markets. That helps support Canada's middle class. It helps support a stronger, healthier economy.

I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on the bigger picture of trade and how he could incorporate that in the years ahead.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I personally look at just about everything and where it is made before I purchase it. I went to great lengths to find boots that were made in Canada.

On the question of trade and on the question that the hon. member asked, the Conservative government was one that brought in, I believe, over 40 trade agreements. The problem we have is that our greatest trading partner is not listening to us. A friendly trading partner, an ally, would not be doubling our tariffs six days after a meeting. I cannot imagine talking to a best friend and then six days later having a bombshell like that put on me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the answer given by my Conservative colleague. What should be done under the circumstances? What is happening in the U.S. is scandalous and very worrisome. What solutions does the Conservative Party propose? After an election campaign and a throne speech as empty as the Liberals' campaign speeches, what are the Conservatives proposing?

• (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, the first thing that we need to address is our relationship with the United States. Unfortunately, we have allowed that relationship to wither away.

As a Conservative, I implore our Prime Minister to immediately address this and to let President Biden know that we need the tariffs to be removed. Free trade is the best avenue.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for his maiden speech.

He spoke passionately about sexual crimes. Here in Canada, sadly, the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls' situation is not getting any better. I still recall the time when the Harper administration actually said that it was not a Canadian problem but, rather, that it is an Indian problem. Now we have the inquiry. The Liberals said that they were going to take action on the calls for justice, but very little has been done.

Would the Conservatives support a full implementation of all 231 calls for justice for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, I had occasion to prosecute a recent offence involving a missing woman, somebody who had been missing for 19 years, so this is a matter that strikes close to my heart. I believe that justice should be sought in all circum-

stances when it comes to any missing and murdered indigenous woman and any missing woman, period.

I will note for the benefit of this House that it was the Conservative government that started the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is along those lines that I hope, as a member of Parliament, to work with my colleagues, so that we will see justice for all Canadians.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga—Malton.

It is a true honour and pleasure for me to rise for my first time in this 44th Parliament to respond to the Speech from the Throne on behalf of the residents of my downtown Toronto riding of Davenport. It is the honour and privilege of my life to be serving Davenport for a third time, and I want to thank the voters in my riding for putting their trust in me once again.

Before I go any further, I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg people.

I was very moved when I heard our Governor General read the Speech from the Throne. It is a speech that reflects the unprecedented times we have lived through over the last almost two years. It outlines the challenges and opportunities of the current moment, and it articulates a great hope for our future.

Our federal government has laid out our priority areas: building a healthier society, growing a more resilient economy, taking bolder action on climate change, creating safer and more inclusive communities, moving faster on a path of reconciliation and fighting for a secure, just and equitable world. I will speak to each of these key areas, focusing on the priorities for Davenport residents.

Coming off of an election just over a couple of months ago, the concerns of the residents in my riding are still fresh in my mind. Members may not know this, but 43% of Davenport residents are first generation Canadians. They were born in another country. Davenport residents understand how lucky we all are to live in Canada, which offers free access to safe and effective vaccines that fight COVID-19, including boosters. Indeed, more than 86% of eligible Canadians over 12 are fully vaccinated, and I cannot tell members how many Davenport parents are so relieved that vaccines are now available for children ages five to 11. They support the standardized Canadian proof of vaccination for domestic and international travel. They also support the mandate of vaccinations for federal and federally regulated workers, as well as the mandatory vaccines for everyone travelling within Canada by plane, train and ship.

The Address

We of course are all worried about the latest variant, omicron. I am glad our government has taken a number of immediate steps to try to slow down the spread of this variant. These steps are needed until we can find more information about it and better tailor our actions. We do not know yet how fast it is spreading, but we do know that vaccines will make a big difference.

While our number one priority is to finish this fight against COVID-19, the Speech from the Throne also highlights our government's commitment to improving our health care system overall. For Davenport residents, this includes more focus and a lot more resources for mental health and addictions treatment, clearing the backlog of delayed procedures and testing, and much more funding and oversight for long-term care homes. We will and must deliver on all this vital and important work.

We cannot talk about spending on health care and/or the many programs and priorities we have without mentioning the need for a strong economy, one that works for all Canadians. There are a lot of positive signs in the Canadian economy as we try to move our way into the post-COVID world. Today, we heard from Statistics Canada that the third-quarter GDP growth in Canada was 5.4%, which is great. We also know that we recouped over one million jobs since the pandemic started, and that both small businesses and large corporations, who were able to pivot from the strong foundation our emergency supports provided, are working hard to adjust and adapt to a new global economic reality and to be competitive.

There are two key things that are important to Davenport as it relates to a resilient economy. One is for Ontario to join the national child care plan. We need parents to be able to get back to work and contribute their best selves. This cannot happen if child care is unaffordable and if they are worried about who will take care of their children. We know that affordable, accessible, quality child care increases women's participation in the workforce and improves Canada's overall economic growth and performance.

The other is ensuring that we tackle the current housing affordability crisis. This is also critical to the future economic success of our nation. The Speech from the Throne highlights our federal government's strong commitment to housing, including increasing affordable housing, ending chronic homelessness and giving Canadians hope that they can afford to live in our big cities and one day will be able to afford to buy an apartment, condo or home.

