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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 21, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

CANADA NATIONAL PARKS ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved that Bill C-248, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (Ojibway National Urban Park of Canada), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise here on Bill C-248, an act to create a national urban park: Ojibway national urban park in particular. As private member's business, this is an exciting opportunity. We all get a draw in a lottery that determines where we actually get in the standing order. Often, Parliaments change. This being my eighth one, I was lucky to be selected in a favourable position: number seven.

It is an honour. Some of the things that we can do under Private Members' Business, whether they get full legislation completion or they get partial movement, are quite significant for this country. It is the part of our democracy that is intrinsic to keeping it strong because if one party or one small cabal has all the answers, we miss out on great opportunities that are unique. That is what this is. This is a unique opportunity to create a national urban park in the city of Windsor, not only for Essex County and not only for Ontario but for Canada.

The property that I am talking about is very significant. In fact, some of the property has 130 endangered species at risk. It is a hot spot, and it is a connection not only to the United States, which is looking at this legislation in a favourable context as well, but also to other parts of Ontario and Canada. There are migratory patterns and other environmental connections that are very significant. We live in a Carolinian forest area that has very much diversity along the Great Lakes.

For those who are not aware, with regard to national parks, around the world there is a growing sentiment that urban and national parks are becoming important not only for culture, wellness and significance to our economies but also to us as individuals.

Nothing demonstrated that more than when, under COVID-19, we saw outdoor spaces being necessary for our wellness and mental health. They supported new connections to our community.

That leads me to Michelle Prior, the president of the National Parks Association of Queensland in Australia, who talked about national parks being a cornerstone of a modern, enlightened society. Not only are world-famous parks important to form our identity, but they also provide an abundance of benefits reclaimed from the past for the future. That is what we are looking at with regard to this national park along the Detroit River and the Great Lakes system that extends into the city of Windsor. They contribute to filling a gap for traditional peoples, which is very important.

We in this territory come from the Three Fires Confederacy first nations, which include the Ojibway, the Odawa and the Potawatomini. We respect the long-standing relationship with these first nations. What is really unique and exciting about this is that it also includes Caldwell First Nation. I will not get into the full details of that, but recently it had a settlement to re-establish itself in this area and it is supporting this project. What is important is that these are some of the heroes of the War of 1812 who were out land-settlement claims that are now being rightly justified. The nation's support of this project and Chief Mary Duckworth is very much appreciated.

This park system would not involve any private property. It would connect several pieces of property together, which I will briefly describe, to create one larger national urban park. We have an example of this: the Rouge National Urban Park in the Toronto area is unique. Just so members are aware, each park has its own distinctive legislation. The government did move forward with a proposal for some urban parks before the last election and committed some money toward them, but they are not fully established national urban parks and they will be deprived of significant resources and deprived of cultural, economic and environmental connections. Each piece of legislation is important because it begs the uniqueness of each park.

This park is critical because of some of the significant pieces of land there. The most significant piece is Ojibway Shores. It is owned by the Windsor Port Authority right now, but the port authority expects City of Windsor taxpayers to foot the bill for multiple millions of dollars for public land that we already own. That area actually has 130 endangered species in it.

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The public had to have an uprising several years ago. I talked with the developer who was working in conjunction with the port authority to raze the entire area and smash it down, saying that it was scrub brush and it was nothing. The developer in the project backed down after I talked with them, and then the port authority subsequently put this on to being purchased. However, the public has pushed back so hard that we finally got an inventory of the site. It has over 130 endangered species that are quite significant. This 33-acre part of the park system is important because it brings it into the fold with other parks, including the Ojibway Prairie Complex, for example, which is a collection of five closely situated park systems from the City of Windsor and the Province of Ontario.

• (1105)

These include Ojibway Park, Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park, Black Oak Heritage Park and the Spring Garden Natural Area and total approximately 604 acres. This is along the last undeveloped area of the Detroit River in the city of Windsor, and is one of the last places along the Great Lakes as well that is close to an urban setting. It is an area of scientific interest, and it is across from and adjacent to the American heritage river registration and environmental improvements that are significant. Connected to this is the Spring Garden Natural Area. It is an area of significance for the Essex Region Conservation Authority, which has been very helpful in this process.

A number of species have been identified in the area, including butterflies, birds, fauna and trees, and a series of elements that are very important and endangered.

Black Oak Heritage Park is part of this under the City of Windsor. As a city councillor, I was part of that as well. It connects to the Spring Garden Natural Area through a series of other parks. The waterfront area next to it is the property of Ojibway Shores, then there is Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park and Ojibway Park. There are a number of species in this area, such as the red-bellied snake, Butler's garter snake, the eastern fox snake and the massasauga rattlesnake. As well, there is slender bush-clover, which was found in 1977, and other types of inventory that are not available in other parks.

As I mentioned, each national park has its own legislation. Point Pelee National Park, which is very close to this proposed park, is an area that would actually see some benefits from it, as well as Rondeau Park. This is important, and I am very pleased that the member for London—Fanshawe is seconding this bill, because it would connect us with southern Ontario very well. We also have Ojibway Park at the edge of the town of LaSalle, which has a new wildlife centre and ecosystem research. The Province of Ontario has looked favourably at this.

The landowners involved in this entire complex are quite significant. We have the port authority with a key piece of property that the public owns. The port authority is an extension of the federal government, and it has public lands. The Province of Ontario has a piece of property as part of this, and the City of Windsor and other municipalities are endorsing the project to make the park come to fruition.

The significance of this opportunity is economically important, because it would be next to an international crossing: The Gordie

Howe International Bridge is being built. As a city councillor, I think I had my first public meeting at Marlborough Public School in 1998. It was the first fight to get a new border crossing in this area. Now we have the Gordie Howe International Bridge being developed. At the same time, adjacent to it is all of this property in a green space.

Ironically, on the Detroit side there is Zug Island, which is notorious for its environmental hazards and degradation. What is interesting is that we now have the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, which was created in Detroit in 2001, and there has been more money poured into it.

I want to thank a number of people who came to my town hall held at Southwood Arena about two and a half years ago. We had attendees from the Michigan government and the American federal government. There were others who came over from the United States as well as from the Audubon Society, which is in relation to birds, and so forth because the connections are so strong. Anyone interested in the Great Lakes, the value of their waters and their ecosystem is going to have a high degree of interest in this, as it is one of our last refuges.

In 2004, the U.S. created the Humbug Marsh refuge, which is across the Detroit River and adjacent to this area. This is historic, and the property that we are talking about is giving rise to a series of interesting developments.

As I was doing my constituency work, I had a book from Marty Gervais, *Walk in the Woods: Portrait of the Ojibway Prairie Complex*. It goes over a series of things that go back to the 1960s. For members who may not know, Marty Gervais is a local historian and celebrated author who has done a number of works on this. We had a calendar and a colouring book of Ojibway Shores.

With what is happening with climate change, I find that the opportunity for people to be engaged has been muted in some ways, because they feel that it is out of their control. They feel that there is no way they can actually have a correlation with it. I am trying to make a difference with this bill. Those who have been in support of it include Unifor, Friends of Ojibway, a series of other environmental individuals who have been involved in this, as well as the tourism industry and the businesses next to the area, because of flood mitigation.

• (1110)

They find that this project is giving them hope and an opportunity to have a real result. As I mentioned earlier, with COVID-19, outdoor public spaces are important. There is some use of these properties' outdoor spaces, but it is not coordinated. They are not coordinated or connected in the way they need to be, but they would be under this bill. That is what is exciting.

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Even Parks Canada recently funded \$600,000 in inventory for this region, as well as the subsequent affiliated regions, to better build the environment there, but still, without having this legislation, we do not have an official road map. We are missing out on opportunities to get funding. We are missing out on the private sector, which wants to invest heavily in this project to make sure it would be beautiful, beneficial and environmentally protected. This will also help with adjacent properties, as others from outside the region are supportive of the diversification we have down there.

We have seen bald eagles down there and kingfishers. There are all kinds of the different elements that are really important to actually reclaiming our environment in urban settings. That is one of the most important things about this. When I talk to students at schools, different people, it is incredible the response I get. Back in 2017, the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club ran an inventory and found that this was not scrub brush, which is what those at the port had said. They had told me for years that it was not worth saving. What the naturalists found were over 130 endangered species.

We still do not have a plan. What we have is an area that meets nine out of the 10 criteria to save the environment, which is one of the reasons the Province of Ontario was interested in this. It is why it is building a coalition of those there to support it. There are many different groups and organizations that have been a part of this. I have had Dr. David Suzuki down at the property. I have also even had different students and organizations.

When we look at the bill in its entirety, we see we have the opportunity to act. If we sit on our hands feeling sorry for ourselves about not being able to get it done, then we will miss out on unique opportunities.

This one is simple. It is all public land. It is all put together. It is almost ready-made. We need to do this for our future because it is to all our benefit.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the member's comments and that we are having this debate this morning. What comes to mind after listening to him is that the member talked about the public interest, from those of members of the public themselves, to those of small businesses and to different levels of government. On numerous occasions he made reference to a plan. Something that I think is lost on a lot of community leaders is that we do need to have a more holistic plan, particularly with urban parks, going forward.

Could the member give his thoughts to the importance of having those strategic, long-term plans? We should not just be talking about the situation today. We should be talking about future generations having access to our environment and our parks.

• (1115)

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, it is actually kind of interesting because my colleague is right. The bill only has a couple of pages of descriptions. After that it is all about the locations necessary to actually identify the creation of the national parks. They have to be identified. That is what this is. It is a plan. When we look at the possibilities of future stuff we can do, what more we can do, that is one thing. Here is a controllable that we can do now. It is all to our benefit, with everything on top.

That is why this is really important. That is why the bill, if one looks at it, identifies locations.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague, the member for Windsor West, for Bill C-248, his private member's bill.

He spoke specifically to a road map. We have Malden Road and we have Matchette Road, two major arteries from LaSalle, which is in my riding, through to Windsor in the hon. member's riding. In principle I agree with this bill. Would the member please suggest and/or agree with me that, if this goes through, it is vital that those two main arteries remain open?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, that is why we need this legislation. It creates a business plan and creates the opportunity to build that infrastructure.

That is why we look at the work by people like Jonathan Choquette. His work has been amazing for reptiles and snakes. We look at the support we are getting from the Wildlands League with Janet Sumner, Dave and all the people who have been looking at these obstacles and turning them into opportunities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know why the people of Ontario and the sponsor of this bill would place more trust in the federal government than in their own provincial government when it comes to this initiative.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, it is because national plans for this type of thing fold in quite well with this opportunity. Interestingly, we have over 300 years of francophone heritage in the area, and it is supporting this. The reason is that the national plan brings in the municipality, the federal government and the proper supports that connect on a larger level. That is why there is unified support behind this.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for an incredible amount of work and a really great bill.

He talked a lot about endangered species and the protection of both plant life and wildlife. Could he talk about some of the protections of water in that area of Windsor, in southwestern Ontario, with the Great Lakes and all of the wetlands and water sources, and how the urban park within this bill would go on to protect the water, that vital resource, as well?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, there are industries and unions involved in this too that are doing some of that work. I think of Rick St. Denis, Rick Labonte, Mark Butler and others who have done some of this. We even connect to the Detroit side with John Hartig of the Detroit River refuge.

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Locally, our history goes back to cleaning this up. I think of the work Elaine Weeks has done from Walkerville Publishing with pushing forward the messaging lists, showing that in our history, with the pollution previously to our water sources, we are now turning that around and cleaning it up.

We have that historical lens on it. That is why, when we think about the support from Caldwell first nation and Chief Duckworth, we see the re-emergence of a group that has been part of the history of this place that is showing the way forward for what it wants in the future. That also includes cleaning up the water. That is so key.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-248, an act to amend the Canada National Parks Act, Ojibway national urban park of Canada. I want to begin by acknowledging that the land I am speaking from today is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Three Fires confederacy of first nations: the Ojibwa, the Odawa and the Potawatomi.

The bill in front of us today was introduced by the member for Windsor West, and I share his enthusiasm for the creation of an Ojibway national urban park in Windsor. In fact mere days after my election in 2019, the MP for Windsor West invited me to his office one Friday evening to talk about my new role. Ojibway was one of the things we talked about. We both recognize that Ojibway is a precious gem unlike any other.

Compared to Rouge National Urban Park in Toronto, Ojibway is a postage stamp of land, but in its 300 hectares, Ojibway contains rare Carolinian forest and tall grass prairie. It also has the most biodiversity in all of Canada with hundreds of plants, reptiles and insects, and other wildlife. Eighteen months after my colleague from Windsor West and I met in his office, we joined Minister Karina Gould and dozens of local partners at Ojibway Park to announce our government's—

• (1120)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that we do not mention other members' names.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, that is right.

We joined the minister and dozens of local partners at Ojibway Park to announce our government's commitment to create seven new national urban parks, and Ojibway was among them. It was a historic day.

Since that day, we have been busy putting in the work to make Ojibway national urban park a reality. Just this past January, our federal government provided the City of Windsor with \$600,000 to begin assessments and consultations and to carry out a joint work plan with Parks Canada.

In short, the first concrete steps toward Ojibway national urban park are already taking place, and that process is being led by the good people at Parks Canada, who have experience and expertise in leading good processes that create good parks. We are not alone in that process.

Windsor is one of five cities where we have signed agreements with municipal governments, and we are working with provincial governments, indigenous partners and stakeholders to develop national urban parks that will form part of a national network in Victoria, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Halifax and Windsor.

The key point is that each of these cities is unique. Each presents specific opportunities and specific challenges in establishing a national urban park. Last August, we announced \$130 million to support the creation of national urban parks in the five cities mentioned. This is part of the \$2.3 billion over five years committed to Canada's nature legacy of budget 2021.

Like the Parks Canada process currently under way, Bill C-248 also seeks to create a new national urban park. However, Bill C-248 introduces a flawed process that is not based on public consultation. Instead, it would harm the authentic and organic relationships and engagement required in the successful creation of a new urban park.

Let me talk about the Parks Canada path we are currently on and note how Bill C-248 departs from it. The name Ojibway national urban park refers to parcels of land that, together, are known as the Ojibway Prairie Complex. The first thing one needs to know is that the Ojibway Prairie Complex is an assemblage of properties that includes four municipal parks, a provincial nature reserve and other natural areas in the western part of Windsor.

There is also a desire to include a federally owned parcel of land under the management of the Windsor Port Authority called Ojibway Shores, and potentially other private parcels of land in the surrounding area. As one can see, the area is complex with multiple partners. Bringing the municipal and provincial governments, indigenous partners and other stakeholders together is a complex undertaking, but we are confident Parks Canada has the expertise to bring that about through consultation and engagement.

Bill C-248 would have the effect of unilaterally transferring these parcels to the federal government without any engagement or dialogue. That is simply wrong, and it creates the possibility that constitutional, legal and other issues and challenges may arise.

The Parks Canada approach is different. Our approach is centred on public consultations. We are also exploring a range of governance models in the creation of national urban parks. We are working with other implicated federal departments for a whole-of-government approach to any transfers of land. As well, we are engaging in the breadth of consultation a project of this complexity demands.

First and foremost, that means engaging, in the spirit of reconciliation, in a nation-to-nation dialogue with indigenous partners. Thorough and open consultation with indigenous partners on this proposal is essential.

Bill C-248 presents indigenous partners with a finished design without any consultation. That is a serious omission and error. As one can see, public consultation is at the very heart of the Parks Canada process currently under way. Bill C-248 is a shortcut that skips public consultation in favour of a *fait accompli*.

Consultations are required not only with indigenous communities but also with many additional levels. At the Ojibway announcement, I talked about the fact the protection of Ojibway has always been a grassroots community effort led by many partners.

For example, the Essex County Field Naturalists' Club completed the first-ever bioblitz of Ojibway back in 2014, which gave us the first true sense of the biodiversity in Ojibway. There is also the Friends of Ojibway Prairie, the Citizens Environment Alliance, the Environment Committee at Unifor Local 444 and the Essex Region Conservation authority.

This also includes folks like Tom Henderson, chair of the Public Advisory Council of the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, Nancy Panchesan of Save Ojibway, and Jonathan Choquette of Wildlife Preservation Canada.

The Parks Canada path we are currently on is rooted in community and makes sure these diverse voices will be at the centre of its design from the start. Let us remember that the creation of the Rouge National Urban Park, which was led by Parks Canada, only came about after major consultations that included input from over 20,000 Canadians.

• (1125)

This is a legacy project, not to be undertaken lightly. In that regard, we will engage closely with indigenous partners to ensure that national urban parks, wherever they may be, provide space for indigenous stewardship, for voices and stories and for connections to land and water based on indigenous knowledge and values. Together we will define the boundaries, the requirements and the objectives of the park. Together we will find consensus on mechanisms to operate the park.

While I appreciate my colleague's desire to proceed quickly, process matters. Parks Canada staff are working actively on this as a top priority, moving from assessment to agreement to full designation of an Ojibway national urban park. Bill C-248 is a shortcut that pre-empts and undermines all of the important work that I have outlined. Furthermore, the governance regime it proposes may not be suitable for the Ojibway national urban park, nor for the other urban parks we are working to create for cities across Canada.

Flexibility in governance models is key. Some may end up being administered through Parks Canada. For others, third party administration may be more appropriate. Others may require a hybrid solution. This bill assumes a single governance model, the authority of the Canada National Parks Act, and I would remind the House that for the park to be established under this act, the federal Crown would need a property interest in all lands within the park's boundaries. We simply do not have that at this point.

This may well be an option worth exploring, but without giving a full hearing to other possibilities, we cannot know whether another option would be more suitable. Reaching agreement on a gover-

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nance model will require flexibility and compromise, and that selection must be made in a spirit of collaboration, communication and respect, and founded upon mutual interest. Parks Canada already has in place a process to create national urban parks. It is based on the expertise of Parks Canada.

In summary, this private member's bill presents us with a competing path to creating an Ojibway national urban park and to creating similar urban parks across Canada, but it is a fundamentally flawed process. Let me tell members how the Parks Canada path that we are currently on is better.

First, whereas public consultation is at the heart of the Parks Canada process, Bill C-248 presents a finished product and, as such, is top-down and unilateral. Second, whereas indigenous communities will play a lead role in the design of the Ojibway national urban park through the Parks Canada process, Bill C-248 does harm to that relationship by establishing an urban park without dialogue and consultation with first nations. Third, whereas the Parks Canada process understands that there are different partnership models worth exploring in consultation with local stakeholders, Bill C-248 rejects a bottom-up made-in-Windsor solution.

In short, Bill C-248 is a unilateral declaration that ignores the partnerships and voices necessary for long-term success. I applaud the enthusiasm and initiative of the hon. member for Windsor West, but Bill C-248 leads us away from the Parks Canada process and away from the values of stewardship, collaboration and community that are the very essence of an Ojibway national urban park. I hope he will contribute these efforts to advancing the Parks Canada process.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the Ojibway national park bill, Bill C-248.

The Conservatives have a long history of supporting the development and expansion of national parks. Most recently, we can talk about Rouge National Urban Park, which is an urban park of 79 square kilometres that was championed by Conservative MPs Paul Calandra and Peter Kent. We recognize the need to preserve these types of urban environments, not just because they are good for the environment, but because they are good for community members, who can then enjoy the time they will spend in these beautiful parks. The Rouge National Urban Park has over 12 kilometres of hiking trails and there is camping. The park is also open year round and is free to access.

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An Ojibway national urban park is looking, in some sense, to replicate this model. When we look at what is being discussed, we can see there are six current parks we are talking about, which are Spring Garden Natural Area, Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park, Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve, Ojibway Park, Black Oak Heritage Park and Ojibway Shores. Combining these six parcels into a national urban park is something we should be looking at and is something we should absolutely consider. I applaud the member for his hard work in trying to bring this to fruition.

I want to mention that this was pushed prior to the member's bill. This is a long-standing project, and the previous member for Essex, Jeff Watson, was also interested in trying to set up an Ojibway urban national park. I am happy to say that his vision is being incorporated into the current member's vision and that two parties, the Conservatives and the NDP, are working together to form this park.

The total land allotted for an Ojibway national park is approximately 900 acres. All the land is publicly owned, including the current port authority. There is support from the Windsor council and local politicians. I also understand that this is supported by indigenous people as well.

When we look at what this will ultimately become, and I have spoken to the member about this, we do have some concerns because there are major roadways that separate these parks. This is not six contiguous pieces of land that are easily formed together. They are separated by roadways, private land and other things. We do have some concerns about what that is going to mean. We know that one of the roadways is a large commuter roadway that allows people from LaSalle to move for employment to Windsor, and the closing of that roadway for a national urban park could have some unintended consequences. I know that is not fully within what we are debating today, but I have let the member know that it is something we are concerned about and something we would want to try to explore in committee.

I am surprised to hear the speech from the Liberals, who are saying, from what I heard, that they are not going to support this piece of legislation because it is doing something too quickly. From my understanding, the contemplation to proceed with this park goes back already perhaps a dozen to 14 years, so to suggest that this is premature or is moving too quickly does not make a lot of sense to me.

I think perhaps it is time to kick the tires. Let us get this to committee, let us study it and let us see if we can maybe push Parks Canada to accelerate its timetable. I do not think we want to wait another 15, 20 or 30 years for this to come to fruition.

Here on the Conservative side, we are in support of the bill so it can go to committee and be studied. Then everyone will have the full picture of what is going to take place here. I think the member should be commended for his activities to push this bill forward, and we look forward to seeing it, when it comes up, pass through second reading and come to committee, so we can see everything with respect to it.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I did wonder why my party asked me to comment on this bill, and the hilarious member for Drummond replied that my mischievous nature might be the reason that I, as a sovereigntist, was asked to speak to the creation of a park in Ontario. I do not really know.

Anyway, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-248 in principle. My party also applauds the member for Windsor West's initiative and his commitment to conserving the Ojibway site.

I am told that the member for Windsor West has been championing this cause since 2013. That is certainly commendable. Clearly the member is engaged in his community. Furthermore, I have looked over the information provided by the member, and there seems to be no doubt as to the ecological value of this site and the justification for turning it into a park. I am confident the information provided is accurate, and I am certain this proposal is of significant ecological value. The Liberal government has actually pledged to work with cities to expand urban parks as part of its goal to protect 25% of the country's lands and waters, so this bill is consistent with government policy.

However, the Bloc Québécois's position regarding Bill C-248 is neutral in the sense that we have no intention of telling Ontarians or the people of Windsor how best to preserve and develop their own territory. Quite frankly, if you ask me, this is another example of centralist federalism. However, one must not bite the hand that feeds. We are all ears, as the saying goes.

Still, this does raise some questions.

I realize that there is no question period for this bill, but perhaps we could discuss it later. I have to wonder why the federal government should be the one to own more and more of our urban spaces.

I think it goes without saying that if the government wants to get involved and be more invested, even though this does not come under its jurisdiction, perhaps the best solution is to offer unconditional funding to Ontario to support this proposal from my colleague from Windsor West.

I think this raises another question that has not yet been answered. I have been listening to my colleagues' speeches this morning. I am wondering why the people of Windsor, the people of Ontario and the member who is sponsoring the bill would trust the federal government more than their own provincial government to create an urban park. Why not leave this up to the body that is supposed to manage the territory, in other words, the Ontario government?

I was saying that we are not necessarily against the bill, but we should acknowledge that it is not the route a sovereigntist party would take, nor is it a route for any party that stands up for the provinces. It is not a route that my Conservative friends, who claim to be champions of provincial jurisdictions, would take. I do not see why we would accept having more spaces protected by the federal government. The Bloc Québécois does not think it is the federal government's responsibility to manage urban parks.

Simply put, if my NDP colleague had made a similar proposal about a park in a city in Quebec, the Bloc Québécois would be strongly opposed to the idea and would argue for ownership of the site to be transferred to the Government of Quebec or to a Quebec municipality. That has been the Bloc Québécois's historic position on national parks.

What we are asking is for ownership of all federal parks in Quebec to be transferred to the Government of Quebec or to Quebec municipalities, because the Government of Quebec is solely responsible for land management on Quebec soil. It is not the federal government, but the Government of Quebec, and Quebec's environmental laws, that should protect and enhance our own environment. I would note that in the last Parliament, I introduced a bill on environmental sovereignty.

• (1135)

Take, for example, the Lachine Canal park, which, as we know, is in the heart of Montreal and is a big part of its history, particularly for historically working-class neighbourhoods like Saint-Henri, Pointe-Saint-Charles and Griffintown.

It would be more than appropriate for the City of Montreal and the relevant districts to administer the Lachine Canal park. That way, they could manage and develop it in tandem with the other neighbouring urban development projects.

I feel that the federal government is a level of government that is far from local areas and communities, and its powers should be limited to the state's prerogative powers. In a context of federalism, where the government is responsible for managing borders and conducting foreign, defence and monetary policy, should it also manage the minutiae of day-to-day administration? Quite frankly, I do not see how this is useful. We believe that it is not the federal government's responsibility to manage parks.

I will close by stating that, for me, and this is a criticism that I can direct to my NDP colleagues, this is rather indicative of the centralizing reflex. It is an unfortunate reflex that has led to today's inadequate funding for the health sector. The expectations for this sector continue to rise without the government necessarily providing the resources. With respect to this centralizing reflex, I hope that my NDP colleagues will be aware of it and, above all, of the fact that this is mainly a provincial jurisdiction.

• (1140)

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am so pleased and very grateful today to rise in this place to speak to Bill C-248, an act to amend the Canada National Parks Act and create the Ojibway national urban park of Canada.

I would like to sincerely thank my hon. colleague from Windsor West for introducing the legislation and for his tireless advocacy for the creation of this national urban park in the Windsor region.

Before becoming a member of Parliament, I had the honour of working for an NDP MP for Essex, and so I know about the regional community's desire for this park and the dedication with which the member for Windsor West has fought to create this special ecosystem. The introduction of this bill to establish Ojibway na-

tional park is the culmination of years, if not decades, of work by my colleague, but of course, we never do this work alone. Many residents in the Windsor and Essex region have spent years fighting to protect this unique urban park in one of the most heavily developed areas in the country.

The proposed Ojibway national park would include Ojibway Park, Spring Garden Natural Area, Black Oak Heritage Park, the Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park, the Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve and Ojibway Shores, which is a vital 33-acre green space and the last remaining undeveloped natural shoreline in Windsor-Detroit. It is home to hundreds of endangered species that rely on migration through surrounding local parks for survival.

If connected, this area of approximately 900 acres, including the Detroit River, would become truly significant. It serves not only as a home and larger ecosystem to several endangered species, but also provides mitigation of flooding due to climate change and provides natural heritage areas that the community can enjoy, appreciate and use for healthy living space and ecotourism.

As a member of Parliament, I am often approached by constituents in my riding who wish to preserve historical or environmentally sensitive areas. I support the member for Windsor West in doing just that. By establishing the Ojibway national urban park, the House can help him and his community protect a rare ecosystem within the city of Windsor and ensure that it remains unchanged by human development.

It is also worth noting here that our colleague spoke of the overwhelming consensus with which his community supports the creation of this urban park. For so many in Windsor to be in agreement on this issue is also unique. The creation of the park and the inclusion of Ojibway Shores speaks specifically to two issues that I am passionate about and am working on in my own riding of London—Fanshawe.

The first is about the protection of our fresh water in Canada. Twice now I have reintroduced an important piece of legislation in the House, which is now Bill C-217, an act respecting the development of a national strategy in relation to fresh water. I have worked with the former NDP MP for Essex on this legislation and again in the Windsor-Essex region. In all of our communities, people know the significant role fresh water plays in our lives and how important its preservation is. In my riding too, we are greatly impacted by the Great Lakes and the Thames River, which supply people with fresh drinking water but also provide all communities with environmental benefits that deserve targeted protection and sustainable planning.

While Canada has seemingly abundant freshwater resources, very little of it is actually renewable, and Bill C-217 works to modernize Canada's freshwater strategy. It has been over 20 years since the government established a policy on fresh water, and environmental conditions have dramatically changed since 1987.

Private Members' Business

My bill asks the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to study, review and adopt a national water policy. The review would work to establish national drinking water standards, ensure that water is protected in international agreements, protect groundwater, evaluate the readiness of water and wastewater infrastructure to handle climate change impacts and reduce eutrophication.

Fresh water is vital, whether for tourism, agriculture, recreational use, health or household needs. It plays an important role in all of our communities. Southwestern Ontario benefits significantly from numerous lakes, rivers, wetlands and tributaries. The health of our water is instrumental to our region's sustained growth, environmental stability and safety, and the safety of people.

I hope that all sides will support this important effort to protect our fresh water for generations to come and I believe my bill and this bill, Bill C-248, complement each other so well.

The second issue that I believe greatly aligns with both private member's bills is the protection of environmentally significant areas. The city of London has 12 designated environmentally significant areas, and three are in my riding of London—Fanshawe. I am so privileged to live between two of them, Westminster Ponds and Meadowlily Woods.

Today I wanted to talk specifically about Meadowlily, because this area is under threat of development. Meadowlily Woods is situated on the south side of the south branch of the Thames River. The area contains flood plain woods, deep ravines, mature woodlands and some active and retired agricultural fields that are now meadows.

● (1145)

Along the Thames, west of Meadowlily Road, is the Meadowlily Nature Preserve, owned by the Thames Talbot Land Trust. The public are allowed to hike the trail through these publicly owned lands, which cover 60 hectares. Meadowlily is unique due to its variety of rare trees, plants and wildlife. It also boasts a significant number of endangered species and almost 10,000 different species of plant and animal life. The site has a mix of wetland and upland forest species.

To paint a picture for members of how beautiful it is, along the river basswood, hackberry, willow and dogwood dominate. White cattails and marsh plants grow near the water. In the summer colourful wildflowers can be found, including the blue flag iris, turtlehead and great lobelia. The upland areas are dominated by sugar maple, American beech, black cherry and red oak. In the spring the woods are carpeted with varieties of flowers, including trilliums, trout lilies, bloodroot, violets and spring beauty, and the cool north-facing ravines are home to eastern hemlock, yellow birch and over a dozen fern species. The meadows and young woods are full of asters and goldenrod in the fall. Invasive species management and ecological restoration, carried out by volunteers, is funded by the City of London to protect the ecological integrity of this area.

Over 110 species of migratory and breeding birds have been observed in Meadowlily Woods. Due to its large size and location along the river, the forest supports the forest interior's sensitive species, such as the pileated woodpecker and ovenbird. We have

red-tailed hawks, great horned owls, belted kingfishers and American goldfinches. We have animal life including coyotes, red foxes, white-tailed deer and beavers. We have so much in this area: leopard frogs, spring peepers, eastern redback salamanders and midland painted turtles. The list goes on and on.

I have to also mention that London is located in the traditional territory of the Attawandaron, Anishinabe, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapeewak peoples. Over 60 archaeological sites are documented in the Meadowlily area, especially on the Ingersoll moraine. The sites span the entire 11,000 years of the prehistory of the area and include everything from indigenous camps to villages. The selling off and development of this land by settlers began in the early part of the 19th century. Private homes were built for commissioned officers of the military on land taken from indigenous people.

I am sure members can imagine that this area is gorgeous and peaceful and in an area of prime real estate—prime real estate in a time of a housing crisis. The land that surrounds this incredible area is currently planned for development. That is the reason a dedicated group of volunteers and community activists have formed a not-for-profit association called The Friends of Meadowlily Woods. They are fighting to protect against the further development and degradation of this larger natural area. Like the member for Windsor West and what he is trying to protect by creating a national urban park in his region to protect those endangered species and environmentally sensitive areas, these folks in my area are working to protect their environmental treasure. Ojibway Shores and Meadowlily are so similar in terms of what is needed to protect our future. We must do everything we can in this House to preserve precious natural habitats, water systems and ecologically delicate areas. We need to learn the balance between growing communities and our natural world for the sake of our future and the future of our children.

● (1150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the member's bill. I appreciate the fact that he has brought forward this legislation, even though there is some concern with respect to it.

I do believe in the necessity of having these types of debates. It is not the first time I have had the opportunity to speak in regard to national and, in particular, urban parks and the many different benefits of them. We often underestimate the benefits of having that strategic plan that deals with national parks.

The member spent a great deal of his time, obviously, because of the area he represents, focusing on Windsor. The principles of an urban national park and the value of these parks could be universally applied throughout Canada, from coast to coast to coast. If we take a look at some of the natural beauty we have, we want to ensure that we do what we can to preserve it for future generations. We all have that responsibility.

It is also important that we take a look at the mechanisms and how we deliver these types of parks. I would like to give a specific example. Many years ago we had a railway at the junction of the Red River and the Assiniboine River in downtown Winnipeg. What we saw was the public talking about the redevelopment of the area and how we could bring it back to nature and allow the citizens of Winnipeg to be more engaged in it.

It is, by far, not a huge national park, but what it did was that it brought in different stakeholders, from community activists and individuals who live in the downtown to different levels of government. Through a great deal of consultations and environmental sensitivity, because at that time we did not have the same sorts of studies, and looking at what people had to say and bringing together private agencies and different levels of government, we now have the beautiful Forks development.

During the seventies and early eighties, there were very few people who ever went down to The Forks. People would go to Saint Boniface, on the other side of the river, because there was really nothing at The Forks but the rail yards and a lot of dangerous things, chemicals and so forth, that were having a negative impact there. I often wondered what kind of seepage was going into the Red River and the Assiniboine River. Through co-operation, today people can go down to The Forks. The last time I heard a number, it was almost two million visits a year. This is in downtown Winnipeg.

This is far from the type of park that the member made reference to in his introduction to the bill. However, whether it is an urban national park or a rural national park, Canadians value our wilderness and what we have, our natural assets. Where we can advance them and move forward, we should.

Riding Mountain National Park is a park in Manitoba that is exceptionally well developed. There is a very strong nature component to it. Thousands of people visit that park as a result of its designation. Through that designation, we have seen things able to continue on in their natural form. That is something I see as a very strong positive.

• (1155)

Let us look at the urban centres. Because not everyone is travelling out into our rural communities, we should look at whether there are urban centres where the national government can play a role in their development. Personally, I look at the City of Saskatoon and what it has done with its Saskatchewan River. In many ways, that is something that Winnipeg, as a community, would love to see. If we could develop a national urban park that is based, at least in good part, on our rivers, I would see that as a very strong thing. I know that what I am talking about would be widely supported by the different levels of government and, in particular, the citizens of Winnipeg. If we put the necessary investments into that in the future, they would be there for future generations and we would ultimately get more people to go down and visit our rivers while protecting that environment.

We can look at what the Government of Canada has done through this incredibly agency, Parks Canada. The manner in which it goes about designating national parks and the lead-up that is involved is not something that happens overnight. There is a fairly

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extensive process in the development of national parks. I would encourage those who are following the debate this morning to tap into the Parks Canada website to get a sense of the types of things they do and the parks that we have today.

We do not necessarily have to reinvent the wheel. For example, when we talk about the Windsor park, we can look at the Rouge National Urban Park in Toronto and how effective it has been at preserving nature and allowing urbanites to experience that sense of wilderness. We can talk about how it is that a city like Toronto is able to continue to grow while preserving that beautiful park. It is fairly extensive. I would like to think that same principle could be applied to many different urban centres, big and small, throughout Canada.

We have in place an agency in Parks Canada that is respected around the world with respect to the efforts and work it has done. As the parliamentary secretary pointed out earlier, the Government of Canada has invested hundreds of millions of dollars into the area of park development to ensure that future generations will be able to have input and receive the benefits of investing in national parks.

When I think of why we need to do this, the most obvious reason for me is that it is the right thing for our environment. Our environment is something I am constantly reminded of, in particular by my daughter, as well as many others, such as constituents, who want the government to do what it can to protect it. Obviously, our national parks have to be high on the agenda.

Another issue with respect to our national parks is what is in those parks today. Whether insects, animals or mammals, particularly where there is the threat of extinction, they need to be taken into consideration, as well as how we can preserve them into the future.

• (1200)

Personally, my third priority is allowing people, whether from urban or rural areas, to be able to experience nature at its best. Canada has so much nature, not only to share with the citizens of Canada but to share with others around the world.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—COST OF LIVING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP) moved:

That, given that,

(i) as the cost of gas, groceries and housing continues to rise, most Canadians are struggling to make ends meet,

(ii) at the same time, wealth inequality is reaching a level not seen in generations as the super-rich continue to protect their wealth through a financial system with very little transparency,

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(iii) over the course of the pandemic, large corporations in certain industries have made record profits, including big banks, oil companies and big-box stores,

(iv) the 2021 Liberal platform included a commitment to implement a 3% surtax on banks and insurers, as well as a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry,

the House call upon the government to include in its next budget:

(a) its proposed 3% surtax on banks and insurance companies on profit over \$1 billion, which should be expanded to profitable big oil companies and big-box stores;

(b) a plan to re-invest the billions of dollars recouped from these measures to help Canadians with the cost-of-living crisis; and

(c) a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Elmwood—Transcona.

We know that the cost of living is going up and that Canadians are feeling the weight of it. They are being crushed by the cost of living. Whether it is the cost of groceries or gasoline going up, everyday families are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet.

Over the past couple of weeks, I have spoken with families that, when they go into grocery stores, have to reconsider what they purchase. They put food back, and that phrase really hit me. A mom mentioned that she would go into the grocery store, pick up something and then have to put it back. It was something that her child likes to eat or her family makes when they cook together. They simply cannot afford it. I spoke to retail and grocery store workers, specifically a worker who works in a grocery store. He has not seen a raise in his salary. He also drives to make deliveries for his living and has seen the cost of gas go up, directly impacting how much he earns.

We saw inflation rise above 5% in January, a 30-year high, while people's wages only rose by 2.4%. Families cannot keep up. While we have heard promises from the Liberal government to do something, it has not acted. Any time the cost of living goes up, it certainly makes it harder for families and workers. Their cost of living goes up and this makes it harder for them to purchase what they need and to put food on the table. However, while it hurts many, it actually benefits some. While the cost of living goes up and hurts families and lots of people, it benefits the wealthiest corporations, which have made record profits.

Let us go into some of those profits. Walmart, in 2021, made \$3.5 billion in profit. Canadian Tire made \$1.26 billion in profit. Canadian Natural Resources made nearly \$2 billion in net income in the fourth quarter alone. We are therefore seeing, on one hand, that people are having a hard time filling up their cars and buying groceries, but companies are seeing record profits. Huge grocery store chains, corporate grocery stores and big box stores have made record profits, and they are profiting off the backs of people. We also know that, in general, the ultrarich are getting richer while 60% of Canadians now say they are having a hard time simply making ends meet.

We believe it is the government's role to step up when we see companies exploiting people, exploiting difficult times and exploiting the pandemic, a war and inflation. It is government's role to stop them from doing that. We have heard some ideas being floated about maybe waiving taxes, but what would stop a corporation, if a

tax was waived, from increasing the price of their goods to make up the loss and the difference?

What are we proposing? We have to get at the heart of the matter, which is wealth inequality. As wealth inequality goes up, it makes the quality of life for everyone worse. We know that societies that are the safest and healthiest and have the most civic engagement are those where there is less wealth inequality. However, what we have seen are policies brought in by successive Conservative and Liberal governments that have allowed the ultrarich to get richer. In this crisis, they have allowed certain wealthy corporations to make excess profits while everyday families are struggling, and we are saying enough is enough. Our proposal is to tax the excess profits made by profitable corporations and reinvest in people. That is a sustainable solution to get at corporate greed and a long-term solution to invest in people.

In the last election, the Liberals promised a surtax of 3% on big banks and insurance companies. We agreed that we should be taxing institutions that are making significant profits and should reinvest in people. We are saying the government should expand what it has already promised to do. It should first implement it and then expand it to also include big box stores and oil and gas companies. Then it should use that revenue to invest in people.

● (1205)

The status quo is doing nothing. The status quo is to let this continue without doing anything to help people, and for the New Democrats that is wrong. We believe it is wrong and that we have to act.

[*Translation*]

People are already feeling overwhelmed by the rising cost of housing and food. The cost of living is going up, and this increase is taking its toll. Canadian families are struggling to make ends meet. While families have seen their weekly grocery bill get more expensive, the CEOs of major grocery chains and big box stores posted record profits during the pandemic.

The ultrarich are prospering under the Liberals, while Canadian families are feeling abandoned. We think this is unacceptable, which is why we are proposing a solution. We are calling on the Liberals to commit to imposing a 3% surtax on the big banks and insurers and to expand this tax to the big oil companies and big box stores.

Instead of letting the rich get richer, we are calling on the government to tax these profits and to reinvest that revenue in measures that help make life more affordable for families. We will never stop fighting for ordinary Canadians, instead of protecting the profits of major corporations.

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• (1210)

[*English*]

What we are proposing is that we act. When people tell us that it is harder and harder to make ends meet, we need to do something about it. When people are struggling to put food on the table, to buy groceries and to pay their bills, we need to do something. We have to acknowledge that people are hurting right now. We are proposing a solution that gets at the heart of the matter: the excess profit and greed of these large corporations. Let us impose a tax on that excess profit and reinvest it back into people.

People have asked what we can do. There is a lot we can do. We can invest in programs that will make life more affordable for people. We can invest in dealing with the costs that people deal with on a regular basis, like the cost of medication. Why not bring in a national pharmacare plan to help families save thousands of dollars on their medication?

We are proposing to put in place a program to help people with dental care. We know that many families are struggling with the cost of living and go without dentist visits. Kids are going without dentist visits. We can bring in social programs, universal social programs, that will help people out.

We can invest in programs that help those who are most in need and help with investments to directly support families that are most in need. We could send direct payments out to families like we did during the pandemic. We can support those families that need help the most.

We need to act. What we are proposing is a clear path to action: imposing a tax on companies that are making excess profits and reinvesting that back into people. The New Democrats will always be on the side of people, and we believe very strongly that our role is to stop companies from exploiting people and that the government's role is to stand up and provide real help when people need it most. That is exactly what our motion and plan are about, and it is exactly what we will continue to do.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, virtually from the very beginning, the government has been very much focused on the issue of equity. We saw this when, for example, we put in the special tax on Canada's wealthiest 1% and reallocated that revenue toward Canada's middle class, to which we gave a tax break.

As to the resolution today, one of the parts I want to highlight is what the member talked about regarding inflation. I am wondering if the leader of the New Democratic Party could provide his thoughts on this: When we talk about inflation, one of the things we have to take into consideration is what is happening around the world. Canada is doing reasonably well on that particular front.

Could the member provide his thoughts with regard to the notion that inflation is not just in Canada and that it goes beyond our borders?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I want to make something really clear. It is important that folks know we are not blaming government for global pressures that are causing our cost of living to go up. However, we are certainly blaming it for the inequality that

is mounting, the fact that the ultrarich continue to make record profits while people struggle and the fact that the ultrarich do not pay their fair share. We are certainly blaming that on government, both Liberal and Conservative.

What we are proposing is a solution to that. It is a solution to the fact that wealth is being concentrated into the hands of fewer and fewer and that those at the very top continue to make record profits. We are proposing a real solution to say that we can do something about that: We can tax excess profits and can invest that back into people. We believe we can and should act when people are struggling, and the way to do that is to reinvest resources back into the people who need them most. That is what the motion is proposing.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the leader of the NDP for bringing forward this opposition day motion. The constituents of my riding are also very concerned about the rampant cost-of-living issue that is happening in this country. One of the main issues people are concerned about is the government's imposition of the carbon tax, which his party has been happy to support.