No matter what else happens, Davenport residents are steadfastly and unequivocally committed to faster and bolder action on climate change. I would say this is the number one issue raised at the doors during the last election. Urgent, aggressive climate action is at the very top of the list of priorities for Davenport. In Toronto, we worry as we see the devastating impacts of climate change on the west and east coasts of our country. Climate change is happening faster than was predicted, and we are scared for our lives, for our future and for our kids' and our grandchildren's futures.

● (1740)

Our federal government has committed \$100 billion to implement a comprehensive and aggressive climate action plan, which includes over 100 measures. In six years, we have moved aggressively, but we have to go even faster, and we have to move even more aggressively. It will take the best efforts and hard work of ev-

ery level of government, the private sector and of every Canadian to move to a low-carbon future and economy. There are tough times ahead, but as an eternal optimist and a believer that we can incentivize, educate and inspire each part of Canadian society to step up and do their part, I believe that we will emerge from this generational challenge a stronger and even more prosperous nation.

Davenport residents are proud of Canada's aggressive climate action plan, but there are key areas where they would like to see even more action. One is eliminating fossil fuel subsidies faster, and another is moving as fast as we can on creating a just transition act for workers, making sure that no worker region is left behind in this process. We must help high-emitting sectors transition if we want our climate plan to be successful and if we truly want to achieve our net-zero target.

Safer communities and a more diverse and equitable society are also important for Davenport residents. In terms of safer communities, three priorities are top of the list for Davenport. Luckily, all of them are highlighted and listed in our Speech from the Throne.

The first is to tackle gun violence. This means everything from addressing the root causes of gun violence to banning handguns, to ensuring our border security has the resources it needs to keep guns from entering our country.

Tackling violence against women is the second urgent priority. In the Speech from the Throne, our federal government has committed to a 10-year national action plan on gender-based violence and to continue to support organizations providing critical services. We have allocated \$600 million over five years to achieve this plan and, since 2015, committed over a billion dollars to support violence prevention, create shelters for women and families, support crisis hotlines and many other steps.

The third priority is the need to continue our battle to fight hate, racism and discrimination. Davenport is home to so many different cultures and religions. We have a vibrant Muslim community, a growing Jewish community, a Caribbean community that has been in Davenport for over 40 years, and multiple Asian communities. We are so blessed. Diversity is indeed our strength, and it is one of the many reasons why Davenport is such a special riding. The commitment to continue combatting hate and racism with a renewed anti-racism strategy is an important one, and it is also included in our throne speech.

The Address

A final note is the importance of championing the LGBTQ2S+ community. I am proud that yesterday, our Minister of Justice reintroduced Bill C-4, a strengthened bill to ban the harmful practice of conversion therapy. Everyone in Canada should feel safe and be valued equally, no matter their background, race or religion.

As my time winds down, I want to speak about the importance of reconciliation to Davenport. My constituents ask me about our government's work, and they press me to make sure we are doing everything we can and moving as fast as we must. They want us to move fast to implement all 94 calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They want us to move fast on implementing the recommendations of the calls for justice for missing and murdered indigenous women. They want us to eliminate every last long-term drinking water advisory in indigenous communities, and they want indigenous peoples to have control over their child and welfare services.

I will end by speaking on the final section of our throne speech, which is about the role that our country plays on the world stage. As our Speech from the Throne says, "In the face of rising authoritarianism and great power competition, Canada must reinforce international peace and security, the rule of law, democracy, and respect for human rights." Our success as a nation and our future prosperity depend on open borders, unfettered supply chains, deep partnerships and engaging in the world in a way that promotes peace, equity and prosperity for all.

Canadians returned us to the House of Commons with a clear message to all Parliamentarians to work together. This Speech from the Throne presents an excellent plan and a way forward to a more equitable, compassionate and prosperous Canada.

• (1745)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Davenport on her re-election.

The Liberals have spent tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure in the past number of years. They get an A for promises, but an F for actually accomplishing it. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has found very little evidence of infrastructure happening.

This is especially important in B.C., where I am located. With the floods, there is an immediate need. I recognize that climate change is very important to deal with, but at the same time, we have these needs right now. Could the member comment on the lack of infrastructure being accomplished, both in B.C. and maybe in Toronto?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I too worry about the pace of our infrastructure progressing in our country. We work very closely with the different levels of government, the provinces and municipalities, and often it gets caught up in some of the bureaucracies and red tape. It is something that concerns all of us. The commitment to great infrastructure investment is a solid one, a real one. We do want to move forward on these important infrastructure projects not only in B.C., but right across the country. The member is right that we have to do better in terms of getting shovels in the ground much faster.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Even though the throne speech was very short, there was still a small section on safety and a mention that the government would make the buyback program for assault-style assault weapons mandatory, which I welcome.