Would the leader of the NDP be willing to ask the government to halt the increase of the carbon tax on April 1?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, here is the problem with the approach of the Conservatives on this and a number of matters: If we were to have a tax holiday on the GST or on the carbon tax, nothing would prevent those very same companies from increasing costs even more. They would say there is a savings that people are enjoying, so let us increase the rates even more. That is the inherent problem with the Conservatives' approach. They think that somehow without government intervention, large, wealthy corporations are going to lower costs or allow people to earn a decent living. They are not. That is why we have to fight. That is why governments exist: to prevent that exploitation.

What we are proposing is to get at the heart of the matter. Let us tax the excess profits and reinvest that back into people, which is something we have done in the last. Profiteering happened in the world wars, and Canada, among other nations, decided that we needed to put in a profiteering tax to stop it and to invest in people. That is exactly what we are proposing.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, the banks continue to post profits, and their executives are rolling in money while families are struggling to access or purchase housing. Major corporations also keep making profits while small businesses are suffering. The oil companies are raking in the dough while everyone is paying more for oil and gas.

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I am therefore in favour of a 3% surtax on those referred to in the motion as the “super-rich”.

I do want to point out, though, that tax havens represent another anomaly. The government is totally complacent with respect to tax evasion. Is it right to take that attitude?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, that is not right at all, and I am grateful to my colleague for his comments and support.

Tax havens pose a major challenge because the ultrarich are hiding their money and not paying their fair share. We definitely need to resolve that problem.

Today, our motion proposes to address the growing inequality in our society by imposing a 3% surtax on major corporations. Doing so will make it possible to restore justice and equality and to reinvest the money to meet Canadians' needs. We believe that this is a necessary measure.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure to be back in the chamber and speaking to an NDP motion.

There is no question. We do not have to go far or talk to many people to realize just what a challenging time it is for so many Canadians, for so many reasons. I think one of the things that compounds that sense of frustration, anxiety and fear that people are feeling as their household budgets tighten is the contradictory messages that they are hearing about why that is happening and what could be done about it.

If we listen to the government some days, when it suits their purposes, it tells us that the economy is doing great, that it has rebounded, that we are past the problems of COVID, that we have excellent job numbers and good growth, and that money is flowing in and things are good. At other times, the government gives a bit more of a realistic assessment, if it is in excuse-making mode.

This is hard for Canadians who are struggling so much in their households and at the grocery store, as our leader was just saying, putting things back on the shelf that their kids would be excited to eat or that would be a normal part of their family cook night. It is frustrating to hear that things are going well, that things are back to normal, because that is certainly not the experience that people are living at the pumps, at the grocery store and around their kitchen tables.

It is incumbent on us, as public policy-makers, to try to find a path through those contradictory messages to something concrete that can be done. For sure, there is a lot going on in the world right now, whether it is the continuing economic fallout of COVID and what that means for supply chains, or what climate change means for supply chains and is going to continue to mean for supply chains going into the future. There is what is happening in Ukraine right now, which of course has dramatically increased the price of gas at the pumps. There are all sorts of things happening that are hard to control, not just for individual Canadians, to be sure, but even for governments.

That makes it that much more important for governments to act on the things it can do something about. An important part of the

story that we do not hear enough of, although we heard a little of it from the Parliamentary Budget Officer at the end of last year, and part of the reason why Canadians can be living such a difficult financial experience at home and in the personal experience of their families, their loved ones, their friends and their neighbours, in the midst of this apparently good economic news, lies in the fact that more and more of the wealth that is being created is going into fewer and fewer hands.

If we are just talking about the economy in general, if we are talking about GDP, if we are talking about how much money is being produced in the Canadian economy, if we are talking about the value of the exports that are leaving Canada, then we can hear good news. That is why, in corporate boardrooms and in the boardrooms of banks, they are celebrating. They hear that good news and they do not feel the pinch, because they are part of that 1% that is getting not only a good chunk of that but a bigger and bigger proportional piece of that pie.

As the pie grows, not only is their piece increasing relative to the size of the pie but the amount of the pie they get is also increasing. That is why we can hear about good news for the economy and big economic growth and all these things that, normally, Canadians would expect to mean that life would be a little better for them, in the midst of so many stories of hardship, people worried about losing their homes and, in fact, more people than ever losing their homes. Homelessness is going up in Canada since the pandemic. The cost of housing is getting ridiculous. It was already ridiculous and growing astronomically before the pandemic, and it has only gotten worse. Housing prices have almost doubled in the last two years. I apologize if I do not have that stat exactly right, but the fact that the number is even what would occur to someone who has been hearing these numbers day in and day out as likely close to the number is a sign of how bad things have gotten.

I wanted to put some of these thoughts on the record to help Canadians who might be listening understand how we could be presented with apparent good economic news again and again by the government, by certain economists and by large corporations in their presentations to shareholders, yet feel so helpless in the face of very difficult economic circumstances.

● (1220)

I said earlier, and I will repeat, this makes it all the more important, because some of the things driving inflation are outside the control of government, that the government zero in on the things it can do something about. Wealth inequality is something governments can do something about. It is something governments, at one time in the post-war period, did something about. Over the last 30 or 40 years we have seen successive Liberal and Conservative governments undoing the good work that was done in the post-war period.

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That work made sure that, in a time of a sense of strong social bonds, when people went to fight for freedom and prosperity, they were owed a good life when they came back, and that their families, who sacrificed while they were away fighting, worked in factories producing munitions and supported the war effort in other ways, were owed a good life when they came back. That meant ensuring a small number of people at the top did not get to run away with all the wealth while everyone else suffered. That system, which was built when there was that strong sense of social solidarity, has been undermined now for a very long time.

It is about time, if we are going to do anything about the very real pinch Canadians are feeling now, we tackle this problem of wealth inequality. The Liberals have made promises to that effect, various kinds over the years, but they have not acted on them in the way that they need to if they are really going to fix the problem. One of their most recent promises was to have a surtax on banks, which made extraordinary profits during the pandemic, not their normal extraordinary profits but additional profits on top of their normal extraordinary profits. As such, asking them to pay a little more on that additional extraordinary profit is not at all unreasonable. In fact, I think it is something we are morally required to do and we have so far failed in our duty to do that.

The crisis in Ukraine has shown that the lack of financial transparency both in Canada and across the world is not benign. It is not even just about missing out on the opportunity to invest that extraordinary profit, which we might tax a portion of, back into programs, as we should, like dental care, pharmacare or supporting good public education. All of these are things we need to do, and I could go on with that list, but I only have so much time so I will not.

We have also seen the way that actors on the international stage who control this amount of wealth benefit and are able to support people like Vladimir Putin by hiding his wealth around the world. That is how the concentration of wealth and power can become very malignant indeed. We should not wait until a dictator feels so empowered and emboldened, not just by what is going on in his own country but what is going on in the international world of finance, that they can go ahead and do what Putin has done in Ukraine and still feel confident that they are going to be able to enjoy their yachts and palaces and that their buddies are going to continue to travel the world with impunity.

That is where the question of wealth inequality and what is going on in Ukraine and in other parts of the world come to get mixed together and show why it is important on an ongoing basis to make sure we are not encouraging the massive concentration of wealth in the hands of a very few people at the top. It is why I am proud that not only are we proposing what the Liberals proposed in the last election with a surtax on the profits of the banks, we are proposing it be expanded to other big corporate winners of the pandemic like big box stores and oil and gas companies that are now raking it in with prices that are really high at the pump.

We have also included the demand for a public beneficial ownership registry, because that is what we need on two fronts. We need it to take on the likes of Vladimir Putin and his oligarch cronies who are hiding his wealth across the world, and we also need a public beneficial ownership registry in order to be able to properly

record the wealth of the top 1%, so that they can be taxed to pay a fair share of the services we need to provide so that all can benefit.

That is why this is such an important motion. I am looking forward to all members supporting it at the vote.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to address the issue of wealth inequity, something NDP members often talk about, I made reference to the issue of the 1% wealthiest being taxed as one of the first initiatives this government took. I have also in the past made reference to substantial increases to the GIS and government investments.

Recently we made announcements across Canada of a national child care program for billions of dollars. That is, I would ultimately argue, a redistribution that is taking place. Therefore, there are different ways that we can tackle this problem.

One of the other ways, and I would ask for the member's comments in regard to this issue, is that there are a lot of people who avoid paying taxes. Over the last five years, we have invested close to \$1 billion in going after those people because there is a lot of wealth that is being avoided in taxes. Could the member provide his thoughts in terms of providing Revenue Canada with the proper tools to ensure that we are collecting fair taxes?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the member is certainly right that there are people who are avoiding paying their fair share. It is something we have long said in the NDP we want to see the government make a priority. One of our frustrations is that, talking points aside, Canada stands alone in respect of the Panama papers and the Paradise papers in not having successfully prosecuted anyone, not a one.

I hear what the member is saying. Yes, that sounds great. What we are looking for is a government that is actually going to make it happen. If the government members are sincere in actually wanting to do the things that the member says they want to do in tackling tax avoidance, yikes, because they sure as hell do not know how to get it done. I dare say the Liberals are not sincere because, of course, we cannot call anyone a liar in this House and I would not dream of doing it. However, something is not working because we have a government that, given the day, is professing to want to take on tax avoidance and tax evasion, yet, over six years in, it has not happened.

Where is the missing link? That is what we are trying to figure out on this side of the House.

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[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to what my colleague said, and I understand one thing. I get the impression that the more proposals and measures we come up with to deal with a situation like inflation and the problems associated with growing vulnerability, the more the government puts its head in the sand.

There are parties in the House that have a lot of proposals, and there is not much time left for the government to decide what it will put in its next budget.

We are hearing a proposal regarding 3%. There is another proposal to use 1% of the government's budget to address the lack of housing renovations and new construction since 1995.

Does my colleague agree that it is important that the government listen to and consider every proposal?

I would also like my colleague to explain why the government almost always votes against such proposals.

• (1230)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I agree. There are several ways to address this situation. What is beginning to alarm me is that this government has various paths it could take, but it will not choose any one of them.

As a result, we are stuck with the status quo, which is not stable itself. We are seeing a trend where money and power are becoming concentrated in the hands of a smaller group of people.

We really need to do something to reverse that trend. That means we need to change the status quo, if not through this proposal, which I think is a good one, then through something else. The government has not demonstrated that it has its own plan. It does not seem prepared to implement other parties' plans either.

However, we absolutely must implement a plan, not only for the coming year, but for the next 10, 15 or 20 years. I believe we have the opportunity here to lay the foundations for a truly equitable economy, but we need to step up now.

[English]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to take part in today's debate. I actually believe today's motion is an important example of how parliamentarians can overcome partisan divisions to deliver positive results for Canadians on their highest priorities.

I would like to thank my neighbour, the member for Burnaby South, for bringing this motion to the floor today, and the member for Elmwood—Transcona for his speech as well as for his work at the finance committee.

One of the driving forces for me to re-enter politics in 2015 was to address issues surrounding social mobility. Building a fair tax system and creating an environment where all Canadians can succeed, no matter what their current financial circumstances are, is crucial for building not just a fair and equitable society but a society where anyone and everyone has a fair and equal chance at suc-

cess. After all, a fair tax system is something that all Canadians want.

Taxes help pay for the government programs and services that benefit our families and support our tremendous quality of life, which is regularly ranked among the highest in the world. They provide a safety net on which all Canadians can rely in times of crisis and they allow us to make strategic investments that can help our economy grow and create a better future for future generations.

Funding these investments and providing these pathways to success require a firm commitment to ensuring that everyone pays their fair share of taxes, and our government has always taken action based on this understanding. In fact, our first action as a government was to increase taxes on the top 1% in order to reduce them for Canada's middle class. We followed up with important measures to make Canada more affordable. These included reducing the cost of child care by 50% this year and eventually to \$10 a day; introducing an unprecedented national housing strategy; increasing the OAS and GIS and indexing our most important benefits to the cost of inflation; reducing the qualifying retirement age in Canada from 67 to 65; and increasing student grants and moving to eliminate interest on student loans. We introduced an anti-poverty strategy that lifted 1.3 million Canadians out of poverty. Before the pandemic, this led Canada to achieve its lowest-ever poverty rate.

Another key action we have recently taken to support fairness through the tax system is our proposed underused housing tax. The tax is on non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential real estate that is considered to be vacant or underused. It was proposed to come into effect as of January 1 of this year. It will help ensure that foreign non-resident owners who simply use Canada as a place to passively store their wealth in housing pay their fair share. We are doing this because a home is, first and foremost, a place to live, and young Canadians who are starting to build their future are facing sky-high housing prices. The revenue from this tax will help to support our government's significant investments in housing affordability so that all Canadians can have a safe and affordable place to call home.

We are not going to stop there. We are also taking action, along with our international partners, to ensure that corporations in all sectors, including major international digital corporations, pay their fair share of tax on the money they earn by doing business in markets such as Canada. Our government has always favoured a coordinated global solution to end the race to the bottom with regard to international corporate taxation. We want to ensure that multinational corporations pay an agreed-upon minimum level of tax wherever they do business, regardless of where they may be headquartered.

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We have made significant progress on this issue. Canada has worked with our partners at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in the G20, alongside 137 countries around the world that have agreed to a landmark two-pillar plan for international tax reform. This plan has been endorsed by all G20 finance ministers and leaders.

We are working expeditiously with our international partners to bring this multilateral agreement into effect, but we are also taking action to ensure that Canadian interests are protected under any scenario. That is why we announced that as a backstop we would move ahead with legislation to impose a digital services tax as of 2024 if the treaty implementing the multilateral framework has not come into effect by that time.

Canada is also taking action to ensure that large companies, typically multinationals, are not using excessive deductions on interest to unfairly reduce the taxes they pay in Canada. We are doing this because we do not want them to shift the tax burden onto hard-working Canadians. All other G7 countries have already taken action in line with the OECD's base erosion and profit-shifting project to eliminate excessive interest deductions by large companies. With budget 2021, we have taken action to join them.

• (1235)

With this proposal, starting in 2023 the amount of interest that certain businesses can deduct would be limited to 40% of their earnings in the first year and 30% thereafter. We will look to provide relief to small businesses in other situations that do not represent significant tax-based erosion risk. We have already released draft legislation on this measure and are actively seeking stakeholder input. By aligning our tax system with our G7 partners, we expect federal revenues to increase by \$5.3 billion over five years, starting in this fiscal year.

Budget 2021 also took action to address so-called hybrid mismatch arrangements in which a multinational company can exploit the different treatment of certain business entities and financial instruments in Canada and another country to earn income that is not taxed in any jurisdiction. It also prevents the situation whereby deductions may be double-counted and apply to two different jurisdictions simultaneously, resulting in a double deduction. Budget 2021 proposes to amend the Income Tax Act to eliminate the tax benefits of hybrid mismatch arrangements, with implementation starting in stages as of July 1 of this year.

As I noted at the outset, our government's commitment to a fair tax system is ongoing. It started before COVID-19 struck and it will continue to be a cornerstone of our government's efforts as we move forward. This includes our commitment to ensuring that large profitable banks and insurers pay their fair share. It also includes our commitment to implementing a beneficial ownership registry that will increase corporate transparency. It also includes a revenue-neutral price on pollution that is a core part of Canada's plan to fight climate change and reach our net-zero targets, and it includes investing in the Canada Revenue Agency to combat aggressive tax planning and avoidance, ensuring everyone is paying their fair share.

We will do this while continuing to focus on making life more affordable for Canada's middle class through measures like the

Canada child benefit and Canada workers benefit, which have helped lift over one million Canadians and more than 435,000 children out of poverty, or like increasing the basic personal exemptions Canadians can earn before paying any federal income tax at all.

Taken together, all of these measures that I touched on today show that our government is following through on its commitment to a fair tax system, and we will continue to follow through on this commitment as we move forward. I am pleased that with today's motion for debate, we will have the support of the hon. member for Burnaby South and his colleagues as we do so. After all, a fair tax that gives everyone a fair and equitable chance at success is something that all Canadians can support.

• (1240)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by letting everyone know that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and I intend on strongly supporting this motion for many of the reasons we have heard this afternoon already. We recognize that this encourages the government to do what it already said it intended to do. It is very constructive in that way and it goes further to point toward ways that we can not only address wealth inequality but do so in a way that actually strengthens our social safety net at the same time.

The member for Burnaby North—Seymour mentioned the under-used housing tax in his speech. I and others in this place have raised that issue also, recognizing that the cost of housing in Kitchener, for example, has gone up almost 34% in the last year alone.

There are some sizable exemptions to what the government has proposed. Could he provide his personal opinion on going further and maybe reducing the exemptions so that Canadians and corporations too would be able to contribute to ensure that we remove this kind of opportunity for folks to speculate on homes in place of living in them?

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for this very important question and for his and his party's commitment to fighting wealth inequality.

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With regard to going further on measures that make housing more affordable, absolutely our government is committed to that. Not only have we introduced a \$72-billion national housing strategy and not only are we introducing the measure we are discussing, and I understand that the member wants us to go further, but we also made dozens of significant commitments in the last election that focused on three broad categories. The first is to increase supply. The second is to focus on housing as a place to live as opposed to an investment vehicle. The third is to find further pathways for new homeowners, first-time homeowners, to find their way into the market so they can find an affordable place to live. We are going to move on all those measures, and I look forward to working with that member to do more when it comes to housing and affordability generally.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this motion put forward by my colleagues and the member for Burnaby South.

Before I begin, I would like to mention I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

I was very encouraged when I heard about this motion today and that we were going to talk about a public beneficial ownership registry, which is badly needed in this country. However, upon closer inspection, I see parts of this motion that make it difficult for me to support it. I would like to outline a few of those areas, but I would first like to return to the important measure of the public beneficial ownership registry.

The motion reads that a “proposed...surtax on banks and insurance companies...be expanded to profitable big oil companies and big-box stores” and “to re-invest the billions of dollars recouped from these measures to help...with the cost-of-living crisis”.

First, industry-specific tax policy that targets particular industries is generally a very poor idea. Instead, the government should set the tax rate it wants to apply to companies of all industries appropriately.

Second, tax hikes typically bring in less government revenue than was expected when they were proposed. We recall that in 2016 the newly elected government increased the top marginal tax rate on the wealthiest Canadians, but government revenues were about one-third of what were projected because wealthy Canadians fled Canada with their assets and declared their income in other countries.

Third, industry-specific tax policy will decrease investment in these industries at a time when capital flows and investments in this country are at record lows. Capital flows freely across borders and in particular within the financial services sector. It would be very easy for companies to relocate operations or shift profits outside of Canada.

Additional taxes imposed on these industries will have to come from somewhere. Corporations could reduce dividends that often go to retirees and pension plans across Canada, and many Canadians have investments in these companies. Companies will cut back on hiring plans, perhaps putting jobs at risk. They will potentially cut back on social services and community social responsibility

programs that have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into communities right across this country. The money will have to come from somewhere.

I have to ask the question: Why does the NDP believe that giving the government more money will solve the affordability crisis? If we want to talk about affordability, I propose that the best thing we could do is have an honest conversation about how to increase competition, which will lower prices for Canadian consumers. We should be talking about increasing competition across all major sectors of this country that have been protected for too long, such as financial services, airlines and other federally regulated industries, including telecom.

Just a few months ago, one of the large financial institutions in the United States reduced its ATM and overdraft fees. I believe this is a reflection of a much more intense competition in the market, whereby companies that keep prices high on consumers are punished, and quite rightly so. Oligopolies have less incentive to lower prices for consumers in times of inflation and have an easier ability to raise their prices. Therefore, the answer is not for government to take away those profits, but for consumers to take away those profits through lower prices. We can do that through a radical reshaping of competition policy across these key sectors. For too long we have shielded and protected these industries from true competition. The result has been increased prices for consumers. As we approach the next Bank Act review, I believe all options should be on the table to figure out how we can increase competition and keep prices low for consumers. This includes discussing the widely held rule of allowing foreign competition in our key industries, significantly reducing the regulatory burden and allowing for easier adoption of financial technologies to vastly reduce the cost of serving customers.

Having businesses that have to compete and give better deals to consumer is the most efficient way to ensure we tackle the cost of living crisis. Growing the size of government revenues is not the path to success.

• (1245)

There was discussion in the motion about wealth inequality. It is hard to discuss wealth inequality without acknowledging where some of the responsibility lies. The Bank of Canada has pursued radical, artificial low-interest rate policies for more than a decade. It has caused asset price inflation. Those who own assets like homes have seen significant increases in wealth. In fact, the Bank of Canada is not alone. Most central banks across the developed world have all contributed to significantly worsening wealth inequality.

We also know that the decision by our central bank to ignore inflationary pressures that started one year ago was a deliberate policy choice by the Bank of Canada that risked doing harm to society's most vulnerable. Less than one year ago, the Governor of the Bank of Canada said in a speech:

Inequality has long been a concern of the Bank of Canada. Our focus on inflation control has always recognized that inflation is particularly tough for poorer Canadians and for those on fixed incomes because they are most affected when the purchasing power of cash declines. Years of low and stable inflation haven't made us complacent about the potential threat these groups face. We also know that the most vulnerable employees are hit the hardest by the boom and bust economic cycles that come with high and variable inflation. Keeping inflation low, stable and predictable promotes a stronger and more stable economy, with greater opportunities for everyone.

I am wondering where the central bank is today. For over one year, we have ignored the risk of higher inflation. Who benefits in times of inflation? The federal government has seen record revenue increases because it taxes nominal GDP. The oil price increases have also inflated the government's revenues and the federal government's response is that gas prices have not gone up high enough, so it wants to increase them even more, by almost 3¢ a litre, which would increase government revenues commensurately.

I would like to turn to the public beneficial registry, the part of the opposition motion I wholeheartedly support. As I previously mentioned, I was very pleased to hear this motion would include the public beneficial registry. There is widespread support for this move from all parties in the House. The motion would have a far greater chance of passing had it been restricted to the public beneficial registry. I became interested in money laundering and white-collar crime when I worked for the previous minister of finance Jim Flaherty on his cause to implement a national securities regulatory framework in Canada, in part to make it easier for authorities to secure convictions against white-collar criminals.

If we were just to review conviction statistics, we would assume that Canada has very little, if any, white-collar crime. Our prosecution and conviction rates are not nearly what they should be. We have some bright lights, of course. FINTRAC is lauded as a world leader in terms of identifying suspicious transactions, but somewhere in between the 13 federal agencies responsible for money laundering, we fail to live up to acceptable standards when it comes to prosecutions and convictions. Our system is broken and experts are saying the public beneficial registry is needed. Transparency International and Publish What You Pay have been doing lots of work where the government, quite frankly, has been negligent.

Indeed, the government has committed to bringing forth this registry but not until 2025. With events unfolding in Ukraine and a focus on financial sanctions, it is even more important to speed up

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implementation well before 2025. We all know where we want to go and we must do it sooner. The challenge is that the longer we wait to take this step, it puts subsequent steps later and delays other actions we can take, including unexplained wealth inquiries, which could allow authorities to investigate suspicious new-found wealth, and other badly needed measures.

The public beneficial ownership registry is non-partisan. It is unfortunate that we could not have just focused on that issue today, but I recognize the motion put forward does not focus on that one issue.

• (1250)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the entire speech by my colleague across the way and he seemed to focus on what I believe to be a misconception that has been continually floated around by Conservatives since Reaganism. That is this idea that if taxes are increased on the wealthy, they are somehow going to migrate away to other locations that have lower taxes. It is a very well talked about idea and concept. However, there is very little data that supports that it happens in practicality.

I am wondering if the member can cite any data, any study or any conclusive review that indicates that it actually happens. I am willing to admit I am wrong if I am missing something, but I have never been able to find that when I look for actual data to support that claim.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question, which allows me to point back to his own government's data. In 2016, we raised the top marginal rate on the highest income earners in Canada. What happened? The government told us that we were going to get about \$3 billion in extra taxes. What did we get? We received less than \$1 billion, which is a third of what we were expecting to get. In fact, we had a record number of tax filers leave the country after that was introduced.

I refer the hon. member back to his own government's statistics on this matter.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech. I was very intrigued as I listened to all his comments, and I was glad to hear that he supports the motion put forward by the member for Burnaby South.

The NDP is proposing that, among other things, a certain percentage be taken of banks' and other businesses' excess profits, but one thing that worries me is what they plan to do with that money. They talk about redistributing it to help people deal with the skyrocketing cost of living these days, but how exactly will that be done?

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At the Bloc Québécois, we have been insisting for a long time that health transfers need to be increased. We feel this would be a good opportunity to restore and ensure the physical and mental well-being of Quebeckers and Canadians.

I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about what should be done with the money. How can we help Canadians and Quebeckers cope with the alarming rise in the cost of living?

• (1255)

[English]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, to clarify, while I find some portions of the NDP motion acceptable, I do not think we can support the motion in its entirety as it is currently written. I do not believe that growing the size of government is going to address the cost-of-living crisis.

My submission would be that we need to let consumers take these excess profits from companies in the form of lower prices. In fact, with respect to public transfers and what we would do with money should we have an excess amount of revenue, and by the way government revenues are increasing substantially during inflation, absolutely, we should be giving no-strings-attached additional money to provinces for health care transfers and other social programs.

I think the provinces well understand how to best use that money to support their own jurisdictions. I would support my hon. colleague with that suggestion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just to follow up on my colleague's question, I think it is something Conservatives traditionally have always said, which is to give big business and the ultrarich the tax breaks and they will create the jobs. They believe in the trickle-down theories. I am wondering if my colleague could provide any sort of report or evidence that clearly shows that this is, in fact, the case, because that is not my understanding.

Conservatives continue to espouse that and I do not think it is a fair contribution to the debate, unless they can substantiate their comments.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to answer this question again. We look at the federal budget from 2017 and it talks about how much revenue was gained from the tax increase on the wealthiest Canadians. It was one-third of what the government projected, so it received far less revenue than it thought it would because people left.

If we increase taxes on large businesses that can easily shift profits and operations overseas, we will find that they will leave this country and we will have less investment.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to oppose this motion put forward by the NDP, the content of which borders on the ridiculous: It sounds like it was written by a 4th-grade student.

We certainly agree that we are experiencing a cost of living crisis. There is no mistaking that. In fact, the Conservatives were the first to speak out against the skyrocketing prices Canadians have been and still are facing, whether it is the price of gasoline, groceries or other consumer goods.

However, the NDP seems oblivious to what caused these price increases. In my opinion, the remedies it is proposing will only exacerbate the inflation we are currently seeing. It seems to think that everything is going to be magically solved with this 3% surtax on banks and insurance companies proposed by the Liberals. It wants to extend the surtax to the New Democratic Party's arch-enemies, the oil companies, and to big box stores. I do not know why it is targeting these two economic sectors in particular, since many other economic sectors could be taxed.

The first sector they are targeting provides jobs for hundreds of thousands of Canadians across the country. It makes a significant contribution to Canada's economic development and the social services funded by the huge tax dollars it already pays. I am talking about the oil sector, which fortunately meets a major share of Canada's and the United States' energy needs at a time of multiple conflicts around the world and in an era where alternatives to this energy source will take us years to access.

We find the NDP's decision to target big box stores even more perplexing because they are kind of the saving grace of the middle and working classes. These people and their buying power depend on the impressive supply chains that deliver essential goods across Canada.

I will not sing the praises of major chains because I am from a region where people have to do whatever they can to promote buying local. However, these chains are one option for the things we need to buy. Over the past two years, local markets have been hit hard by COVID-19. That is why chambers of commerce have worked so hard to encourage buying local as a way to help our small businesses, which have had such a tough time, stay alive.

The fact is that big corporate chains play an important role in everyday life by offering products that are as affordable as possible to a clientele that does not necessarily have the financial means or the time to visit small specialty shops.

We are under no illusions. Merchants are very much affected by increases in the cost of living and supply chain challenges. CP Rail employees are on strike at this very moment, for goodness' sake. Once again, we are talking about a major hurdle that will further increase the cost of living. As we know very well, basic commodities like western Canadian wheat and barley will not be able to leave Canada, inevitably preventing them from getting to processors.

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Retail prices are not the only ones that have gone up. Wholesale prices have risen, too. Farmers are having to spend more money on soaring energy costs. Processors are being forced to increase wages to attract and retain staff. Goodness knows I can speak to this from my own personal experience with my business. Trucking companies are struggling with both a driver shortage as well as increases in the cost of fuel, which has risen by 30% in recent months.

Inevitably, merchants also have to pay to get products in a competitive market like ours. It is not always easy to increase prices quickly, since consumers have fortunately learned to use coupons, now that everyone is forced to deal with the skyrocketing price of products in stores. Profit margins are not huge at these major chains, nor at our local stores, who have to recover their loss somewhere.

Prices have also increased considerably at grocery stores. I went grocery shopping on the weekend. I could not get over how much the price of butter, milk or bacon has gone up in a year. It makes no sense. People are worried that these prices will continue to go up since all the other costs in the supply chain are going up as well.

• (1300)

I just listed a host of factors that led to these price increases over the past year.

Does the NDP truly believe that the big box stores will simply accept this new proposed tax and not pass it on to the consumer?

It is absolutely ridiculous to think so. Make no mistake: If there is a government-proposed tax or surtax, even with the billion dollars or more in profits that those companies are making, they will pass it on to the consumer. There is no doubt about it. That is what will happen. At the end of the day, it will still be the consumer and every socioeconomic group who will be paying.

Let me give an example. I live in La Pocatière, or, more specifically, Saint-Roch-des-Aulnaies, which is an hour and fifteen minutes away from Quebec City and major chains like Costco and so on. What kind of compensation would I get with the surtax, compared to someone who lives in Lévis and is a two-minute walk from the major chain in question?

That is what life is like in the regions. Longueuil, for example, is not a big region. My region covers 7,500 square kilometres. When I am travelling around my riding, it can take three hours to get from one end to the other. I do not cycle that. When I go shopping, I obviously try to shop as close to home as possible, but if I want to shop elsewhere, I have to pay for gas, travel and my time. That will obviously have an impact on my total costs.

Why is the NDP not trying to address the root cause of these price increases?

It must know that printing money to finance the Liberal government's astronomical deficits has devalued the Canadian dollar. It is sad to say, but the current government's poor management has weakened our petrodollars, which, in the past, increased along with the price of a barrel of oil. This is definitely not the case at present.

Members will recall that in 2007 and 2011, under the Conservative government, the Canadian dollar was practically on par with

the U.S. dollar, and even briefly pushed above it, in some cases. Not everyone was pleased, especially exporters, but it did at least give consumers some breathing room and let them take advantage of prices that were stable and even dropped for some imported goods, such as food items that we cannot grow because of our climate.

This year, however, we find ourselves with the worst of both worlds: gas prices that continue to increase significantly and the purchasing power of our dollar that is decreasing across the board. We all know the results of the government's record over the past six years, which consists of financing deficits not just with borrowed money, but with printed money as well.

Why does the NDP believe that everything can be solved by increasing taxes?

I cannot wrap my head around that. I cannot understand it. What we need to do is lower taxes and reduce the size of the government to try to save money in a lot of different places.

I would remind the House that, in 2015, the Liberal government said that it would run three small deficits of \$10 billion, but it ran a \$100-billion deficit after three years. Then, the pandemic hit. Imagine what that would mean if a recession were to hit. That would add fuel to the fire. The Liberals are going to make the inflationary spiral we are experiencing in Canada even worse.

Canada must be able to compete in a global economy, and the worst thing that can be done for investment in Canada is to entrust this government with the task of determining which industries are more deserving of preferential tax rates and which ones should be given punitive tax rates. It can take years before a company takes off and becomes profitable. There is still a lot of uncertainty in the business community right now. The government cannot just suddenly decide how a society will pay taxes based on public discontent. We need to maintain a predictable business environment.

Did the NDP think about how many more public servants it will take to administer this new tax and to redistribute the funding? How much will that cost in paperwork alone?

The government is slow enough as it is in delivering its current programs. This would only make things worse. In rural ridings like mine, people are tired of paying more and more taxes. This only increases the cost of travelling long distances to work, to school, to kids' activities or simply to the grocery store.

We say no to any more taxes. The cost of living is high enough as it is.

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• (1305)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member said that the Liberal government has devalued the Canadian dollar. I am wondering by which measure he is making this claim.

If the member is claiming it is based on valuing it against the U.S. dollar, the exchange rate is actually among the highest in the last five years. If he is talking about it in terms of what inflation has done to the Canadian dollar, indeed that inflationary impact has been felt around the entire globe. The value of our dollar still remains significantly higher than other countries'.

Can the member clarify what he meant when he said the Liberal government has devalued the Canadian dollar? By most measures, that is just factually untrue.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, what is true is that the government has spent \$600 billion over the past six years. That is the reality, and no one can ever take that away from them. Unfortunately, they will be stuck with that legacy forever.

That is why everyone is paying, and will continue to pay, more money in interest. It is beyond belief that the Liberals have more than doubled the debt in six years.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. He did a good job outlining the cost of the paperwork that would result from this new tax increase. How many public servants does he think it will take to change a five to an eight on a tax return?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, knowing the federal government, it will surely take thousands of people to change a five to an eight on tax returns.

In reality, the math is not as simple as it sounds. The money collected will have to be redistributed, but how will that be done and who will receive it?

The federal government has grown as big as an elephant. This measure will do nothing to stop it from getting any bigger.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am stunned, unfortunately, and so disappointed by the comments from the hon. member across the way. I do not think that he read the motion and I would hope that he looks at it more closely.

In no way have we ever talked about increasing taxation on people. In no way have we talked about increasing taxes on small businesses. This is specifically for those large organizations and corporations that have made excess record profits. They do not pass those along to people. They already do not pay their fair share in taxes, and people are feeling that on the ground.

Scotiabank had a net profit of \$10.1 billion and it paid its shareholders, but it does not go into the pockets of people. They take that

from people and they take that from their customers. Loblaws had \$1.9 billion. They take that—

• (1310)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the hon. member to ask a question, please.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, my colleague and I have a totally different view of this. I do business. When I sell a product to someone, I try to sell it to them at the best possible price and under the best possible conditions.

Inevitably, the tax or the surtax—I read it—proposed for banks, insurance companies and others will be passed on to consumers. It is completely ridiculous to think otherwise. Does my colleague really believe that these companies will not pass on the surtax to consumers? They will automatically raise their prices by 3%, there is no other way.

The surtax will inevitably be passed on to consumers. The goal, however, is not to tax consumers directly, but the big banks.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have another question for my colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. I am not sure if the member for Kingston and the Islands already asked this.

The Conservatives think the value of our dollar has dropped relative to other countries. Is that just because of inflation? I do not think I understood his response.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, our country's debt has doubled over the past six years. It took 150 years for the debt to reach \$600 billion. Now it is over \$1.2 trillion. The size of Canada's debt is almost inconceivable. We have to pay all that borrowed money back, and that affects the value of our dollar.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying I will be sharing my time with the member for Terrebonne.

On this first day of spring, and I wish you an excellent spring, Madam Speaker, I see that the NDP is dedicating its opposition day to the Liberal Party's election platform. I wonder why. Part of the Liberal platform was to charge this surtax on the profits of the big banks.

I think maybe the NDP no longer has confidence in the Liberals. However, the budget is coming up and I have seen the NDP declare its confidence in the Liberals several times. It even did so when it came time to support the emergency measures, even though several legal experts confirmed that those measures breached the fundamental rights of Canadians. I wonder what has the NDP so concerned on the eve of the budget. The Liberals themselves proposed going after the big banks to the tune of \$10 billion over four years.

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I am thinking that it is probably because the Liberals are in the habit of listening to what Bay Street has to say. What happened when the Liberals suggested imposing this small surtax on banks during the election campaign? The banks made threats. Top bankers and their associations came out and started saying that they would increase consumer fees and eliminate jobs in the banking sector and that this would be catastrophic.

We are all worried that the Liberals will listen to Bay Street bankers. Not so long ago, a former finance minister came from Bay Street. We understand that he is no longer talking to them, but he was so charming that he surely still has friends there.

What surprises me the most is that we are discussing a surtax. The reality is that our banks are undertaxed. Our banks and the businesses that provide all manner of other goods and services are not on an equal footing.

Do we pay the GST on financial services? No, because financial services are generally exempt from pretty much all taxes. However, when we purchase goods and other services, they are taxed, even in the riding of the member who just spoke about buying goods.

Banks offer financial services and are funded in a somewhat underhanded way. We know what happens. When my constituents put their money in the bank, what kind of interest rate do they get? They basically get no return on their investment. However, the bank turns around and lends money at a rate of 22% on credit cards, 15% on lines of credit, 5% on other things and so on. The bank makes money because of this credit spread, but there are never any financial service transactions. That circumvents the principle of value-added taxation, which all other businesses support.

Banks are undertaxed, but there are ways to tax them. Great Britain's Mirrlees Review, a major tax commission led by a Nobel prize recipient, explained that, in order to remedy this problem, banks' cash flow and financial services could be taxed. However, it is surprising that no tax is proposed when it comes time to collect from banks to level the playing field for our companies.

When banks need funding, they turn to the Bank of Canada, which loaned them money at a rate of a quarter of a percentage point during the pandemic. This system is supported by the public trust and the taxpayer. Did banks complain when they were charging higher mortgage rates in a completely inflationary market? The answer is no. Bank lobbyists never told us that people were paying too much.

When banks seek funding by issuing debt obligations or bonds, they pay less than all other companies with similar capitalizations, and this is because banks will not be able to declare bankruptcy. They are too big to fail. People purchasing obligations from banks know very well that if disaster ever strikes a bank and there are problems with the financial system, Canadian and Quebec taxpayers will come to their rescue through the Bank of Canada as the lender of last resort.

This means that banks make more profit because they pay less for their debt certificates. We must stop calling this proposal a surtax. Our banks have access to many tax advantages based on the nature of the services they provide and on the fact that they benefit

from a system that is less competitive than in other places, which means that they make more profit.

• (1315)

For the sake of fairness, justice and efficiency, we need to get an additional contribution, in the absence of more appropriate tax reform.

We hear them talk about the banks. We hear the Conservatives. There is no shortage of arguments against this tax. The first argument is that the banks are owned by large Canadian investment funds and those Canadian investment funds generate dividends. We hear them say that there will be fewer dividends if we tax the banks' profits a little more and that the big investment funds will pay, except that during the pandemic, profits were higher than normal. There were excess profits. No investment fund manager in Canada, whether they work for the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan or private funds, had anticipated those returns and the difference in performance from companies whose security is not guaranteed by the Government of Canada. We are in a situation where, if we tax a portion of excess profits, we are not even getting back to the profits already anticipated by all Canadian investment fund managers. This is therefore a bad argument.

Now we are being told this will affect housing prices. That is both practically and theoretically untrue. Why? The reason is that our banks structure their costs in such a way as to maximize profit. They have revenue and expenses, and their goal is to achieve the biggest gap between the two. That is called profit.

However, whether the government taxes that profit at 15% or 18%, the bank's recipe is exactly the same. It will still maximize profit, the same as before. Higher tax rates will make absolutely no difference. In fact, this approach to taxing banks' excessive profits is one of the most effective and one of the least likely to create distortion and to be passed on to consumers.

I have been listening to my Conservative colleagues. It almost sounds like they are talking about a sales tax. Taxes vary in the type of damage they can do, in their economic impact. This particular tax is justified and equitable.

The Bloc Québécois has already put a similar idea forward. We proposed a retroactive tax because the situation with excessive bank profits was unusual. Our thinking was that, in a full-blown pandemic, what people need is health care and health transfers. Governments are under extreme pressure, and never before have we been in such dire need of government support. That is exactly why we suggested it.

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When I meet people in my riding, people who have lived through two years of a pandemic, and the hospitals are cutting staff, when the Quebec government is asking for transfers and the nine other provinces and the territories agree but Ottawa turns a deaf ear, I figure that at some point we will have to find a way to finance these services. Now the federal government has a way.

I am tired of hearing that the banks will pass on the costs to consumers, and so on. What we are proposing is justice. Banks are undertaxed and are legally avoiding paying tax. Since the 2006 crisis, taxes on corporate profits have been significantly and systematically reduced for all businesses. We are now at a crossroads where we must reflect on this and decide whether all businesses should be treated equally or banks should be taxed differently.

Are banks really different? Obviously, the answer is yes. Should we find other ways of taxing financial products and the credit spread? The answer is yes.

Let us think about this logically. The government is under pressure. It had to increase service delivery. It has to increase health transfers, listen to the provinces and find new sources of revenue. It is not surprising that the Conservatives and some of my colleagues are against this. They are against everything.

The only way they understand how to finance any service is through oil, oil, and more oil. However, because of their oil, before the last increase in the price of a barrel, the government of Alberta projected a \$500-million deficit. It is obvious to me that taxes need to be fair and equitable. This is a motion that, in principle, supports this idea, and that is why I will vote in favour.

• (1320)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague and friend across the way, and I think there is some discontent within the coalition of the Bloc and the Conservative Party.

At the end of the day, we hear a lot about banks, as we should. We want to ensure that everyone pays their fair share. However, one of the things that is important to recognize when we talk about banks is it is not one person who owns, for example, the Bank of Montreal. It is not the super wealthy who own our banks. It is often union members, pension funds and so forth, and they too are dependent on these dividends.

I would just ask the member to follow up his comments with the best way to tax so it is most effective and not hurting the consumer. Could he provide further thoughts on that?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North knows how much I admire him.

I find it fascinating that the Liberals are forming a coalition government with the NDP and are now claiming that there is a coalition of the opposition. Perhaps they are a bit embarrassed.

That being said, I have mentioned this before. It is true that large corporations pay out dividends. It is true for banks, which must ob-

serve minimum Canadian ownership thresholds. It is also true that profits have exceeded all projections. What the Bloc Québécois is asking is to consider the projections. No investment fund manager saw this coming.

During the election campaign, the Bloc Québécois suggested seizing some of these profits, because they have nothing to do with our banks' business acumen. They are the result of circumstances, not the banks' actions. We should take some of these profits. It would be both effective and fair.

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do have to make a comment at the beginning on the idea of a coalition. I mean, words have to mean something. The last time I checked, there were not any New Democrats in the cabinet meeting, and the last time I looked at the voting records, all three of the opposition parties voted with the Liberals from time to time in roughly equal proportions.

However, I want to thank the member for Mirabel for pointing out the absurdity of the Conservatives' arguments. I think he must agree with me that the Conservatives are really saying that, since taxes to businesses are always passed on to consumers, we should never tax businesses. Is that not where the Conservatives' arguments are really leading today?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I have said this before.

Taxing different businesses fairly means subjecting them to similar tax treatment. Right now, banks are not subject to similar tax treatment. That is what we need to change in the field of banking services.

Some Conservatives could use a course in economics, and I am prepared to give one in the lobby. Not all taxes are passed directly on to consumers. It depends on the consumers' reaction and the size of the tax base to which the tax is applied. It is highly unlikely that this would happen with the tax on profits, much more unlikely than with other types of tax, such as consumption taxes.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the speech given by my colleague from Mirabel. We can always count on him to identify the limitations of the market in a crisis.