No pun intended, but the Liberal Party has switched targets. At first, it did not want to put that in the bill that it introduced in the last Parliament. However, there is another problem: the trafficking of firearms, in other words, handguns. There have been fatal shootings in Montreal.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of our proposal to create a joint task force to combat firearms trafficking at the border.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, gun violence impacts us all and there are a number of steps that we need to take in order to aggressively combat gun violence in our country. It is not just a ban on handguns, it is also ensuring that there are enough resources and attacking the root causes of gun violence in our society. It is also ensuring that our border officers have enough resources and technologies to be able to prevent guns from coming into our country. It is a whole number of steps that are going to be required in order for us to address gun violence and reduce it in our country.

• (1750)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about the importance of reconciliation and the need for action with regard to the TRC and the calls for justice by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, as per the constituents from her community. In the throne speech there was no mention of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, and no mention of the calls for justice by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. On top of that, there was no mention whatsoever of the urgent need for an urban, rural and northern "for indigenous, by indigenous" national housing strategy.

What action will the member take to ensure that her government and the Prime Minister undertake what her constituents want her to do here, which is to take action on the TRC's recommendations, the calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and to ensure there is a "for indigenous, by indigenous" national housing strategy?

The Address

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, whether we mentioned it once or 10 times in the Speech from the Throne, I can assure the member, as well as everyone in the House, that implementing every single one of the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a top priority for our government, as well as implementing all of the calls for justice in the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We have allocated a significant amount of money to make sure that those recommendations are implemented. It is something we are all seized with and we are determined to make great progress on in this Parliament.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That a take-note debate on the softwood lumber dispute with the United States be held on Wednesday, December 1st, 2021, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, and that, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House: (a) members rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with another member; and (b) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: All members opposed to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands moving the motion will please say nay.

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

Hearing none, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this chamber to provide my reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to start off by thanking the good people of Mississauga—Malton who elected me their representative. I would like to sincerely thank my constituents, my supporters and volunteers who worked from sunrise to sunset and beyond to have me elected. I would like to especially thank my family without whom I could not take this seat in the chamber today. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to recognize the good work of the member prior, the Hon. Navdeep Bains, and thank him for his years of service.

A faith in simple dreams, a quiet confidence, a profound optimism in better days to come, that we can work toward that better future without sacrificing our morals today, that is Canada.

If we step away from this hallowed chamber, walk the streets others will not visit, see the faces others will ignore and speak to

the individuals often left out, we can learn what our country needs and how it can move forward.

If we listen, we will hear the voice of Abdul, who seeks only to bring honour to his house. He tells me that his father was persecuted for being a religious minority in their old country, that he escaped with his life to this beacon of hope we call home. Abdul's father works on a factory line and after a long day's work comes home, wanting to see hope and promise in his son's eyes. His father only wishes to see his son get a good education and live a good life.

Abdul is a good son, is good-mannered and all we can really ask for in a young man. It is with an apparent but heartbreaking shame that Abdul told me some of his darkest thoughts, as he pulled me aside on the campaign trail. He told me that he struggled with those thoughts for years, that no one knew this and that if he shared this burden with his family and word got out, he would bring dishonour to his father's name.

A silent mental health crisis exists among South Asian and ethnic communities. Mental health is deeply stigmatized in these communities. The children of immigrants face the challenges associated with straddling two different worlds. While trying to fit into a society that values individual expression, they navigate a culture at home where self-worth is determined by the validation of family and community. When seeking psychological services, they often are not understood and cultural nuances are ignored.

It gives me hope that our Prime Minister understands this looming crisis. This is the first Prime Minister in our country's history who has established the role of Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. We will establish a new federal transfer to provinces and territories, the Canada mental health transfer, to help jurisdictions expand the delivery of equitable, accessible and free mental health services. We will invest an initial \$4.5 billion over five years for this initiative. This funding will mean more access to psychologists, therapists, social workers, counsellors and other community supports. It will mean better care for young people like Abdul so he can go on to achieve everything he hopes for himself.

If we listen, we will also hear the voice of Ghias, a recent immigrant to Canada. When I started on the campaign trail, a large part of me was worried immigrants would not connect with the plight of indigenous peoples, that they would be too focused on establishing their own lives here, buying a home, learning the language and securing themselves for future generations to come. When my family arrived in this country, that was certainly our focus. My father had left behind poverty and so much suffering. Would we be up to the task of taking on another burden? What could I expect from others when my family itself was having these questions?

Ghias told me that from where he came, his language and customs were suppressed by the majority, that he was punished for speaking a different dialect and that he could not dance their traditional dance nor dress in their traditional garb.

What Ghias said next was remarkable to me. Perhaps I had underestimated the immigrant spirit to take on more. Ghias told me that he sympathized with indigenous peoples and that he understood the pain. He told me that if he could enjoy the bounty this land had to offer, he was also willing to accept its darker history and work toward a better future.

● (1755)

In the Speech from the Throne our Governor General stated:

Reconciliation is not a single act, nor does it have an end date. It is a lifelong journey of healing, respect and understanding.

As Canadians, we have a shared history and a common destiny. It does not matter if one came to Canada one month ago or one's ancestors came here a few hundred years ago, we must all carry the weight of this country's past. We should all desire to chart a path forward toward reconciliation, and we should make no mistake, because individuals like Ghias have a yearning to play a role in reconciliation and wish to walk the path toward reconciliation, to turn the country's guilt into action.