He would make the founding fathers of political economy proud, because they emphasized the importance of redistribution. My colleague is offering to teach a course in economics, so I suggest that he also offer a course in economic history.

Historically, whenever there was a crisis, governments always opted for a policy of redistribution through taxes.

Can my colleague tell me whether this is true or false, and provide more details?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, there are two things I want to say.

That is what happened in wartime, during World War II, when the debt ratio increased. The government collected exceptional contributions from the big banks and corporations, far more than is being asked for today. That allowed us to get through very difficult times.

Now, my colleagues need to understand that, by its very nature, the Canadian banking system is less competitive than other countries' systems. Profits are higher than elsewhere, and the system is also more stable. We need to be able to take advantage of this stability when we need it the most. That time is now.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank my esteemed colleague, the hon. member for Mirabel, for sharing his time with me.

We are here to debate the motion put forward by the hon. member for Burnaby South, highlighting several wealth gap issues that have been exacerbated by current inflation. Let me remind the House that, during the last election campaign, this government promised to levy a 3% surtax on the profits of banks and insurance companies.

We agree with this measure. Let me also remind the House that, while the public finances recorded colossal deficits and the pandemic forced SMEs out of business, several sectors of the economy besides banks and insurers became richer. Today's motion seeks to leverage the huge profits that certain companies earned in spite of the crisis. Their support will be essential.

We are currently experiencing a period of high inflation. In December, the consumer price index rose by 4.8% on a year-over-year basis. This major acceleration of inflation significantly affects the purchasing power of Canadians and Quebecers. The price of groceries rose by 5.7%, and the price of housing grew by 9.3% compared with December 2020. The simple fact is that inflation is affecting almost all goods. That in turn is affecting both individuals and businesses.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has had a significant impact on the price of energy. Even if the price of gasoline does go back down eventually, its current volatility and unpredictability are enough to worry Quebecers. We were used to countering inflation by addressing surges in demand, but we are now also facing problems with supply, including increasing pressure on labour and energy costs.

That being said, it is important to implement measures to protect the general public, especially the most vulnerable members of our society, from price increases. Let us look specifically at who could be doing more in this situation. In the past 12 months, several financial groups have earned record profits. National Bank, Laurentian Bank, Royal Bank of Canada, Bank of Montreal, TD Bank, Scotiabank, CIBC and Mouvement Desjardins collectively earned \$60.68 billion in profits. That is 39% or approximately \$17 billion more than the previous year, which was also a pandemic year.

The year 2020 was a good year for some businesses, according to an analysis of the profits of the largest Canadian businesses published at the end of last year. According to Canadians for Tax Fairness, 111 publicly traded companies headquartered in Canada made

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profits of at least \$100 million in the first nine months of the year, and 34 of them posted record profits. The top profit-maker was TC Energy, formerly TransCanada, whose Keystone project has been in the news for years. The company made \$3.5 billion in profit on \$9.7 billion in sales in the first three quarters, for a profit margin of 35.6%.

This stands in stark contrast to what has been happening with our SMEs. Many went into debt to get through the pandemic, wagering that the economy would eventually get back to normal. Even if the economy recovers, they will still be in debt. There is a reason the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that one in four SMEs could close down permanently in 2022 because they went into debt during previous waves. Small business confidence in Canada and Quebec remained especially low in January because of supply issues, the health restrictions and labour shortages.

The Bloc Québécois agrees with the idea of implementing a tax on profits over \$1 billion for banks and insurance companies, as well as oil companies and big box stores. The tax should be used for assistance programs, in particular for SMEs.

Such significant measures require an explanation. They are aimed at increasing the government's revenues to help it deal with the deficit and assist struggling SMEs. These measures would directly help those who are hardest hit by inflation. I can already hear our Conservative friends say that taxing corporate profits makes it more difficult for those that keep the economy rolling to reinvest. However, they are well aware that the large profits made by these companies mean that they already have considerable reinvestment power.

● (1330)

In the final analysis, we would be taking 18 cents out of every dollar of the profit made by billionaire companies. They would still have a bit of a margin left.

In the case of oil companies, we need to make sure that the plan includes programs aimed at reinvesting in the urgently needed energy transition. If we collect these funds, it will have to be to better guide the investments of corporations that have a significant societal impact.

The purpose of taxes is to take a small portion of the surplus of wealth-creating businesses to correct market failures and thus redistribute wealth, while redirecting the funds with a plan and coherent vision aimed at improving Canadians' well-being. Let us keep in mind that we are talking about 3% for businesses that make more than \$1 billion in profits. We are in the middle of a climate crisis and economic tensions that often require state intervention to redistribute wealth.

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In short, we support the spirit of today's motion. The Bloc Québécois will support any measure that effectively benefits the most vulnerable. We cannot just stand idly by while workers and businesses struggle with the effects of the pandemic.

The objective of the proposed surtax is to get revenues from those who benefitted from the crisis to help those who suffered from it. That is why governments exist. We know that the extremely costly measures taken during the pandemic increased the deficit. Now it is time to take stock, and we must correct the failures of a market we know to be imperfect, especially when it is faced with the uncertainty of a pandemic.

What is our purpose as members of Parliament in these critical times if not to propose and support measures aimed at protecting the most vulnerable and promoting a vision whose only goal is the well-being of society?

• (1335)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will pick up on the member's last point.

Back in 2015 when we had the federal election, we had made it very clear that the priority of the government was going to be Canada's middle class and those working hard to become a part of it. One of our first initiatives was to put a special tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%, and then to take that money and give the middle class a tax break. I say that because when I look at the resolution, I think Canadians and all of us expect that we have an obligation to pay taxes. The issue is a sense of fairness, and that is what governments, whether at the national or provincial level, need to strive for.

Can the member provide her thoughts in regard to why it is so important that governments at different levels recognize tax fairness?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Equity and social justice are extremely important to the Bloc Québécois. In this particular case, we are talking about a 3% surtax, that is, from 15% to 18%, for companies that already have profits over \$1 billion, so it amounts to a redistribution.

Of course, every well-intentioned parliamentarian in this place should want those profits to be shared with our most vulnerable citizens.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for an extraordinary speech, one that displays a progressive view of politics that I think is refreshing to be heard in this chamber.

It is funny. Anybody who understands history knows that in the 1950s and 1960s in this country we had a period of unprecedented growth and we had tax rates that were far fairer. Of course, then we had the 1980s and the right-wing neo-Conservative revolution with the absurd contention that the best way to help poor people is to cut

taxes on the rich, and all of that has resulted in is incredible inequality in this country.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has any comment on the failed experiment of neo-Conservative economics. Does she agree with the NDP that a fair tax system is a key way to address wealth inequality in Canada?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his kind words and his very pertinent question.

Indeed, the prosperity gap has only increased over the last few decades, as economists like Thomas Piketty have pointed out. These prosperity gaps are getting wider and wider. The majority of the population is feeling a growing sense of injustice, which is not being addressed. That is why a fair tax system is needed. I absolutely agree with the NDP on this.

I do want to stress, however, that taxation can also be a question of incentives, and we have to be careful when taxing certain companies that these incentives do not push companies to engage in tax avoidance, which is unfortunately legal, to divest or to simply leave the country.

How taxes are collected remains important. However, in this case, as my hon. colleague from Mirabel pointed out, this tax will not be passed on to consumers. It will only redistribute wealth.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me express my admiration for my colleagues from Mirabel and Terrebonne, who spoke so incredibly eloquently with knowledge of their respective topics. It is often said that the Bloc does nothing but block, but that is just not true. We bring solutions, ideas and depth to the debates. I think that my colleagues proved that in their speeches.

There is something I would like someone to explain to me. If this motion were adopted and this measure put in place and we effectively took 3% to create a fund to help people deal with the rising cost of living, where would we put that money? What would take priority?

How do we manage this fund to ensure that the government does not use it to do God knows what? I would like my colleague's thoughts on that.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. This gives me the chance to say a bit more about the issues of economic development and the redistribution of wealth.

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In this time of climate crisis and economic tensions, that money must first be used for an energy transition. Then it must be used to help businesses that create a tremendous amount of value but that are vulnerable during this pandemic period. There are major supply problems, including with respect to the labour shortage and the supply chain, and we must absolutely help wealth-creating businesses that do not have the luxury of making more than \$1 billion in profits. We must also help with the energy transition by redirecting investments in oil companies, in particular, to a meaningful investment that is good for society in general.

• (1340)

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The cost of food is going up. The cost of gas is going up. The cost of housing has been skyrocketing for years, and it continues to shoot up. Canadians are feeling the impacts. They are struggling to make ends meet and to put food on the table, struggling to pay rent and struggling just to afford the basics.

While Canadians are struggling, big corporations are making record profits. In my riding of Victoria, seniors on fixed incomes are coming to me saying that the rising costs mean they are having to choose between paying for food and paying for medication. Families who have been surviving paycheque to paycheque have told me they are going into debt just to get by. Many young people are barely scraping by as it is. Most have completely given up on the idea of ever owning a home and are just worried about how they are going to pay rent.

I sat down with the James Bay Community Project a few weeks ago. They are an amazing non-profit community organization. They help seniors, youth and families by providing community support and volunteer services.

They spoke to me about the impact that the pandemic has had on low-income folks in our community, especially in food insecurity for seniors. The rising cost of living impacts everyone, but it especially impacts the most vulnerable. While people in my community and people across Canada are struggling, the ultra-rich are making more money than ever, raking in record profits and accumulating even more wealth.

Wealth inequality is reaching levels that we have not seen in generations. The past year broke records when it came to creating new billionaires. On average, a new billionaire was created every day—every single day. The number of billionaires on the Forbes annual list of the world's wealthiest exploded to unprecedented levels. The wealth of billionaires has risen more in the past two years during this pandemic than it has in the past 14 years. This is the biggest surge in billionaire wealth since we started keeping records, and a staggering 90% of the Canadian billionaires are richer than they were one year ago.

While everyday Canadians are falling farther and farther behind, worried about the cost of food and worried about the cost of rent, the super-rich are getting even richer. This kind of extreme inequality is outrageous in and of itself.

I spoke to a single mom who told me about how the rising cost of gas, diapers and food has eaten into her budget and how she is scrambling this year, on the first of every month, calling friends and trying to figure out how she is going to make rent, while at the same time, in the same year, the wealthiest shareholders and corporations, the same corporations that are raising prices, are raking in billions. That is outrageous. The members in this chamber should be outraged.

It is outrageous that while families are struggling to pay for groceries, the billionaire Weston family is raking in profits. They own Loblaws, the Real Canadian Superstore and Shoppers Drug Mart. Loblaws has a net profit of more than a billion dollars. As the price of groceries continues to increase, Loblaws paid out half a billion dollars in dividends to their shareholders. Families are struggling to pay for gas, but Suncor made over \$4 billion. Gas prices continue to rise, and they paid out \$3.9 billion to their shareholders. Oil companies are making record profits off the backs of Canadians, while Canadians are paying hundreds of dollars more at the pump. At the same time, these oil companies are receiving billions in fossil fuel subsidies from the Liberal government.

It is outrageous that the government continues to hand out public money to profitable oil companies, companies that are fuelling the climate crisis. The climate crisis is already threatening everything that we value, with devastating climate fires, extreme flooding and extreme heat.

• (1345)

The Arctic poles are currently experiencing unprecedented heat waves. This is causing alarm among climate scientists. This is a dire warning of a faster and more abrupt climate breakdown. How many more dire warnings do we need? How many more disasters? We are running out of time to stop the worst and irreversible impacts of the climate crisis.

This is a climate emergency, and the government is not acting like it, continuing to pay big oil to pollute while it gouges Canadians at the pump. That is outrageous. Families are struggling to make mortgage and loan payments while Scotiabank had a net profit of over \$10 billion. It had the gall to increase fees for customers while paying out \$4.3 billion in dividends to its shareholders. That is outrageous.

The economic impacts of the pandemic hit Canadians hard. As families, seniors and young people have struggled with the cost of living, corporations that have been raising prices are making wind-fall profits. This kind of extreme inequality is outrageous. However, extreme inequality is not only outrageous; it leads to worse health and social outcomes and has a disproportionate impact on women and racialized folks. It also puts a drag on economic growth.

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Importantly, and this is probably the most important thing I am going to say today, this kind of extreme inequality is not inevitable. It is not a fact of life. It is a choice by decision-makers, by elected officials, by the government. It is a choice to protect the profits of the wealthiest while making the vast majority suffer the consequences. Because of choices made by the government, the ultrarich can continue to protect their wealth using a financial system with very little transparency. Because of choices made by the government, the wealthiest are allowed to exploit this crisis for their own profit. They benefit from excess corporate profits while everyday Canadians get gouged by inflation.

Because of choices of the government, money laundering and tax evasion are rampant in Canada, driving up the cost of housing. There is even a name for it: “snow washing”. It refers to how easy it is in Canada to launder money and evade taxes. We have some of the weakest corporate transparency laws in the world. This allows billions to be laundered, and it has been devastating our real estate market. It has led to an overvaluing of the average price of residential properties. On average, it impacts homes in my riding of Victoria by \$45,000 to \$90,000. This is why we need a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry.

Housing, grocery and gas prices are the rising costs that people are dealing with every day, so today, members of the House have a choice. Are we going to make big banks, big box stores and big oil companies pay their fair share? Are we going to help the people who are struggling with the cost of living? Are we going to get tough on money laundering and tax evasion?

The Liberal government has the choice today to stop protecting excess corporate profits and to start helping people with the cost of living. One important step would be fulfilling their campaign promise to implement a 3% surtax on banks and insurance companies with net profits of over \$1 billion, and extend the surtax to oil companies and large grocery chains. It is also critical to establish a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry to combat tax evasion and money laundering by the wealthy. Then, let us choose to use the tax revenue from the surtax to fund things that will actually help people who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Let us increase the Canada child benefit, the GIS and GST rebates, and build affordable housing. Fair taxation is a key tool for governments to address wealth inequality, provide key public services and increase supports that curb inequality.

• (1350)

When members of the House vote on this motion—

The Deputy Speaker: It is time for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Victoria, a fellow British Columbian, for her intervention. I know she feels strongly about these issues.

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan invests heavily in financials, with 15% or 16% of its assets there. Many widows and orphans get what they get back from banking stocks. By the same token, we have the Liberals' crazy idea, which the NDP is endorsing, of suddenly raising corporate taxes on specific banks and deciding which

ones will be in and which ones will be out. However, the fact is that most banks will just raise user fees a slight amount for everyone they serve rather than lose the business of wealthy people who the NDP apparently wants to target.

How does the member square that circle? I am certainly supportive of the idea of a beneficial ownership registry. I wish the government would get that registry up and started properly.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, Scotiabank made over \$10 billion and is handing out billions to its shareholders. It can afford a 3% surtax. We know this, and we need to be investing that money into things that will actually help people who are struggling with the cost of living. When the member puts his vote down for this motion, I hope he understands that he has a choice: Is he going to put corporate profits first, or is he going to put people in my riding, in his riding, across British Columbia and across Canada first?

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's debate was very interesting and she did not get a chance to finish, so I would like to give her my one minute to let her conclude her remarks.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his generosity.

When members of the House vote on this motion they have a choice. Are they going to put corporate profits first, or are they going to protect the people who are struggling with the cost of living? I do not know who still needs to hear this, but extreme wealth inequality is a choice made by governments. It is time to make different choices.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been debating for a few hours already, and we always come back to the same thing.

We understand very well that banks are being asked to contribute and that the 3% surtax is necessary for a redistribution of wealth.

Earlier, I was asking my NDP colleague whether he would vote in favour of any Bloc Québécois measures to address the problems we have experienced and are now experiencing.

What I understand from my colleague's comments is that when the Bloc Québécois makes proposals that are directly related to the collective well-being, the NDP will support them.

• (1355)

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to hear that the member is in favour of ensuring that we have a tax on the biggest corporations so that we can invest in the things that matter most: helping our community members who are struggling with the cost of living and investing in climate solutions. I will always work across party lines with members from the Bloc and members from any party to ensure that we put people over corporate profits.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I come to members today from the traditional territories of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

Jocelyn is a constituent in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. She is the proud mother of two young children, ages three and four. She holds a university education and a strong desire to remain engaged and connected in our community. Unfortunately, Jocelyn was in multiple accidents, leaving her permanently disabled and unable to work. Even though she is currently getting a “deal” on her unaffordable and overpriced rental, she is left with just \$500 a month, after her rent is paid, to meet her family's needs. Jocelyn said to me that all she is looking for is the certainty that her children will have food on the table and a place to call home.

In addition to Jocelyn being unable to make ends meet, she is unable to afford the medications prescribed by her doctor to help her with the physical symptoms from her accidents. It would cost \$100 a month for the medications that could significantly improve her quality of life. For Jocelyn, \$100 a month is well outside her means with her limited income. Instead, she had to find medication that was less costly and unfortunately also less effective at alleviating her symptoms. This is a vicious cycle that too many Canadians find themselves in. When Jocelyn recently told me about her experience, she described it as systemic violence, one where most Canadians are living paycheque to paycheque and are stuck in a vicious cycle of poverty. While many people struggle in the system, our richest and largest corporations earn record profits.

As we continue to debate this motion today, I hope members of the House will keep Jocelyn and others like her in mind. We must do better to make sure that Canadians have access to the basic supports they need. That starts with ensuring that everyone is paying their fair share. In our country, where we praise ourselves for taking care of each other and for our high quality of life, how is it that we are seeing so many like Jocelyn? Despite hard work and perseverance, they are still unable to have the basics: a home, food and medications. These are not luxuries; these are basic human rights.

Too many in my riding are struggling to make ends meet, and the pandemic has only amplified a crisis that was growing for years. The last Nanaimo Foundation's Vital Signs report from 2019, for example, showed a worrisome trend of an increase in the number of seniors struggling to make ends meet. We know this trend has only increased throughout the pandemic. We are seeing more seniors becoming homeless or on the edge of homelessness, unable to pay their bills or keep food in their fridges. It is heartbreaking to see seniors, who have worked tirelessly to age with dignity, be left with little hope of even having the basics like a place to call home.

Statements by Members

Child poverty rates also continue to increase in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. Children are being left to suffer while large, wealthy corporations make more than ever. This is shameful. I ask my colleagues to take a moment to consider not only the immediate consequences, but the long-term implications of the increasing number of children being left to struggle in poverty. We are showing our children through our actions how to treat one another.

The Liberals and Conservatives tell Canadians that they are looking out for them, but we have seen countless times that this is only true if it does not cut into the profits of their corporate friends. By supporting this motion, they can show that they are ready to live up to their promises to Canadians. Today, they can help make sure that companies that have been squeezing Canadians at the pumps or at the grocery stores are supporting the public services people need.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

NOWRUZ

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, on March 20, my family and I joined all who celebrate the joyous occasion of Nowruz, also known as the Persian new year, in gathering around our haft-seen table.

As we marked the beginning of the spring by basking in the fresh smell of *sabzeh* and *sonbol* and the sweet aroma of *samanu*, and enjoying the delicious traditional meal of *sabzi polo mahi*, I began to reflect on how far we have come since Nowruz 2020. Since then, we have continued to stand against the darkness brought by COVID-19 and other challenges. Despite the current global threats, we have to continue to try to welcome the light.

To my fellow Persians and all cultural communities who celebrate Nowruz in Richmond Hill, in Canada and across the globe, I wish a happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous new year.

[Member spoke in Farsi]

[English]

*Statements by Members***INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS**

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the first day of spring, a fitting day to mark as International Day of Forests. Forests sustain our lives in many ways. Around the world, 1.6 billion people depend directly on forests for food, shelter, energy, medicines and income.

Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is home to Algonquin Park. While Group of Seven artists Tom Thomson and A.Y. Jackson have immortalized the beauty of the park trees, we now have Wild Women, painters of the wilderness, Kathy Haycock, Joyce Burkholder and Linda Sorensen.

Keeping our forests healthy are families of loggers, such as the Blaskies, Pecarskis, and Enrichts. Sawmill families, including the Bells, Gulicks, Holkums, Heidemans, McRaes, Pastways, and Shaws, have given local residents a place to work for generations. Pembroke MDF makes the forestry residuals into cupboards and generates electricity.

The rolling hills of the upper Ottawa Valley peak in brilliance in the fall. Whenever people's travels bring them to our forests, the people of the valley will welcome them.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year in March, we celebrate women's contributions to making Canada and the world better. For International Women's Day this year, I had the opportunity to join a panel at Brampton city hall with Constable Joy Brown from the Peel Regional Police and Tricia Sampson from the Elizabeth Fry Society for a special panel where we discussed how to uplift women and break down the barriers they face.

Our government is working to reduce violence against women, as well as working on other initiatives to help women, such as expanding affordable child care, pay equity and GBA+ decision-making. The theme this year is "Women Inspiring Women." Every day, I am proud of my mother and my twin daughters, as they are my personal inspirations.

I am also proud of all the strong women in Brampton and throughout Canada who break down barriers for women everywhere, advancing equality at home and around the world. When women and girls succeed, we all do.

* * *

*[Translation]***NATIONAL FRANCOPHONIE WEEK**

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, established in 1988 by the OIF, the International Day of La Francophonie provides an opportunity for the 88 member states to celebrate their common bond, the French language.

Trois-Rivières has been celebrating the Francophonie for 10 years thanks to the involvement and dedication of members of the Journées internationales de la Francophonie committee. This committee includes a dozen or so stakeholders and organizations

from various sectors, including the educational, teaching, cultural and community sectors.

Every year, about twenty activities are organized, including a texted dictation, presentations, a gala, an evening of poetry, author visits to schools and an international French theatre festival. This year's activities will be held from March 17 to 27, and the theme centres on showing pride where the Francophonie's roots run deep. I extend a personal invitation to everyone in Trois-Rivières to participate in the activities.