If we listen to Canadian voices, we will hear one more voice, the voice of Sukhraj. Sukhraj was born in Canada, but his parents were immigrants. They both work in a plastics factory and are nearing the age of retirement. After a life of hard work and renting, they want to buy a home they can grow old in, a home they can watch their grandkids grow up in. As is common in many extended South Asian families, Sukhraj wants to pool his savings with his parents to afford the home and live with them. The combined income of his parents and his savings is barely enough to afford a modest home in the suburbs of Toronto. Sukhraj tells me that as time goes on, his desperation increases, and he becomes willing to place offers far surpassing the list price of the home. Time after time, he is outbid. When he finally does manage to place an offer that lands him a house he comes to see me. Teary-eyed and barely able to get out the words, he asks me to come to a corner of the campaign office and cries on my shoulder.

The right to work toward a home is a right every Canadian should have. A place to call one's own should never be outside the reach of ordinary middle-class Canadians or those working hard to join the middle class. That is why this government has a plan around housing. Whether it is building more housing units per year, increasing housing or ending chronic homelessness, this government is committed to working for Canadians. Our plan is to ban foreign home ownership in our housing sector, to implement the proposed tax on non-residential, non-Canadian vacant homes, and to get together with our partners to ensure they can leverage our upcoming investments to build more housing supply as well as repair the existing stock. The housing accelerator fund will help municipalities build more and better, faster.

The government will also help families buy their first home sooner with a first-time homebuyer incentive, a rent-to-own program, and by reducing the closing costs for first-time homebuyers. These policies will help people like Sukhraj buy that first home, so that when they do it is a moment of happiness and not just a moment of relief.

The stories I have told, and the faces we have looked at, are not the stories of three individuals, but issues that affect all Canadians.

The Address

Progress needs to be made. Progress must be made. In this chamber, we may disagree as to how to get there. As it has for more than 150 years, progress will come in bits and pieces, but if we put partisan rancour aside we can move forward.

This is Canada.

● (1800)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is new, so I will give him the benefit of the doubt. I do not know if he heard my question to a previous Liberal member regarding the first-time homebuyer incentive.

The first-time homebuyer incentive was an election gimmick in 2019. The CMHC and the federal government said it would help 100,000 Canadians. The federal government's own numbers in February of 2021 show just over 9,000 people were helped. That is 1.6% of the total number of homes that were sold and purchased by Canadians in 2020. Would he agree with me that this particular program, the first-time homebuyer incentive, is an election gimmick and a waste of time, that it has failed and that the federal government should move on this and adopt the Conservative housing proposals from this past federal election?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Speaker, this government has a plan around housing. Whether it is building more housing per year, increasing the housing stock or ending chronic homelessness, this government is committed to working for Canadians.

The homebuyer incentive is not an election gimmick. We have a minister of housing who will work to make it happen. That is our commitment. Whether it is the homebuyer incentive, a rent-to-own program or reducing the costs for first-time homebuyers, we will help new homebuyers buy that first home.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to hear him talk about workers, and more specifically about the fate of those who have lost their jobs.

I had an interview request this morning in my riding. There are EI applications sitting on desks at the department and not being processed. These applicants are calling members of Parliament to try to get some follow-up, because they have been without a source of income for months. They tell us that when the officials answer them, they ask them if they have done everything possible to find a job. It is quite alarming to see this kind of thing.

The Address

I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with what his government's officials are saying.

[English]

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning of the pandemic, this government has been focused on supporting Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That is why we created the Canada emergency response benefit, the Canada emergency wage subsidy benefit and the Canada emergency rent subsidy, which have helped so many in my riding of Mississauga—Malton. These benefits have helped many small businesses keep their doors open and helped the hard-working residents of Mississauga—Malton put food on the table, keep a roof over their heads and pay for necessities. Our government was there for Canadians at the start of the pandemic and will continue to support Canadians as long as it takes as we recover.

• (1805)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member. Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith has been providing essential services to urban indigenous people for over 50 years. Since COVID, the Tillicum Lelum staff have seen a shift in the supports required to meet the needs of community members. Their youth safe house, for example, has seen increased numbers and an increased complexity of needs, and for the young moms program, numbers have been increasing. Day after day, Tillicum Lelum staff are seeing low-income families who need and deserve affordable, safe and accessible housing.

Could the member clarify to the constituents of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, including those accessing vital services from Tillicum Lelum, when the government will do what is needed to ensure everyone has a place to call home?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Speaker, housing is a priority for this government. That is why we are introducing a rent-to-own program and have the first-time homebuyer incentive. In fact, we will ban foreign home ownership for years to come so that homes can be more affordable for Canadians. The right to a home for Canadians is a right that everyone should enjoy, and it is something we should work toward. We will ensure that it happens.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell that the member for Mississauga—Malton and I will work well together, given his approach to his constituents in reflecting their visions. Could he comment on the vision of mental health that was mentioned in the throne speech, the importance of mental health to his constituents and our focus on that area?