I will conclude by congratulating committee chair Sylvain Benoit from UQTR and all of the committee members for their unwavering commitment to the Francophonie. I wish everyone a good National Francophonie Week.

* * *

NOWRUZ

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, more than 300 million people around the world are celebrating Nowruz.

[English]

Nowruz, which means "new day", celebrates the Persian new year and the arrival of spring. During this time, friends and families sit around the haft-seen table and exchange gifts, share food, and reflect on the year that has been and the year to come. Without a doubt, the past two years have been quite challenging, but Nowruz and spring present a beautiful time for renewal and new beginnings.

Nowruz also gives us an opportunity to mark the contributions of communities that celebrate this day. Whether they are the Persian, Afghan or Kurdish communities, whether they are Ismaili, Bahá'í or Zoroastrian, or whether it is through the Iranian Cultural Society of West Island, or through appreciating the Afghan cuisine of Aryana Restaurant on Sources Boulevard in Pierrefonds, we thank them for their contributions to our community and celebrate them.

● (1405)

To all marking Nowruz in Pierrefonds—Dollard and beyond, I wish them a happy Nowruz and better days ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: I know everybody is really happy to see each other after being away for a couple of weeks, but it is getting a little noisy, and we want to hear these great statements.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Statements by Members

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is being fuelled by European dependence on Russian energy. As Europe and much of the world searches for alternatives, Canada should be part of the solution. The only thing standing in the way is the Liberal government and its war on Canadian energy. In cancelling pipelines, killing LNG projects and driving away hundreds of billions of dollars of investment, the Liberal government's record is so disastrous that last year Canada imported \$400 million of Russian oil, \$400 million to fuel Putin's war machine.

As a result of the Liberals' war on Canadian energy, Canada is weaker, Putin is stronger and the world is less safe.

* * *

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, March 21, marks World Down Syndrome Day. This day was created to raise public awareness, promote inclusivity, encourage advocacy and support the well-being of those living with Down syndrome.

People with Down syndrome have an inherent right to be accepted and included as valued and equal members of our communities. This date was chosen because it is the 21st day of the third month, which signifies the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome, which causes Down syndrome.

I want to recognize organizations in my riding of Sudbury, such as the Down Syndrome Association of Sudbury, L'Arche Sudbury, Christian Horizons and Community Living Greater Sudbury, that work extensively to amplify the voices of and empower individuals living with Down syndrome.

Together we can work to create inclusive communities around the world that welcome and support individuals with Down syndrome.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Canada's Prairies, they are known as kokum scarves. In the Yukon, we call them granny scarves. In a tribute to the historic friendship between first peoples and early Ukrainian settlers, indigenous men and women across Canada are wearing these colourful scarves to show support for Ukrainians devastated by this war.

The Yukon boasts the fourth largest per capita population of Ukrainian Canadians. When Yukon first nations leaders met recently with representatives of the Ukrainian community to offer their support, they were presented with symbolic granny scarves. At a time when first nations and Yukoners themselves are responding to the simultaneous tragedies of the opioid crisis, residential school trauma and the pandemic, they are nevertheless coming forward to show support for Ukraine.

Putin's war in Ukraine has surely broken the hearts of all Canadians, but we can take solace in these stories of support and solidarity. As Yukoners open their hearts and homes and pledge their sup-

port to Ukrainians, our indigenous communities are once again lighting the way to peace and reconciliation.

Slava Ukraini.

* * *

NOWRUZ

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish Canadians of Kurdish, Persian and Central Asian heritage a very happy Nowruz as this week marks the start of their new year.

Nowruz is an ancient new year celebration adopted by many Central Asian peoples. For Kurds, this new year will be 2722, and the word "Nowruz" literally means a new year, marking the first day of spring. It is celebrated through a variety of traditions. The Kurds gather in the countryside to light bonfires, which represent passing from the darkness of the previous year into the light of the next. Fire is considered a symbol of triumph in Kurdish mythology. In Kurdistan, Kurds will light fires and fireworks, and they will be heading to the mountains of Akre, considered the home of the celebration of Nowruz.

Persians set the haft-seen table and exchange gifts. Other Central Asians also celebrate by planting trees and attending festivities marking the same occasion. On the 13th day after Nowruz, Kurds will go out for a picnic for Sizdah Bedar, celebrated in the new year with family and friends.

To all of my Kurdish friends in Canada, I wish them *Newroz piroz bet*.

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● (1410)

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians should be able to live a true and authentic life, free from violence and discrimination, no matter who they are, where they live or how they appear. Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We know that the elimination of racial discrimination is not confined to 24 hours on March 21, but is required 24-7, 365 days a year.

Nelson Mandela shared the following truth many years ago, which I would like to highlight today. He said, "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of [their] skin, [their] background, or [their] religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

Let us keep raising our voices, bringing down the towers of oppression, and keep doing the right thing for generations of the past, present and future.

*Statements by Members***LEONARD JOSEPH GUSTAFSON**

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Leonard Joseph Gustafson, a former member of Parliament, parliamentary secretary to then prime minister Mulroney, and a senator, who passed away last Friday. Len was born in, and loved, Macoun, Saskatchewan. Throughout his life he was many things, including a contractor, a businessman, an MP, a senator and, most importantly, a farmer.

The great orator, Paul Harvey, must have been thinking of Len when he wrote his famous speech “So God Made a Farmer”. In a quote from the speech, God says he needs, “‘somebody...who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, then, pain'n from 'tractor back,' put in another seventy-two hours.’ So God made a farmer.”

Our thoughts and prayers are with Len's loving wife, Alice; their children Terry, Jerry, Ben and Bona Jean; their children's spouses; and their many grandchildren. Len is now with his son Jerry, looking down on all of us and sending their blessings for a bountiful harvest season.

I send my thanks to Len for his service to the people of Souris—Moose Mountain and to Canada. His legacy will not be forgotten.

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COVID-19 MANDATES

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the end of mask mandates in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Quebec has already ended their vaccine passport requirements. As of March, P.E.I. no longer requires proof of vaccination. Saskatchewan has not had vaccine mandates since February 14, the same day that New Brunswick ended all COVID-19 restrictions, and Alberta ended its mandates back on February 8.

Across the country, provinces are following the science and they are removing their restrictions. The government must follow suit. Vaccine mandates have cost Canadians their jobs, have restricted travel and are hurting our tourism sector here at home.

Canadians have done their part to fight COVID-19. They have done their part to get through this pandemic. It is time that they get their lives back. The federal government must put an end to all pandemic restrictions that are in its jurisdiction.

* * *

NOWRUZ

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise today to join other colleagues to wish everyone who celebrated Nowruz a happy new year. Yesterday, thousands of residents in my riding of Willowdale and, indeed, hundreds of thousands of Canadians, joined 300 million individuals around the world, to usher in Nowruz. A 3,000-year tradition, Nowruz is a festive holiday celebrated by Persians, Afghans, Turks, Kurds, Bahá'í, Ismailis, Zoroastrians and many more communities.

It was a pleasure for me to join others around the haft-seen table to mark the spring equinox and the promise of new beginnings. Nowruz celebrates renewal, optimism and light, all essential qualities that are necessary at a time like this.

May this festival of renewal bring hope to a world that needs it like never before by ushering a new year free from hardship, the pandemic and war. To everyone celebrating,

*[Member spoke in Farsi]**[English]*

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I join all New Democrats in marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As a Métis person, I know first-hand how the tolerant image that Canada projects on the world stage can hide ugly realities, racism and discrimination.

Too often, this shiny image does not match the reality that indigenous peoples, Black Canadians, Asian Canadians, Muslim Canadians and other racialized people, both in my riding of Edmonton Griesbach and across the country, face every single day. Canada must wake up to the reality that we have a serious and growing problem with white supremacy and hatred. We saw another reminder of how serious this problem is just days ago when a Mississauga mosque was violently attacked in an act of islamophobic hate.

Words of solidarity and symbolic gestures are not enough to stop the ongoing violence and dismantle the systemic racism that continues to thrive in Canada today. We need real solutions.

● (1415)

The Deputy Speaker: I do want to remind everyone that we are almost at QP. I know that is what everybody is waiting for, but we are getting a little noisy. I want to make sure we can listen to the great statements we have been having.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

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QUEBEC SOCIAL WORKERS' WEEK

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, Quebec is recognizing the professional contribution of social workers.

Social workers put people first. They make it easier to access basic social services. They make the voices of the most vulnerable and overlooked members of our society heard. They innovate and make lasting improvements to society. They are true agents of change.

We see what social work is really all about through the independent community organizations that perform miracles on a daily basis, through every individual citizen who moves one step closer to realizing their full potential, and through the roughly 15,500 social workers who lead, organize and participate in the development of their communities. Every day, these professionals guide us toward a more welcoming, warm, respectful and fair society. I am proud to be a social worker.

I wish all of my dear colleagues a happy social workers' week.

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[English]

VANDERHOOF RCMP

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 25, 2021, at 12 noon, a white Ford F-350 pulled up to a small RCMP detachment in my community of Vanderhoof, British Columbia. Seconds later, the driver started shooting, narrowly missing the officers and civilians inside. He circled the building and continued shooting. Minutes felt like hours. Leaving behind rounds and bullet-ridden vehicles, the suspect fled into the community. It is a miracle that no one was injured or killed.

For the first time, the B.C. Emergency Alerting System was activated, and the community was locked down within minutes. Simply put, the suspect was hunting police officers. He fired over 20 rounds alone into the detachment. Within an hour, the suspect was taken down without incident. When asked to recount the events of this day, many of the officers' voices still crack with emotion. They are still hurting. One shared with me that he thought this was the day that he was going to die.

On behalf of the residents of Cariboo—Prince George and all Canadians, I would like to express our appreciation and our gratitude. These brave men and women put the safety of their community above their own. They ran towards danger. They ran towards gunfire. They are somebody's mothers, daughters, sisters, fathers and brothers. They are true heroes, and I ask that all my colleagues join me in saying a heartfelt "thank you".

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the francophones and francophiles who celebrated the International Day of La Francophonie yesterday.

We must thank the pioneers and builders across Canada who fought, worked and advocated to ensure that we can access services in French and English in official language minority communities. The francophonie should be celebrated for the significant cultural and economic contributions it has made to Canada.

Oral Questions

We must support our community organizations and promote education, from early childhood right through to post-secondary, across the country.

I thank all of the proud private-sector companies that promote the French language and that are working hard to provide bilingual services to their customers.

Let us celebrate the culture, community and pride that unite us. Let us show deep compassion for our neighbours and be proud of our diversity.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, railways are central to Canada's economy.

Canadians are finding it harder and harder to find the essentials, and the labour dispute could not come at a worse time. Some \$425 million worth of goods are transported on the CP railway every day. Farmers, businesses and millions of Canadians are affected every day of this dispute. This was all foreseeable.

How do the Liberals plan to prevent disruptions to the supply chain, job losses and business closures?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, negotiations always come with their challenges, but it is important to know how to overcome these challenges to come to an agreement.

CP and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference are still negotiating. The parties are working hard and no one has left the table. They are well aware of what is at stake here.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years after the onset of a pandemic that deeply scarred the supply chain, caused skyrocketing prices across the board and continues to compromise buying power, the Prime Minister does not seem to care, and that is disappointing. This labour dispute comes as no surprise. Everyone has been talking about it for weeks, but once again the Prime Minister is slow to act. Canadians are paying the price, and so will the rest of the world if a solution is not found quickly.

Will the Prime Minister personally commit, here and now, to finding a solution to this conflict?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the best deals are reached at the bargaining table. We have faith in the parties' ability to reach an agreement. Canadians are counting on a swift resolution.

Oral Questions

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds to me like they are washing their hands of the whole thing. I really do not understand the Minister of Labour's response. While we are here talking, Canadians are paying a hefty price.

Inflation is at an all-time high, houses are no longer affordable, and grocery bills are forcing families to make tough choices. The CP Rail dispute will exacerbate the situation.

We would like to suggest a way for the government to make things a little bit more bearable for Canadians right away. Will the Prime Minister waive the GST on gas and diesel immediately?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, negotiations between the parties are ongoing. No one has left the table. We have faith in the parties' ability to reach an agreement at the bargaining table. Our government believes that is where the best deals are reached. The parties understand what is at stake, and Canadians are counting on them to reach an agreement as soon as possible.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I previously asked the Minister of Transport what he was doing to prevent a CP Rail strike, he said, "Let me assure my colleague we are monitoring the situation. I have met the CEO. I have met with the Teamsters. It is really important that we maintain the fluidity of our supply chain."

The strike is on and damage is already happening. The agriculture sector is already seeing it, the automotive sector has said it cannot endure another hit and the Chamber of Commerce is calling for back-to-work legislation on behalf of small businesses.

What is the government's plan to immediately resolve this dispute?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, notice of a work stoppage could not have come at a worse time. Every day that goes by, for farmers and for manufacturers in this country particularly, is a day too long, and I think the parties at the table know that. They have an enormous responsibility to all Canadians to negotiate an agreement that protects the supply chains that Canadians depend on. They are working hard. No one has left the table. Our party believes that the best deals are reached at the table.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are empty words, because the government's record is of being slow to act in these situations. With the Wet'suwet'en and the Coastal GasLink rail blockades, it took weeks for the federal government to intervene. With the Port of Montreal, it took over a week.

Forty-five hundred railcars, and nearly half a billion dollars' worth of goods getting to market, are in jeopardy every day. Canadians cannot afford more inflation. Eight out of nine of the previous CP disputes went to binding arbitration.

What will the government do to immediately address this situation?

• (1425)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would acknowledge Canada's supply chains are still reeling

from the B.C. floods, from COVID-19 and now the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Canadians' best interests need to be prioritized. I am here in Calgary. I am urging the parties to reach an agreement. Our government is committed to ensuring the reliability and the efficacy of our supply chains, which support Canada's economy right across all sectors.

Canadians worked together throughout this pandemic to find solutions to our collective challenges, and they expect the same from stakeholders in our national economy.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has created an emergency travel authorization for refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. It can count on the Bloc Québécois's support for that measure, but two weeks ago, we also said that it should charter additional flights to evacuate these individuals. As we speak, refugees are applying for the program and filling out the paperwork, but once they get through the process, no one is picking them up.

When exactly will refugees be airlifted out of Ukraine on federally chartered flights?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and, in particular, for his co-operation on the Ukraine file.

We are prioritizing applications from Ukrainians. Since January, over 10,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Canada. Last week, I announced new measures that will make it easier and faster for Ukrainians to safely come to Canada.

I will continue to work with my colleagues to facilitate the entry of as many Ukrainians as possible to Canada.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the number of refugees—women, children and seniors—has reached 3.5 million, and that number is growing quickly.

Canada is home to the second largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world. This means that people will want to come here, and a lot of planes will be needed to accommodate them.

Imagine if Ukrainian families have all the proper paperwork but unfortunately remain stuck in refugee camps because of a lack of transport. That is inhumane. The minister's answer is not good enough. He says that in order to succeed the federal government needs to charter flights.

Here is my question. When will that happen?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has welcomed nearly 10,000 Ukrainians since January.

We are working with our partners, including the provinces and territories, the business community, the Ukrainian Canadian community and settlement agencies. This is the best way to support people arriving from Ukraine.

[English]

We are going to continue to work with partners to arrange the best way for people to get here as quickly as possible, regardless of what it takes.

I am very proud of the measures we have put forward. I am going to continue to work to get as many people here as quickly as possible.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is happening at CP is a lockout. The minister should be concerned to know why a company in the supply chain is locking out its employees under the current circumstances.

[Translation]

The cost of gas, groceries and housing continues to rise. Families are struggling, but banks, big oil, grocery and big box stores are making record profits. Wealth inequality is at its highest level in generations.

Will the Liberals deliver on their promise to make life more affordable for people by making the wealthiest pay their fair share?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition member is discussing the issue of affordability.

We lowered taxes for the middle class twice. We increased them for the wealthiest 1%, but the members across the aisle voted against. We created the Canada child benefit, which is indexed to inflation, but they voted against.

On this side of the House, we are here to address the issue of affordability, and that is what we will continue to do.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians reeling from the pandemic are having a hard time making ends meet. From groceries to transportation, housing, corporate profits and CEO bonuses, everything is increasing except income and pensions. Canadians are frustrated with this rigged economy. The rich are getting richer and Canadians are paying the price. The NDP has a solution: Tax the rich. Tax the banks and use that money to offer relief to Canadians.

Will the government continue to stand with wealthy CEOs, or will it finally take action in support of Canadians who are struggling right now?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to this platform initiative.

Oral Questions

As it pertains to affordability, it is disappointing that the NDP chose to vote against providing more pandemic supports for Canadians and businesses in Bill C-2.

On raising taxes on the wealthiest 1% and lowering them for the middle class, increasing investments for the Canada Revenue Agency to combat tax evasion and increasing investments to combat international tax avoidance, we invite the opposition NDP to vote with us on Bill C-8.

● (1430)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ever since this finance minister took charge, the cost of living has skyrocketed. Inflation is at a 30-year high. We know Canadians are struggling to balance their own budgets, and paycheques do not go as far as they used to. The cost of everything is out of control, including gas, groceries and housing, yet the minister does not seem to care. Things are not getting better for Canadians. They are getting worse.

When will the minister tell Canadians how she plans to fight inflation, and when will she table her next budget?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member has raised the issue of affordability, let us review what we have done since taking office. We lowered taxes for the middle class twice and raised them on the wealthiest 1%, and Conservatives voted against. We created the CCB indexed to inflation and Conservatives voted—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I will just give it a minute. I know it has been a while. We have not seen each other in a while and we have not had a chance to heckle in a while.

The hon. Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance may give a quick answer.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, we provided seniors over 75 years of age with a one-time payment of \$500 and the Conservatives voted against it. We are focused on affordability, and that is what we will continue to do.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was for the finance minister.

Inflation is raging across our country and Canadians are being left behind. The cost of everything is skyrocketing. I mentioned gas, groceries and the price of home heating. Worse yet, millions of Canadians have lost their dream of home ownership as house prices spiral out of control, yet the minister does not seem to care.

When will she finally tell Canadians what she plans to do about the affordability crisis, and when will she table a budget?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege for me to share with the member opposite exactly what we are doing and will continue to do on housing. There has been \$72 billion invested in the national housing strategy, \$2.5 billion invested in the rapid housing initiative, and investments in every corner of this country and every riding, even the noisy ones, to make sure that housing is a right for everyone. We will continue to focus on Canadians, while the Conservatives focus on raising the temperature.

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HOUSING

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks back I alerted the House that the average home price in Canada had hit \$720,000. Do members know what it is today? It is \$868,000. I want to remind members what a house's price was when the Prime Minister came into office: \$434,000. The Liberals officially did it. It took them six years, but they have doubled the average home price here in Canada.

How can the minister continue to ignore these numbers?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to the important issue of housing affordability in Canada, and we have proposed solutions such as a new housing accelerator fund to speed up both the supply and the speed of housing construction in Canada, a new rent-to-own program to help renters become homebuyers, as well as a temporary ban on foreign buyers of non-recreational residential property.

We have moved to implement a 1% tax on non-resident and non-Canadian-owned real estate, and the Conservatives voted against it.

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CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all the programs the minister just spoke of fall under the CMHC. The CMHC is a government agency that, according to its website, is driven by one goal, housing affordability for all, yet newly revealed documents show that CMHC employees received \$48 million in bonuses in the last year.

The average home price went up 21% in the last year. How can the minister award the CMHC bonuses, when Canadians cannot afford to buy a home?

• (1435)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that no minister in my position has or will ever make decisions in terms of an independent Crown corporation's employee compensation system. CMHC, like every Crown corporation in Canada, is independent of political interference when it comes to the hiring and salaries of its employees.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so many Canadians are struggling to find an affordable place to rent, let alone purchase a home. Why? It is because home prices have doubled since the Liberals took office, and

they are up 43% since 2019 alone. Over the past two years, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which reports to the Minister of Housing, has given out \$48 million in bonuses.

Did the minister personally sign off on these bonuses, or is he simply going to try to pass the blame onto someone else?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that no minister in my position has or will ever interfere in an independent Crown corporation's decisions when it comes to employment and salaries.

We are focused on federal investments in housing, making sure that more Canadians than ever before have a safe and affordable place to call home. In British Columbia, where the member's riding is, we have invested over \$5.8 billion in affordable housing investments. These investments have helped over 128,000 families. This includes \$34.5 million in 120 new units in West Kelowna in the member's riding.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this minister is supposed to be the Minister of Housing not the minister for “show me the money”.

What performance metrics could possibly justify doling out \$48 million, an average of more than \$12,000 per employee, to over 93% of employees during an affordable housing crisis? Will the minister show some spine and cancel these bonuses, or will he do what he always does and just blame the opposition for what happens on his watch?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that no minister has or will ever interfere in the salaries and compensation of employees of an independent Crown agency.

We are focused on providing affordable housing solutions for Canadians. Every single time that we have brought more federal investments to the table, the member opposite has voted against them. The Conservatives are not serious about affordable housing. How do I know that? Their opposition day motion did not have the words “affordable housing” in it. Their election platform did not have “affordable housing” in it. They are not serious about this issue.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, Montreal is recovering from a brutal weekend. Five armed attacks were committed within a 48-hour period. It is a sad reminder that the wave of violence afflicting our city did not resolve itself while our attention was elsewhere. Montreal is still in the grip of a gang war that has been escalating for the past three years.

However, judging from the government's apathy, it is as if the emergency does not exist. We have been talking about this for months, but nothing is changing on the ground.

What tangible action is the minister taking to deal with the gang war plaguing the Montreal region?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to building safer communities.

To reduce gun crime, we must address social conditions that lead youth to join gangs. We are working closely with municipalities and indigenous communities to provide \$250 million over five years to bolster gang prevention and intervention programming. By investing in community programming, we will stop the cycle of gun and gang violence, and prevent youth from enduring a life of crime.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, \$250 million is good, but it is not enough.

The gang war that is going on right now is affecting the entire greater Montreal area. In Laval, gun violence has more than doubled over the past three years, but the flow of guns still has not been stopped. Illegal firearms continue to find their way in without the federal government taking any serious action.

This is a crisis. People are feeling less and less safe on city streets. One quick solution is to cut off access to guns and stem gun trafficking.

What is the Minister of Public Safety waiting for to take action?

• (1440)

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely take this crisis seriously. We know there are many prongs to solving the issue of guns and gangs.

That is why, just last week, the Minister of Public Safety was in Quebec, speaking with organizations, and announced funding for communities, for municipalities and for indigenous groups to deal with the scourge of guns and gangs.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not enough. Every time there is a

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shooting, we ask questions. Every time, the minister answers that he is taking action, that he will take action or that he is aware of the situation. However, there is no sign of concrete action. We only hear rhetoric, and the situation is getting worse. This cannot go on any longer.

Montreal is telling us that the federal government is not doing enough. The Government of Quebec is telling us that the federal government is not doing enough.

When will the minister finally come up with a real solution to cut off access to illegal firearms?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that protecting communities from gun violence requires a comprehensive and effective strategy to protect communities, not just in Montreal but across the country.

Our position is clear. One of those actions we have taken is that we have said assault-style firearms have no place in Canada. Through a mandatory buyback program, we will remove the threat these deadly firearms pose to our communities from coast to coast.

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the skyrocketing cost of oil is hitting families' pocketbooks very hard. In response, the government is doing absolutely nothing.

It actually seems to like this situation, since more money is flowing into government coffers. This allows the Liberals to do what they do best, which is spend, spend, spend. Meanwhile, families are struggling to pay their housing costs and put food on the table for their children.

When will the government take real action to help Canadian families?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Canadians are seeing higher prices at the pump.

The Conservative Party wants Canadians to think that this has something to do with the Canadian economy. However, the Conservatives seem to be ignoring the fact that global energy prices are high, in part because of the serious situation in Ukraine. It is highly likely that oil companies will not lower the price at the pump.

On this side of the House, we are focused on affordability. We encourage the Conservatives to join us and vote in favour of Bill C-8.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of Parliament come to this House to represent their communities and offer common-sense solutions on issues. Conservatives proposed a GST tax holiday on gasoline and diesel, something that would help my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country, who are being hammered by gas prices as high as 214.5¢ this month. The Liberals are dismissing solutions.

If the ministers are so out of touch with the prices that Canadians are paying at the pumps, will they ask their drivers what they are paying as they escort them around?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Canadians are experiencing increased prices at the gas pumps. The Conservative Party would have Canadians believe that this is a consequence entirely of the Canadian economy. What the Conservatives seem to leave out is that this rise in energy prices is due, in great part, to the tragic circumstances under way in Ukraine.

Even if we implemented what the Conservatives are peddling, there is no guarantee that Canadians would see a reduction of prices at the pump. On this side of the House, we create long-term solutions. On that side, they continue to peddle political games.

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TAXATION

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of gas has reached record highs. I know the Prime Minister has never made a living in rural Canada, but rural Canadians need to fill up their gas tanks to live their lives. They cannot take the subway to work. They cannot walk their kids to hockey. They cannot take the bus to town. I think Canadians deserve a break.

Will the Prime Minister reduce the cost of fuel by removing the GST from gas and diesel?

• (1445)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to talk down the Canadian economy and spin economic fiction, so let us talk about some facts.

Fact: last week, Statistics Canada showed that our annualized growth is 6.7%. Fact: our economy is the second-fastest growing in the G7. Fact: despite omicron, our debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest in the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Sometimes it gets to a point where I just cannot hear a thing. I know everybody is excited to see each other. We are excited to hear the minister's answer. I am sure the government members are excited to hear the questions that they are going to be answering. Can we keep the temperature down a little and enjoy what is left of question period?

Let the minister answer the question.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, the third of many facts that I will share in this answer is that, at \$2.5 trillion, our economy is exactly the same size it was before the pandemic. We are on track and we will continue to fight COVID inflation on behalf of Canadians.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to see improved passenger rail but many were shocked to hear that the Liberals want to privatize service between Toronto and Quebec City. If the Liberals hand over their new rail project to a private corporation, it is ordinary passengers who will pay while wealthy investors profit. Ottawa's disastrous experience with LRT shows the risk of handing transit over to private companies.

Will the minister guarantee that passenger rail on the Quebec-Windsor corridor will remain publicly operated?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for giving me the opportunity to stand here today and talk about the great news that I helped announce just last week.

Our government is committed to moving forward with the investment in the high-frequency rail along the busiest corridor in Canada, where 95% of Via passengers use the train to commute between Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and stops in between. This is great news for Via Rail. This is great news for Canadian travellers, and this is great news for public transportation.

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HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are faced with a housing crisis, yet under the Liberals' rental construction program, affordable housing often ends up being 30% to 120% above the average market rent. It is scandalous. Nearly half of the housing the Liberals promised is expected to come from this program, and 90% of the funding has gone to for-profit developers. Canadians deserve better.

Will the government change the requirements to ensure housing built under this program is substantially below market rent?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the national housing strategy has a number of important programs, including the rental construction financing initiative. It is important to assess each program based on the needs of Canadians in different parts of the housing spectrum. The particular program the hon. member mentioned actually has conditions with respect to accessibility and energy efficiency, and it has minimum affordability requirements. It has led to the construction of tens of thousands of new affordable rental housing units across the country.

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TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the past two years have been hard on main streets across Atlantic Canada. Due to COVID, our community hubs have been forced to close or to be open for reduced hours. These closures have been especially hard on businesses in the arts and tourism sectors.

Could the minister responsible for ACOA tell this House what the government is doing for Atlantic Canada's main streets as pandemic restrictions start to ease?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank my friend and colleague from Halifax West for her excellent question. As Atlantic Canada's main streets reopen, our government will be there to help them and to help locals and tourists discover the incredible things that they have to offer.

Last week I was honoured to announce the “rediscover main streets” program, which is investing \$10 million in helping these resilient businesses show off their amazing products, their services and experience. We have been there for Atlantic Canadian businesses since the pandemic started and we will be there with them to ensure that they become vibrant entities again.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after several requests, the Liberals have finally agreed to send lethal weapons to Ukraine.

Canada has sent 4,500 M72 rocket launchers, 7,500 grenades, 100 Carl Gustav M2 anti-tank weapons, and 2,000 rounds of 84-millimetre ammunition. This morning, the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirmed that all the weapons had reached Ukraine.

My question is simple: Have all the Canadian weapons reached the battlefield, or are they stuck somewhere in Poland?

● (1450)

[English]

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are leaving no stone unturned to support our Ukrainian friends. We announced six tranches of military aid, both lethal and non-lethal, to Ukraine in February alone. This represents well over \$100 million in military aid to

Oral Questions

Ukraine, and we are working tirelessly with our allies to deliver this aid. The minister continues to be in close contact with her Ukrainian counterpart and with NATO allies to see how best Canada and the alliance can continue supporting Ukraine.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer. We want to know if the weapons we sent have reached the battlefield.

Are Ukrainian soldiers using our Carl Gustavs, our M72s and our grenades, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs told Mario Dumont this morning on LCN?

It is a simple question: Are the weapons on the battlefield at this time, yes or no?

[English]

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working as quickly as possible to deliver new tranches of aid to Ukraine. Last month, nearly \$10 million worth of lethal aid was delivered in full. We are working around the clock to get more aid to Ukraine as quickly as possible, alongside our NATO allies. Given the nature of this conflict, we will not be providing details about transit.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Foreign Affairs told CTV that, “Canada is not a nuclear power, it is not a military power. We're a middle-sized power and what we're good at is convening and making sure that diplomacy is happening”, and in so doing, insulted every Canadian who has gone to war for this country or put on its uniform. It is not the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces who are not ready to do their job; it is the minister and the government that are incapable of doing their jobs.

Will the minister apologize to this country's veterans?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear about this. Every single member on this side of the House not only supports the men and women in uniform today, but those who were in uniform yesterday.

Oral Questions

While we are not a superpower, let me tell members what we do. Our men and women in uniform supported the people of Afghanistan. We supported the people of Syria and most recently, we have been on the ground and supported troops in Ukraine with training that has trained 30,000 military personnel. We will continue to be there, and that is what Canada does well.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 11 years after Afghanistan and 158 lives lost, the minister thinks we are convenors, not warriors. I have news for the minister, who should take a look at our Canadian history. The victors at Vimy Ridge, the Hundred Days, Juno Beach, Kapyong and Operation Medusa deserve our admiration and our praise but are forgotten by the government.

Will the minister apologize for her hurtful remarks to the military, to veterans and to the families of our fallen?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk a little more recent history. The previous Conservative government dropped defence spending to the lowest level in 60 years. What this government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I do not have to yell or anything. I just have to sit here and wait to get to the point where I can hear the member.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat that. What the previous Conservative government did was drop defence spending to the lowest level in the last 60 years. What this government is doing is recommitting to the armed forces to ensure that they are appropriately equipped, that they will be engaged appropriately and they will continue to represent Canada and Canadian interests.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am hearing lots of yelling from the back row. You do not have to yell quite as loud to be heard in this chamber, so I am just looking over and saying to calm it down. Calm it down. Thank you.

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

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• (1455)

[*Translation*]

LABOUR

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister must grasp the urgent need to resolve the lockout at Canadian Pacific.

The Bloc Québécois wants a quick, negotiated resolution to the dispute, but we can all see that the talks have reached an impasse. We can also see that supply chains are under unprecedented pressure, what with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Will the minister himself sit down with both sides to signal that he is handling conflict resolution personally?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's supply chains are still reeling from the floods in British Columbia, COVID-19 and now the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Canadians' interests must be a priority, and I urge the parties to reach an agreement. Canadians have worked together throughout the pandemic to find solutions to our collective challenges, and they expect the same from stakeholders in our national economy.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister obviously did not understand my question.

Unfortunately, there is a definite pattern to how this government handles crises. More often than not, it is content to watch them unfold, to be a mere bystander and to allow them to degenerate.

The minister can break free of that pattern right here and now. He said that he will stay in Calgary until the two parties reach a deal. That is the right attitude.

Will he go the distance and personally intervene to bring about a negotiated resolution for CP Rail?

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will answer in English to make sure that I am not repeating myself in answering the member's question directly.

I am here in Calgary. I will not leave. I do not intend to leave until we have an agreement. I am dealing with both parties. I am involved. We have an excellent federal mediation and conciliation service. They are at the table with the parties, and I am optimistic, with people at the table and not leaving, that we will reach the deal that Canadians demand and want as soon as possible.

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HEALTH

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Canadians were mandated to get vaccines and vaccine passports and to stay at home. Canadians have complied, and our fragile health care system has survived.

The entire world and 10 provinces in Canada have reopening plans. Federal mandates need to end, and Canadians need to know what the benchmark is and the plan the government is using to end the mandates, so on what date will this government end federal mandates?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer this question.

The member speaks about the date. April 1 is when there will be no need for a pre-entry rapid or antigen test or molecular test when entering Canada. We do thank Canadians for all the hard work that they have done over the last few months, including vaccinating themselves in large numbers, with 87 million vaccines administered over the last year and a half. While we do that, we are going to work very hard to keep protecting the health and safety of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the province of Ontario is lifting a whole raft of temporary measures to fight COVID-19. People can finally have faith in the future and get back to normal. I think it is about time.

Given that the provinces and other G7 countries have reached the same conclusion, when will the Liberal government announce the end of mandatory measures at the federal level?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, vaccines have prevented 1,600 deaths in recent months because of federal and provincial vaccine mandates.

Those 1,600 people are still with us today thanks to vaccine mandates. Estimates suggest that vaccine mandates have also saved us billions of dollars, probably about \$4 billion.

That is a lot of money and, more importantly, it is a lot of people who have been kept safe and healthy.

• (1500)

[English]

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the course of the past couple of weeks, every province in Canada has either completely ended their mandates or given a solid deadline for when these measures will end, including New Brunswick, yet this government is still forging ahead with its overreaching and intrusive mandates. When will the federal government start trusting Canadians, stop dictating to them how to live their lives and give the people a day to end the mandates?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 135,000 is the number of people in the United States who died because they were insufficiently vaccinated compared to Canadians. It would have been a tragedy if in Canada we had not used that gift that science and scientists gave us a year and a half ago. We are extremely grateful to all the vaccinators and all the Canadians who did the right thing, which is to protect their health and the health of those they love.

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[Translation]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has developed several programs to support Black communities across the country, strengthen community organizations and help Black entrepreneurs finance their activities. In order to promote an inclusive economy, I announced a \$25-million investment to support 10 Black-led organizations.

Can the Minister of Economic Development talk about the impact this support has had on Black communities in Canada?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I also want to acknowledge the extraordinary work he does for the people of Bourassa.

Oral Questions

Our government is working closely with Black business owners and organizations, such as the Côte-Des-Neiges Black Community Association, Audace au féminin, the Centre d'encadrement pour jeunes femmes immigrantes, the African Business Network and many others that will receive substantial support.

In Quebec and across Canada, the fund aims to strengthen support for Black entrepreneurs and business owners. We will support them during this period of economic recovery.

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[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to take back control of their lives, yet millions of Canadians are unable to travel freely within Canada, unable to get on a plane, unable to get on a train, because of the Liberals' punitive and ineffective vaccine mandates. This infringement on mobility rights constitutes an outlier among democracies, so on what date will the Liberals join the rest of the democracies of this world and lift these mandates?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason we are able to lift these mandates is that we have, in Canada, one of the highest rates of vaccination in the world. In Canada, about 85% of people have had a first dose, 81% two doses and almost 60% a third dose. That is the reason we are able to lift these restrictions. Four hundred thousand people would have been the number of people dying in Canada over 2021 in the absence of public health measures and vaccinations.

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CARBON PRICING

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I spoke to hundreds of constituents from Peterborough—Kawartha who are scared and afraid because they cannot afford to buy food, pay for rent or put gas in their car. People are suffering from anxiety, depression and addiction because they cannot manage the stress of making ends meet.

The carbon tax hike on April 1 could see an increase of 12¢ a litre at the pumps. Canadians cannot take any more.

How can the Liberal government say it has Canadians' backs? When will the government give my constituents and all Canadians hope and drop the carbon tax scheduled for April 1?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government put a price on carbon pollution to ensure clean air, fewer emissions and more money in people's pockets. As the carbon price increases, payments also increase, leaving the majority of Canadians with more money in their pockets.

While the Conservatives want to take us backward to a time when it was free to pollute, our government will continue to move forward with practical and affordable solutions for Canadians to cut pollution and create good jobs.

• (1505)

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan, every product on every shelf has a significant freight cost. Transport companies I met with last week have been forced to raise their fuel surcharges just to survive. That increase must be passed on, and the cycle of inflation spirals out of control. Life gets more expensive every single day. The government ignores this fact, but my constituents do not have that luxury.

Where is the Prime Minister's plan for rising fuel prices? Will he, at the very least, cancel the scheduled increase to the carbon tax on April 1?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely understand that inflation and affordability are pressing challenges for Canadians. We also know that this is a global phenomenon and not a made-in-Canada problem.

I want to assure Canadians that we are working hard to make life more affordable and remind the opposition benches that eight dollars out of \$10 that sustained Canadians during the global pandemic came from the federal government. We are committed to addressing housing affordability. We will continue to pursue child care. We will continue to increase the CCB. On this side of the House, we are focused on affordability.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Liberal auto caucus, I am well aware that Canada has long been considered a global leader in the auto sector. As this sector transitions toward a greener and zero-emissions future, we know that Canada has every tool needed to be a world leader in EVs and electric batteries: skilled workers, critical minerals, clean and renewable energy, a strong innovation ecosystem and an integrated North American supply chain.

Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry kindly update the House on how the government is securing good, well-paying jobs in the auto sector by making major investments to support the transformation of Canada's automotive manufacturing sector toward electrification?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge for his great leadership. We can see the passion even on the other side of the bench.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, it has been an exciting week, so I understand why they applaud for the auto sector, with our government securing a major investment that will see the auto industry in this country thrive for decades. Last week, we saw Honda make a \$1.4-billion investment in the Alliston plant in Ontario. That builds on other investments from BASF, GM and POSCO, and there is more to come. Stay tuned.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over three million people have now fled the violence in Ukraine. Civilians are being bombed in their homes and even in hospitals. They are desperate for support. Economic sanctions are a strong tool we have to force Putin to stop committing war crimes. However, the sanctions announced by the government will not have the desired effect if they are not properly enforced.

Will the minister commit to the NDP ask for ownership of assets to be made public and tell Canadians how many Russian assets have been frozen since the most recent invasion of Ukraine?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question, because the reality is that this is an egregious invasion by Russia into Ukraine and we are using every economic tool that we can to ensure that we punish and suffocate Russia. Over 500 individuals and entities have been sanctioned just in the last three weeks. We continue to do that. The systems are in place to make sure that we follow through on every one of those sanctions, and we will continue to do everything to ensure that Russia is suffocated while we continue to support Ukraine in all its efforts.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the minister answered my colleague's question earlier, so I would like to try it again.

Following decades of underinvestment in Via Rail, last week the federal government began to solicit the private sector to not only co-develop, but operate and maintain high-frequency rail in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. We know that privatization is short-sighted. We know it puts public money toward corporate profits and jeopardizes good jobs.

Business of Supply

Will the Minister of Transport reconsider and assure the House that Via Rail is not on the verge of being privatized?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Our government is not privatizing Via. Let me also be very clear that this is the largest infrastructure project in Canada's history and we are inviting all potential partners to help us do it right. For generations, governments have talked about this type of project. Our government is delivering for Canadians. This is good news for passengers. This is good news for climate change. This is good news for jobs. This is the way we build nations.

• (1510)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank members for a great question period. It was very lively and very attentive. That is all the time we have left.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties, and I hope if you ask, you will get unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that the House denounce foreign influence and Hollywood actors who unfairly target and misrepresent Canada's energy sector, including the position of many elected leaders from indigenous communities who support resource development projects, particularly at a time when efforts should be taken to displace Russian energy in Europe with clean Canadian energy.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, perhaps you can help me here. I would like to remind the hon. House leader for the Conservative Party of this, and he is not the first person to do it, I have to say. When a member of this place puts forward that there have been consultations among the parties, they have to at least have talked to the parties.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure members can come up with a solution for that.

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period the Minister of Housing said there was no mention of affordable housing in the Conservative platform. I would like to seek unanimous consent to table that platform and outline that we have a plan for indigenous housing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member have leave to table that document?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order arising out of question period, the parliamentary secretary for Global Affairs was misleading the House regarding cuts, going back 60 years,

by the Conservative government. I would like to table a Library of Parliament report on operation expenditures and authorities covering 2000 to 2021. It shows that the highest amount spent, adjusted for inflation, was during the Harper years and it is more than is being spent now.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member have leave to table the document?

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—NATURAL GAS PIPELINES AND THE INVASION OF UKRAINE

The House resumed from March 3 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:13 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1525)

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

(*Division No. 38*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmieć
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd

Business of Supply

Lobb
Maguire
Mazier
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Perkins
Rayes
Reid
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer — 115

MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Moore
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Redekopp
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Spengemann
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Vuong
Yip
Zarrillo

Gill
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Weiler
Zahid
Zuberi — 212

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chagger
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Chahal
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau
Garrison
Gazan

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to subsection 39(3) of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act and Standing Order 111.1(1), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a certificate of nomination and biographical notes for the proposed reappointment of Joe Friday to the position of Public Sector Integrity Commissioner for a term of 18 months.

I request that the nomination and biographical notes be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to 24 petitions. These responses will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (C), 2021-22".

FINANCE

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Finance, entitled "Considering the Path Forward".

I would like to thank our clerk Alexandre Roger; analysts Brett Capwell, Michaël Lambert-Racine, Sylvain Fleury and Joëlle Malo; and the whole team of interpreters, technology officers and staff of the committee for their dedicated work on this study and report.

● (1530)

The Deputy Speaker: I think there is a supplementary opinion from the hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, generally I work hard and the Conservative members of this committee work hard to secure consensus reports, but in this case that was impossible for a number of reasons. First, this report involves recommendations for tens of billions of dollars of spending for which no prioritization process was applied, none whatsoever. What is worse is that this was not placed within the context of balanced budgets. There was no spending restraint strategy attached to it.

On top of that, this whole report is going to set Canada way back. These recommendations were adopted uncritically by the Liberal, the NDP and the Bloc members of this committee. For that

reason, we had to issue a dissenting report, which highlights the importance of being fiscally prudent within a balanced budget.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the fifth report later this day.

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (C), 2021-22".

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[English]

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, 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 the address by the President of Ukraine, delivered in the Chamber of the House of Commons on Tuesday, March 15, 2022, before members of the Senate and the House of Commons, together with all introductory and related remarks, be printed as an appendix to the House of Commons Debates of Monday, March 21, 2022, and form part of the records of the House.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

RAIL WORKERS

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to rise and present a petition on behalf of over 850 residents of Saskatchewan.

Routine Proceedings

Last week, Saskatchewan's Premier Moe started a petition asking the federal government to classify rail workers as an essential service in light of what was a looming CP Rail strike at the time. This disruption will have a catastrophic effect on the supply chain in Saskatchewan, affecting many sectors such as agriculture, mining and forestry. The petition asks the federal government to start working on back-to-work legislation and begin working on legislation to make rail service an essential service, which would preclude any future disruptions.