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer: Mr. Speaker, mental health is very important, especially in ethnic communities, which seem to suffer more during crises like the pandemic because there is no targeted support for them. This is a conversation I have had with friends, and it is unfortunately a very sad conversation. I am very thankful that the Prime Minister has appointed a Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and I look forward to working with the minister to better serve the constituents of Mississauga—Malton.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to let you know that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Repentigny.

If I had a title for my speech, it would be “autopsy of a failure”. Before we talk about the throne speech, let us go back in time, to last spring. I would remind my colleagues that we were in a pandemic last spring. There was only one MP on the other side. I say this often, because I cannot believe it. There was just the member for Kingston and the Islands. All the other Liberal Party members were in their basements or some such place. They were afraid of the pandemic. They were shaking under their desks. Once in a while, the Prime Minister would come and visit. I remember that we would give a start of surprise when we saw him coming. We were shocked to see that there were other Liberals in that party. He would arrive from time to time and answer questions.

Then, things improved. Quebec began opening up. We thought the Liberals would eventually see common sense. We talked about it with their leader and their whip. They said that they could not come to the House, that the situation was still terrible and that there was still a pandemic. They continued to hide under their desks in the basement. They said that they could not do it, that they could not handle the light of day and that they needed to adapt.

It made no sense. That was the Liberal approach. They were afraid of the pandemic.

People say a lot of things, but the Prime Minister can be very persuasive. He convinced those folks over there that it was time to call an election. Even though we were in a fourth wave of the pandemic, he convinced them that the time was right. Even though it was only two years after the previous election, it was the right time to meet the public. An election had to be called, the situation was critical, there was an emergency on the home front.

At the end of the day, one by one, Liberal Party members took the bait. They thought they were going to walk around, meet with people and shake their hands. Soon they were making human pyramids. They were happy; they were finally out.

They told people that they were calling an election and that everybody would have to line up to vote. We were in the fourth wave of the pandemic, but no big deal. They said they could not make Parliament work because of their minority situation, that it was not going well and that the opposition was behaving outrageously. They all said that.

I have been the House leader of the Bloc Québécois since 2019, and I remember that everything was going well. The opposition was making its contribution. There were discussions happening, and that was great. Bills were being improved because we were all working together. I would say that the main problem during that time was more the Liberal government's lack of organization in developing its parliamentary strategy and legislative agenda than the opposition from the opposition parties.

The Address

There were bills on the table, and the work was getting done. Bill C-10 got all the way to the Senate. In Quebec, we had been waiting for years for the web giants to contribute to the culture sector. The bill died in the Senate because of the election. Bill C-216 was meant to ensure that supply management would be protected in future trade agreements. It was on track. Everything was going well. Bill C-6 on conversion therapy was almost wrapped up. The Liberals are coming back to that now with another bill.

The bill that made pensioners first in line to get paid when a company goes bankrupt was also coming along nicely. The one that made sure that someone with a serious illness was entitled to 50 weeks of EI benefits was moving forward. That is something to be expected, it makes sense, but they decided to throw it all away and call an election, because time was of the essence.

The Prime Minister looked people straight in the eye and told them that it was urgent, that the government needed their opinion because otherwise horrible things lay ahead. The public voted, and almost all members are back, except for a few changes.

The public said to stop fooling around, stop with the elections and get back to work. They said to get back to work because we are in a pandemic. That is what the public said. The public told the government to get its act together and return to Parliament.

Now the Liberals are returning to Parliament. They wanted a majority government, but that turned out to be a flop. Now they are saying that we need to take the bull by the horns, that it is extremely important, that it is urgent.

We sat around for two months. We waited for Parliament to be recalled for two months. Our clothes were out of style by the time we came back here.

They came back, claiming that the throne speech would be as amazing as a kangaroo on a trampoline and that we would have to wait and see. People were saying that the speech would be amazing, that it would be the highlight of the decade.

• (1810)

When we heard the speech, however, there was nothing there. The government should be ashamed of having given birth to a mouse. It is not even a mouse; it is a flea and you would need a microscope just to see what is there. No matter how many times you read it, there is nothing there.

In the end, we did find one thing. We learned that the government does not like its jurisdictions and prefers to interfere in provincial ones. The government asked itself how it could interfere in Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdictions. Someone a little smarter said that the provinces and Quebec would be stunned if the government were to interfere in health care.

The government talks about health but fails to mention that provincial health care systems are underfunded because the federal government has been starving them for more than 20 years. The federal government is saying that it is going to stop giving the provinces the money they deserve and is going to starve them little by little. At some point, however, all hell is going to break loose. That is when the federal government will step in and say that the

provinces do not know how to manage health care and that there are all kinds of problems in the sector.

However, the federal government has been starving the provinces' and Quebec's health care systems for 20 years. It is quite simple. The government must be told to increase payments as it should be doing and to increase transfers to 35% of the cost of health care for everyone in Canada and Quebec. Everyone agrees on this amount except for the federal government, which does not understand. The federal government is telling itself that it will say that the provinces are not doing a good job, so that it can go ahead and interfere in their jurisdictions.

The federal government is steadfast, and it does not like its jurisdictions. The rail crisis fell under federal jurisdiction, but it let the provinces deal with it. It says it will let the City of Montreal and Quebec deal with the firearms issue. When an issue falls under its jurisdiction, it does not want to deal with it, but it will meddle in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. If the Prime Minister wanted to run a provincial government, all he had to do was stand for election in British Columbia. However, he is the Prime Minister of Canada.

The federal government thought it came up with a good idea by announcing that it needs a minister responsible for mental health, an area that falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. However, the federal government said that it would be all right and that it would be fun. It went ahead with it.

This morning, despite being comfortably seated, I fell right off my chair when the leader of the official opposition said a minister responsible for mental health was a good idea. The Conservatives have been saying for years that they do not want to interfere in areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Then, this morning, the leader of the official opposition said he was disappointed and ready to fight. The thing is, one cannot respect the provinces' jurisdiction by leaving them alone and support the idea of a minister responsible for mental health at the same time. That does not work, but that is what the Conservatives did, and they thought it was pretty great. Then they said it was because the government was no good. I think the root of the problem is not that the government is not good; it is that it did not do its basic job.

Quebeckers send half their taxes to Ottawa because they want to be taken care of during a pandemic that makes the problem even worse. What Quebec and Quebeckers want is to see the money they send to Ottawa flowing back to where it is needed: health care. The federal government does not have the authority to handle health care. It has never done so. It has never paid a doctor or a nurse, and it has almost never run a hospital, so it must send that money to the people with expertise in this area: my government, the Government of Quebec. That is what the Bloc Québécois wants.

We are also thinking about seniors, who suffered in isolation, who were the most affected by the pandemic in terms of health, who are on a fixed income and who are now being financially strangled by inflation. The only thing the federal government did was divide them into two classes. It said that it would help seniors 75 and up, but seniors 65 to 75 would have to wait.

The Address

In the House, three ministers said that if seniors 65 to 75 did not have the means to live comfortably, they would have to go back to work. Seriously? The federal Liberal government wants to send people 65 to 75 back to work? This government is already worn out only two months in. Good thing it spent two months resting, or it would be dead.

With a throne speech like that, I think the opposition will have its work cut out for it.

• (1815)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not that often that I see somebody with such great passion speak in the House as this member just did, so I applaud him for that. I definitely think that he shows his passion for various issues.

I do have a concern over something he said towards the beginning of his speech. The member talked about how the House was working so well together. He talked specifically about conversion therapy and how it had been passed. The member was in the House, and he saw the games that Conservative members were playing just to delay.

In the 11th hour, just before we were about to recess, the Conservatives finally said, “Okay, we will let this bill pass.” Then it went to the Senate, and the leader of the Conservatives in the Senate started tactics to try to delay the bill. This happened with a number of pieces of legislation, not just on conversion therapy.

Could the member explain to me how he feels the House was working so well together, when in reality we were seeing roadblock after roadblock from the Conservatives?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, we can look at all the bills and go over their history. I have no problem with that.

We could talk about Bill C-7 on medical assistance in dying. The Conservative Party blocked that bill, as my colleague said. The Bloc Québécois, meanwhile, decided to support the bill and move it forward.

No, the Conservatives' approach to Bill C-6 was not exemplary. However, an election should not be called simply because one or two bills get stuck, when many bills are going through without a hitch. I know; I was there.

Yes, the Conservatives could take a good hard look at themselves when it comes to this bill. They have not been effective, one could say, but the fact remains that this is a democracy. The Conservatives were against the bill and they showed it.

What I am trying to say is that when there is a strong, robust, intelligent and effective legislative agenda, things go well. That was the problem in the last Parliament. The government did not get the job done.

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was very enjoyable. One of the things he mentioned was inflation and the cost of living. That is a very important issue in northern Ontario and across the country.

Does the member agree that it is time for the government to stop printing money, get spending under control and ensure it is doing what it can to address inflation?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada has had just one inflation target since 1991.

It is the second bank in the history of the world, after New Zealand, to have such a specific target. In 1991, the Bank of Canada wrote that its only monetary policy goal was to maintain inflation between 1% and 3%, ideally aiming for 2%.

That is the only goal of the Bank of Canada. I hope that the bank will continue the good work it has been doing since 1991. I also hope that the government will respect the fact that the Bank of Canada is responsible for combatting inflation.

This obviously does not mean that the government should spend as it pleases. This means that the government must keep close tabs on its spending.

The Bank of Canada has a role to play, and I hope that it will do so.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw a parallel between the management of Canada and the management of the Montreal Canadiens.

The summer is normally a time to rest, but they both chose to play the game, and they both ultimately got very close to their goal but never reached it.

Yesterday, the Montreal Canadiens management decided to do something and finally clean house.

Is there still a parallel to be made between the two? I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, that is quite the question. I must thank my colleague, who is putting me on the spot.

Clearly, the Montreal Canadien players do not skate as well as the Liberals. That is a fact. However, we hope that the Prime Minister will do a somewhat better job as general manager than Marc Bergevin.

Aside from that, Canada and Quebec decided that we would have a minority Parliament. The role that the opposition must play and that the Bloc Québécois will play is to monitor the government, be a constructive opposition, provide advice and act to ensure that this government has policies that will truly serve Quebeckers and Canadians. We have a lot of work to do in that regard.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the voters of Repentigny who have put their trust in me for a third time. I would also like to thank all of the volunteers who supported me and helped me achieve victory, which can never be taken for granted. I am thinking in particular of Christiane and Assia. I do not have enough time today to thank everyone by name.

Representing and defending the interests of my riding, Repentigny, is very important. It is just as important to be a voice in the House for all of Quebec when it comes to the environment, and more specifically to what the Government of Canada is not doing but has an obligation to do in order to ensure a future for my nation, for my people, of every generation.

Let us turn to the throne speech. After an election that nobody wanted, were we entitled to expect a content-rich throne speech, a speech that had substance and that provided clarity about the government's agenda? I think so.

I am not the only one who noticed that Governor General Simon's first throne speech unfortunately did not live up to any expectations. We heard a few statements such as: "The Government is taking real action to fight climate change." Really. "Now, we must go further, faster." All right. "This is the moment for bolder climate action." We shall see.

The campaign promise to cap oil and gas sector emissions sounded really promising, but here is the problem: the government's behaviour on past commitments and the lack of transparency raised by Commissioner DeMarco suggest that there is something fishy going on. What is needed is a cap on oil and gas production and a phase-out plan if there is to be any hope of getting real results. Again, there is no such thing as clean, ethical oil and coal.

The throne speech contained only three lines on the electrification of transportation. It was the Bloc Québécois that proposed net-zero legislation to force auto manufacturers to make a varied fleet of electric vehicles available to Quebecers and Canadians within a reasonable time frame.

Although the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development was unanimous in recommending the adoption of such a policy, the government dragged its feet before responding and eventually called an election.

What about the total lack of any reference to the banking and financial sector's responsibility for the climate crisis? My colleague from Mirabel spoke about this at length last week.

We are still waiting for the mandate letters to be sent to the various ministers, particularly the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. My colleagues and I are anxious to see that letter. Citizens and organizations continue to be concerned about the federal government's inaction on climate change. With a throne speech so lacking in content, that mandate letter would at least give us a true indication of the government's intentions on this issue, which, we must agree, is urgent.

The new cabinet was sworn in on October 26. Five weeks have passed, and the Prime Minister is still keeping us waiting. For a

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government that kept saying how much it wanted to get to work, I have my doubts about how hard it has been working so far.

What we are seeing right now in British Columbia and the Maritimes also happened in Quebec in 2018. Whether it be flooding, heat waves, forest fires or droughts, natural disasters are everywhere, and no region will be spared. Anyone who has doubts about the effects of the climate crisis should go and talk to the communities that are on high alert right now.

The combined impact of climate change and the pandemic is serious. The global health of populations is being affected. New pathologies are emerging. Some are worsening and others are taking on an unprecedented scale.

• (1825)

In November, researchers at the Université de Sherbrooke's faculty of medicine published the results of a study involving 10,000 people that was carried out over the past two years during the pandemic. I will provide a summary and I invite my colleagues to read the results in their entirety. The study shows that "the longer it takes governments to act on climate change, the greater the psychosocial impacts."

I also invite the government to read one of its own publications from the Public Health Agency of Canada, a special issue devoted entirely to climate change and health. In the first few pages we read the following:

While the health sector is already grappling with climate change impacts on public health and healthcare needs, priorities, use, provision, and costs, health adaptation is generally under-represented in policies, planning, and programming.

It is important to mention that the impact that the climate crisis is having on the health of vulnerable populations—in particular seniors, people living in rural areas, farmers and indigenous peoples—as evidenced by infectious diseases, food security, water, morbidity, mortality and the entire spectrum of mental health, is now a threat to everyone.

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., the hon. member will have three and a half minutes when we resume debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think this may be the first adjournment proceedings of the 44th Parliament.

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I am honoured to stand here before the House to pursue an answer to a question I posed in question period on November 25. That was the day the commissioner for environment and sustainable development delivered a report that one could describe as scathing in relation to the government's record in reducing greenhouse gases and to one particular program. I refer in particular, for anyone who wants to look this up, to report 5 of the commissioner for environment and sustainable development, and to report 4.

Report 5 dealt with a historical overview of what the Government of Canada has done and not done to deliver greenhouse gas reductions. Very clearly, it is a record of 30 years of failure. I have to say I am grief-stricken by that failure. I have had a front-row seat to that failure. I was working in the environment minister's office when the lines were written that are repeated in report 5. It was the conclusion of the first major scientific conference internationally on the climate crisis, which occurred in June 1988 in Toronto. There, the scientists assembled said the following, and it is quoted in report 5, which was released last week: "Humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war."

That was the conclusion of scientists in 1988, and we had a chance to do something about it globally, as a species and as economies. Not only did we fail, but we went in the other direction from the commitment we made in 1992 globally, and in Canada particularly, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the coming climate crisis. Both things were a commitment in 1992. We have done neither, and greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in Canada, which has the worst record of the G7, were 21% higher at the last recorded report than they were in 1990.

I have had a front-row seat to a commitment from government after government to treat our children to an unlivable world, and we have precious little time to arrest that. That is why I asked the minister the question on November 25. COP26 left us with a tiny chance to hold to 1.5°C, which we must do, yet this report outlines that with respect to one particular program, a recent one that is only partially under way, the so-called onshore emissions reduction fund, after \$70 million being spent, the environmental commissioner within the Office of the Auditor General and Natural Resources Canada, which administered the program, were unable to point to a single tonne of greenhouse gases reduced because of the money the people of Canada were spending.

I will just quote this one paragraph: "Overall, Natural Resources Canada did not design the Onshore Program of the Emissions Reduction Fund to ensure credible and sustainable reductions of greenhouse gas emissions in the oil and gas sector or value for the money spent." The minister in response said not to worry, because that program was to help the oil and gas sector during the pandemic. It was an economic problem.

The oil and gas sector got the same salary reimbursements as other sectors. Did they need to double dip? If they did, should we not be able to see some emissions reductions?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my esteemed colleague for her decades-long activism on this file.

I am making this address from my service vehicle, a 100% electric vehicle, in transit to Ottawa, which is not to make a statement about my street cred on environmental issues but I would simply point that out.

My government wishes to thank the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development for his work and his report.

As my colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands knows very well, we have made tremendous progress when it comes to climate change. Let us go back to our earlier years of activism to COP1 in 1995 where very few people were paying attention to this. We only had one IPCC report that started to point to the fact that humans were causing global warming, and the only thing that countries could agree upon in Berlin in 1995 was that the commitments that we had made in Rio in 1992 were inadequate.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Twenty-five years ago in Berlin, the only thing the countries could agree on was the fact that the commitments made in Rio to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions to their 1990 levels by 2000 were inadequate.

Those commitments did not include any emissions reduction targets, no international mechanism to combat climate change, or any dedicated funding mechanism by the industrialized countries to help developing countries adapt to climate change.

I attended the Glasgow summit a few weeks ago as the new Minister of Environment and Climate Change. More than 50,000 people attend those conferences, and it is no longer just government negotiators, NGO representatives and scientists.

[*English*]

At these meetings, we now have representatives from civil society, indigenous organizations, labour, municipalities, businesses and the financial sector, as well as innovators and investors. They are all saying that they want to be part of this and they want to be part of the solution, which is something we have never seen before. To say that nothing has happened when looking at all of the initiatives that have taken place at the municipal level, in our communities, in many provinces over the years and, frankly, all around the world is to deny the fact that the world has started to tackle climate change.

Now, clearly, as the commissioner's report points out, we need to do more. There is an international agreement on the fact that we need to do more, which was recognized in Glasgow, which is recognized in many of the IPCC reports and which is certainly recognized in the commissioner's report.

As I am sure my colleague has read the commissioner's report, she will know that the report did not study the 2016 pan-Canadian framework plan on climate change that our government presented in 2016, or the enhanced climate plan that was presented in 2020. The commissioner did not study the 100 or so measures that have been introduced by our government since 2016 as well as the \$100 billion that we are currently investing in Canada.

I will finish up on this. As our last inventories have shown, we have managed to flatten the curve to 2030. We have taken out more than 30 million tonnes of CO₂ greenhouse emissions that would have been in the atmosphere. That is almost equivalent to half of Quebec's overall emissions. So, our plan is working, but we need to accelerate it.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, if I could have additional time to be the equivalent of the minister's what I would say is, number one, we measure success not by good programs on paper but by emissions reductions in real life. The atmosphere is not interested in negotiating with humanity nor is it interested in the Liberal Party doing better than the Conservative Party. All that matters is that we live within our carbon budgets, and we are not.

If we do not hold to 1.5°C, as the developing world and low-lying island states say, it is a death sentence for them. After the summer we have had in British Columbia with nearly 600 of my fellow citizens dying in the heat dome, with the wildfires and now with the flooding, how many more death sentences do we take if we accept that 1.5°C is the best we can get and we are failing to get there?

We are failing to meet our commitments, and the honourable minister knows it. It is not a prop that he has a bicycle on his wall, it is not a prop that he is in an electric car, but it is a prop to claim that we are doing what needs to be done when we are building pipelines and subsidizing fossil fuels.

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• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. She is right. The objective in everything we do has to be a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and atmospheric concentrations. As she is well aware, our latest records clearly show that we have started to do that.

However, I agree with her. We must pick up the pace and do more. That is the message we got from Canadians in the last election.

[*English*]

Canadians told us they wanted us to do more when it comes to climate change and to do it faster, which is why we have committed to present additional measures in the fight against climate change in Canada. We will not stop until we have achieved it. I am of the opinion that the last inventory we saw shows that it is the last time emissions will grow in Canada. From now on, we will see emissions continue to go down in this country as long as our government and subsequent governments continue to do what needs to be done to ensure that we achieve the targets.

The Deputy Speaker: I know we had a bit of trouble with translation tonight because of the unauthorized headset. I know the minister was trying his best to participate in this, but I want to apologize to those who were trying to follow that in French.

[*Translation*]

I am very disappointed that we did not have access to the French interpretation.

[*English*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:42 p.m.)

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