The rail sector is a vital service not only for Saskatchewan's economy, but for Canada's economy.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a petition from residents across my riding who are asking for Canada to address the urgent climate emergency that we are all facing.

I want to thank the Council of Canadians from my riding, which brought me this petition. It focuses specifically on human and workers' rights, respect for indigenous rights, decarbonizing housing and increasing public transit. It is a plan that includes rural and remote communities that are so essential, especially to my region.

• (1535)

INSECTICIDES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present this petition.

The petitioners note that it has been nine years since the European Union took action against the dangerous class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids, particularly because of their devastating impact on pollinators such as bees. For food security, which is now increasingly imperilled, for the health of our agricultural areas, and indeed for biodiversity in general, the petitioners call for the Government of Canada to act to restrict the use of neonicotinoid insecticides to protect our pollinators.

FIREARMS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition from my constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon calling on the government to stop targeting licensed, law-abiding firearms owners and to cancel its plan to confiscate their legally obtained private property through its arbitrary firearms ban.

The petitioners are calling for the limited resources that do exist to focus on anti-gang enforcement, reducing involvement of at-risk youth in gang violence, and providing the CBSA with the necessary tools to keep our borders safe.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions to present today.

The first petition is from Canadians from across the country. They are concerned about the revocation of charitable status from pro-life organizations. They are calling on the House of Commons to do all that it can to prevent, block, organize against and vote against any effort by the government to revoke the charitable status of pro-life organizations.

NORTHERN RESIDENTS TAX DEDUCTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my next petition is from Canadians from across the country and particularly from Fox Creek and Swan Hills. These are some remote communities located in northern Alberta. They have extended travel times and more expensive heating costs than other communities do. The residents of Fox Creek and Swan Hills have to travel great distances to access groceries and shopping centres. They are not able to avail themselves of the northern living allowance, given that there is an arbitrary geographical line that fails to consider other factors including access to other communities.

Neither Fox Creek nor Swan Hills is part of either the northern or intermediate zones in Alberta; therefore, the people of these two communities are calling on the Government of Canada to put them within the prescribed intermediate zone to allow these residents to claim the residential deductions for living in northern Alberta.

AGE VERIFICATION SOFTWARE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have is signed by Canadians across the country who are concerned about vulnerable Canadians who are not adequately protected on social media platforms from potential exploitation. They are concerned about people being bullied, blackmailed and harassed. The petitioners are calling for meaningful age verification that can determine the age and identity of users. They are commenting that age verification software on social media platforms can significantly reduce the creation or sharing of child sexual abuse materials, instances of fraud and online bullying and child luring. The petitioners are calling on the government for a commitment to defend these vulnerable people and for the government to enact legislation for meaningful age verification.

EQUALIZATION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my next petition is from people from across Alberta. These petitioners note that Alberta is the single largest per-capita contributor to the federal equalization program, contributing over \$600 billion since the 1960s. They comment that the current equalization formula was set when Alberta had record growth. Since then, we have experienced job losses and high unemployment. Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 and the failure to build pipelines have devastated the Alberta economy.

They are calling on the government to fix the equalization formula, and they are calling on the government to defend and advocate for the building of pipelines so that Keystone XL, in particular, and others can be built.

Routine Proceedings

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has obviously been a very emotional few weeks for Canadians across the country, and that is especially true for the local Ukrainian communities in Regina and southern Saskatchewan who have signed this petition.

Ever since Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, there has been an unfolding humanitarian crisis as Ukrainian refugees flee the war zone. This petition calls on the Government of Canada to expedite the processing of refugee applicants from Ukraine and to resettle them in Canada.

Regina and southern Saskatchewan have a very large Ukrainian community and there is certainly a great deal of interest in helping to resettle the refugees and in doing their part.

• (1540)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first is, of course, in support of my private member's bill that I am sponsoring in this place: Bill S-223, a bill to finally combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. Petitioners are hopeful that this Parliament will be the one that finally gets it done.

HAZARAS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the ongoing terrible human rights situation of the Hazara community in Afghanistan. It is a situation that was bad prior to the Taliban takeover and it is certainly getting much worse.

This particular petition asks the House to designate September 25 as Hazara genocide memorial day to recognize a historic event of ethnic cleansing from the 19th century as a genocide against Hazaras, but most importantly to continue advocacy for the rights of Hazaras and other ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 267, 277, 278, 280, 283, 286 to 289, 295, 299 and 301 to 303.

[Text]

Question No. 267—**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:**

With regard to the annual funding provided to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, since fiscal year 2015-16, broken down by year and by each of the entities it owns: (a) what is the detail of the annual funding provided, broken down by its expenditures for (i) Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, (ii) Canadian National Energy Alliance; (b) what is the financial position of each owned entity, broken down by (i) total financial assets, (ii) total liabilities, (iii) total net debt, (iv) total non-financial assets, (v) total accumulated deficit, (vi) total revenues, (vii) total expenses, (viii) total surplus or deficit, (ix) accumulated deficit related to operations at the beginning and the end of the year; and (c) do the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and the Canadian National Energy Alliance plan to release their own quarterly and annual financial statements, and if not, why not?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, AECL's payments to its contractors are provided

in its annual report, available publicly at www.aecl.ca/reports-resources/.

As part of the restructuring of AECL, in 2014 the CNL was created and operated as a wholly owned subsidiary of AECL until September 2015, at which point the shares of the CNL were transferred to a private sector contractor selected as part of a government-run procurement process for the management and operations of AECL's sites. As such, for part of the 2015-16 fiscal year, the CNL was a wholly owned subsidiary of AECL; however, its financial statements were integrated into those of AECL. For the subsequent period, the CNL has operated as a private sector entity. As a result, AECL does not maintain the financial records of this separate private organization. Information on AECL's financial position is provided in its annual reports, available publicly at www.aecl.ca/reports-resources/.

AECL is not responsible for either the CNL or the CNEA, both of which are private sector organizations. As such, AECL does not maintain information regarding the respective financial position of each entity.

Question No. 277—**Ms. Laurel Collins:**

With regard to the government's commitment to plant two billion trees by 2030 and create almost 4,300 jobs, broken down by fiscal year and by federal riding: (a) how many jobs have been created to date, broken down by (i) seasonal employment, (ii) full-time employment, (iii) part-time employment; and (b) is the promise to create 4,300 jobs an annual commitment, or a cumulative total to be achieved by 2030?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources, with support from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, was mandated to develop and implement a plan to plant two billion trees over 10 years as part of a broader commitment to natural climate solutions.

The program is on track to plant two billion trees over 10 years, resulting in a permanent increase in forest cover in Canada. The program provided funding to plant 30 million trees during the 2021 season, and that number will increase as the government's partners ramp up their activities.

The 2 Billion Trees program is a proposal-based grants and contribution program. Interested and eligible organizations are required to submit project proposals. Expert evaluation panels assess projects to ensure they meet program objectives and co-benefits, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity, habitat restoration and human well-being. Projects must also pass risk and due diligence requirements before they are retained for funding via contribution agreements. As a result, specific tree-planting locations and any related employment benefits will depend on the funding proposals put forward by provinces, territories, indigenous communities, and organizations across Canada.

Routine Proceedings

Following a call for expressions of interest in February 2021, the program received 120 applications for early tree planting in 2021. NRCan has finalized most of its funding agreements to support the planting of over 30 million trees across the country, in both urban and rural areas. Many of the projects began planting in spring 2021, and planting continued through the 2021 planting season. NRCan proactively discloses these grants and contributions on Open Canada at <https://search.open.canada.ca/en/gc/>.

Similar to other government grants and contribution programs, contribution agreements with federal funding recipients outline planned projects or activities. In the case of the 2 Billion Trees program, the exact number of trees planted is reported by the funding recipients on a quarterly basis and after all of their planting activities have been completed. Program recipients will have 60 days after the end of the fiscal year on March 31, 2022, to provide their final reporting. At that stage, NRCan will consolidate and validate the data and is expected to publicly disclose the results on the 2021 tree planting season in spring 2022.

Funding recipients are required to report on their program activities, including details on the number and types of jobs created. Canada's 2 Billion Trees program will create up to 4,300 jobs across the country. The data collected from funding recipients will serve as the basis of performance reporting for the program. Details on the program's performance indicators can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/campaign/2-billion-trees/natural-climate-solutions-fund-performance-indicators.html>.

Question No. 278—Ms. Laurel Collins:

With regard to recommendation 4.43 in Report 4 on non-tax subsidies for fossil fuels of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development: (a) following consultations to solicit feedback, has Environment and Climate Change Canada developed clearly defined criteria to determine whether a fossil fuel non-tax subsidy is inefficient, and, if so, what are these criteria and what is the department's definition of "inefficient"; (b) does Environment and Climate Change Canada still refuse to implement this recommendation; and (c) what is the status and expected completion date of the review of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies as part the G20 peer review process with Argentina?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Environment and Climate Change Canada is continuing its work with a number of federal departments and agencies to develop a comprehensive framework and guidance to assess whether a non-tax measure may constitute an "inefficient fossil fuel subsidy". The department is finalizing its criteria for determining "inefficiency" and is conducting ongoing consultations as part of the process.

ECCC recognizes that the issues of economic, social and environmental sustainability are important considerations, and the framework and guidance will include those considerations. The department will assess how to strike a balance between the issues of economic, social and environmental sustainability. ECCC and the Department of Finance are working together to finalize the framework and guidance to identify and assess relevant measures in order to fulfill the G20 commitment.

Canada recently committed to accelerate the timing of its G20 commitment to phase out or rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies from 2025 to 2023. A report listing Canada's inefficient fossil fuel subsidies is being developed and will be submitted to a panel

of experts as part of Canada's G20 peer review process with Argentina.

Question No. 280—Mr. Daniel Blaikie:

With regard to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and the one-time payment to recipients announced in the fiscal update of December 14, 2021: (a) what are the eligibility criteria for the one-time payment; (b) when does the government expect to begin making one-time payments; (c) will this one-time payment be taxable; and (d) will this one-time payment be included in the definition of income for purposes of eligibility for the GIS in 2022?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), in order for individuals to be eligible for this one-time grant payment for guaranteed income supplement-Canada emergency response benefits, it is proposed that recipients must be eligible to receive the GIS or allowances in March 2022, and have received a pandemic benefit in 2020, been in receipt of GIS or allowance benefits in June 2021 and faced a reduction or loss in GIS or allowance benefits in July 2021.

With regard to (b), payments will be made in April 2022. A small number of payments, up to 1,000, will be issued in March 2022 to address the immediate financial hardship that some seniors are experiencing.

With regard to (c), the proposed one-time grant payment for GIS-CERB recipients would be non-taxable and non-reportable.

With regard to (d), the proposed one-time grant payment for GIS-CERB recipients would be non-taxable. As such, it would not be included in the definition of income for the GIS or allowance.

Question No. 283—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to Health Canada and the Pfizer/BioNtech Phase 3 vaccine clinical trial that was used for a population-wide approval of novel medical intervention: (a) what are, in percentages, the benefits conferred by vaccination versus control (placebo) considering all-cause morbidity (level 1 evidence of benefit or *harm*) in the said trial in terms of (i) adverse events, (ii) severe adverse events, (iii) serious adverse events, (iv) deaths; (b) what is, in terms of percentage, the amount that the vaccine reduced the transmission of COVID-19 in the vaccine arm compared to the placebo arm in the said trial; (c) what were the bio-markers for which trial participants were systematically tested at the commencement, during, and at the conclusion of the trial to test for the safety of the product evaluated in the said trial; and (d) what were, in terms of percentage, the absolute risk reduction provided by the vaccine?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada has authorized several COVID-19 vaccines for use in Canada. Each of these underwent a careful scientific review and met our standards for safety, efficacy and quality.

Routine Proceedings

Information about all of the authorized vaccines can be found on the COVID-19 vaccines and treatments portal, <https://bit.ly/3EH07IB>, by clicking on the individual vaccine names and then the “all resources” tab. For each of the vaccines that have been authorized, detailed information can be accessed, such as the product monograph, which is the prescribing information for consumers and health care professionals on a manufacturer insert, the summary basis of a decision, which provides a detailed overview of the data considered by Health Canada, and the terms and conditions placed on the authorizations, which are the requirements for further data submission that manufacturers are required to meet.

Note that information in the portal is being updated regularly and can be found at <https://bit.ly/3lo1svI>. Also, the clinical study reports related to the approval of Comirnaty can be accessed on Health Canada’s public release of clinical information website, at <https://bit.ly/3GFvDHE>. It has specific details related to various aspects of the review, including the summaries of clinical efficacy and safety.

Information on the questions regarding the trial, including those on adverse events and severe adverse events, the biomarkers for which trial participants were systematically tested, and on the absolute risk reduction provided by the vaccine, is all publicly available. The information can be found at <https://bit.ly/3HLiZYU>. Please note that how the vaccine reduced the transmission of COVID-19 in the vaccine arm compared with the placebo arm was not assessed during the said clinical trials.

For public convenience, here are some useful links. The product monograph for Comirnaty, with a date of revision of January 20, 2022, is at <https://bit.ly/3uEsNQF>, and the summary basis of decision for Comirnaty is at <https://bit.ly/3GNlhWg>.

Question No. 286—Mr. Damien C. Kurek:

With regard to the impact of the federal carbon tax on registered charities: (a) why are registered charities not eligible to receive Climate Action Incentive payments even though they are forced to pay higher prices on goods as a result of the federal carbon tax; (b) what are the government’s estimates on the amount of federal carbon tax paid by charities or projected to be paid by charities, broken down by province, in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020, (iii) 2021, (iv) 2022, (v) 2023, (vi) 2024; (c) what are the government’s estimates related to (b) for charities who do work in Canada in primarily (i) urban settings, (ii) rural settings; (d) does the government have any plans to directly reimburse charities for the amount they pay in carbon taxes, and, if so, what are the plans, including the formula used to determine how much each charity will receive; and (e) what are the government’s estimates on the reductions in donations charities may receive in (i) 2022, (ii) 2023, (iii) 2024, as a result of Canadians having less disposable income because of the carbon tax and other inflationary pressures?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, or GGPPA, all proceeds from the federal fuel charge must be returned to the jurisdiction of origin.

In the case of the two voluntary jurisdictions of Yukon and Nunavut, all direct proceeds are returned to the territorial governments, and these governments can in turn return proceeds to any sector of the economy they see fit, including the non-profit sector.

In the case of jurisdictions not meeting the federal benchmark, those being Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, the bulk of the direct proceeds from the fuel charge is returned to households through climate action incentive payments, known as CAI

payments. Remaining proceeds are being returned to small and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs; indigenous communities; and other organizations.

Monthly fuel charge returns only account for aggregate amounts by fuel type and by jurisdiction. Typically, once the fuel charge has been paid by a fuel producer or distributor, there is no further reporting of who ultimately directly bears the cost of the federal fuel charge. The amount of the fuel charge is ultimately embedded in the price of fuels sold to consumers and other organizations.

In the four provinces where CAI payments are available, the majority of households receive more in CAI payments than they incur in carbon pricing-related costs. This would mitigate the impact of the federal carbon pricing system on disposable incomes.

Question No. 287—Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:

With regard to the intermodal terminal project for the storage and transshipment of propane gas that is currently being discussed and that would be located in the Municipality of Upton, Quebec: (a) has Distribution Upton requested ministerial approval for the construction of a new railroad that links with the transfer station in the Municipality of Upton; (b) has Propane Suroit requested ministerial approval for the construction of a new railroad that links with the transfer station in the Municipality of Upton; (c) does St Laurent & Atlantique have the certificates to proceed with the transshipment of propane; (d) does St. Laurent & Atlantique need to make any changes to the existing rail line for the terminal project; and (e) has St. Laurent & Atlantique filed any applications for adding rails to the proposed terminal construction site?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada does not have information on this, as the Canadian Transportation Agency is the authorizing body. The Canadian Transportation Agency is unaware of the proposed intermodal terminal project for the storage and transshipment of propane gas. The agency confirms that to date it has not received any request from entities mentioned in the query.

With regard to part (a) and part (b), to date the agency has not received any request.

With regard to part (c), yes, St. Lawrence Atlantic Railroad (Quebec) Inc. has a valid certificate of fitness that authorizes them to operate a railway that includes the carriage, per calendar year, of less than 4,000 tonnes of toxic inhalation hazard materials, and other dangerous goods, other than crude oil, as defined in section 2 of the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, SC 1992, chapter 34.

With regard to part (d), as per section 94 of the Canada Transportation Act, St. Lawrence Atlantic Railroad (Quebec) Inc. has to notify the agency in writing if there are any changes to the construction or operation that may affect the liability insurance coverage. To date the agency has not received any notification of any such changes from St. Lawrence Atlantic Railroad (Quebec) Inc.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (e), to date the agency has not received any application.

Question No. 288—Mr. John Barlow:

With regard to the Federal Ministerial Coordinating Committee on PEI Potatoes:

- (a) what is the exact mandate of the committee; (b) what specific goals or assignments have been issued to each minister on the committee, broken down by minister; (c) what is the time period provided related to each goal or assignment in (b); and (d) what are the (i) dates, (ii) locations, (iii) ministers in attendance, for each meeting of the committee which occurred to date?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the committee is a forum for exchange of information, development of strategies and coordination of activities to resolve the trade situation, while minimizing negative impacts on the P.E.I. potato sector. It is an ad hoc interdepartmental setting where ministers bring together their perspectives from their respective mandates, as well as views from their engagement on the issue, to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to advancing government objectives.

With regard to (b), the committee members include me, as the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, under my mandate for the growth and development of a competitive, innovative, and sustainable Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector; the Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, under her mandate to create opportunities for economic growth in the region by helping businesses become more competitive, innovative, and productive; the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, under his mandate to engage with lead ministers to ensure a well-coordinated and strategic approach on key priorities that have significant provincial and territorial implications; the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, under her mandate to engage the United States to address bilateral trade issues and protectionist measures, including with respect to the agricultural sector; and the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, in his role as member of Parliament for Cardigan.

I am the government's policy lead on the potato wart file. The Minister of Official Languages and I are co-chairs of this committee. In response to the P.E.I. potato situation, each minister is undertaking activities in line with their respective mandates and responsibilities. The committee is ensuring those activities are coordinated and complementary and are collectively advancing resolution of the situation.

With regard to (c), the creation of the committee was announced on January 7, 2022. The committee meets via video conference or teleconference approximately every two weeks, and will continue until such time as the members agree to dissolve the committee.

With regard to (d), the first meeting, and the only one to be held prior to January 27, took place January 13, 2022, via video conference. I attended with my colleagues, the hon. ministers of official languages, veterans affairs and international trade.

Question No. 289—Mr. Ron Liepert:

With regard to the government's contract with Switch Health to conduct COVID-19 PCR tests for international passengers arriving at the Calgary International Airport: (a) what is the number of COVID-19 PCR tests performed on travellers who entered Canada at the Calgary International Airport between December 1, 2021, and January 31, 2022; (b) what percentage of the tests in (a) were positive

for COVID-19; and (c) what are the details of the contract with Switch Health related to the testing for international arrivals at the Calgary International Airport including (i) the value or amount, (ii) the start and end dates of the contract, (iii) whether the contract was sole-sourced or awarded through a competitive bid process, (iv) the number of PCR tests expected to be conducted under the contract?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Switch Health reported results for 78,377 COVID-19 PCR tests from international arrivals entering the Calgary International Airport between December 1, 2021, and January 31, 2022. Of these tests, 4% were positive.

The scope of the contract with Switch Health and its basis of payment involves the entire testing process from start to finish, including on-site sample collection, as well as several deliverables in support of the Public Health Agency of Canada's testing efforts and reporting requirements. These are centrally managed overhead costs and are not directly assigned to testing performed at a specific port of entry. Accordingly, PHAC is unable to confirm a specific value or amount that can be attributed definitively to the testing of travellers at the Calgary International Airport.

The Switch Health contract was awarded on February 20, 2021, with an end date of February 28, 2022. The contract originally awarded to Switch Health was done through a competitive procurement process in January 2021 that was carried out by Public Services and Procurement Canada under solicitation H1051-204342. More information can be found at <https://buyandsell.gc.ca/procurement-data/tender-notice/PW-AC-007-79580>.

The contract was set up to allow the flexibility to process a variable number of tests as required, based on changes to border policy in response to the changing nature of the pandemic. As such, the contracts do not contain a set number of PCR tests expected to be conducted for the Calgary International Airport.

Question No. 295—Mr. Martin Shields:

With regard to the government's Wellness Together website and the PocketWell application: (a) have there been any data or privacy breaches or related incidents concerning the website, application, or any data collected since January 1, 2020, and, if so, what are the details, including the (i) incident summary, (ii) type of data involved, (iii) number of users whose data was involved, (iv) corrective action taken, including whether or not the users were notified, (v) date of the incident; and (b) what specific processes are in place to deal with any data or privacy breaches concerning the website or the application?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been no breach of Wellness Together Canada, WTC, portal or PocketWell app privacy or data. The Government of Canada commissioned the portal and app, funding both their establishment and maintenance. They are led by a consortium of established leaders in mental health and substance use care, including Stepped Care Solutions, Homewood Health and Kids Help Phone. The contract between the Government of Canada and the WTC consortium stipulates that all involved organizations, resources and third party service providers are subject to legal privacy obligations, privacy policies or contractual agreements that include appropriate privacy standards. All services must comply with applicable privacy and health information legislation to maintain the security of client information.

The WTC consortium contracts Greenspace Health to host and maintain the WTC portal platform. Privacy practices for WTC Portal and PocketWell app by Greenspace are service organization control, SOC, type 2 compliant, meeting the industry standard for best practices. SOC 2 defines criteria for managing customer data based on five trust service principles: security, availability, processing integrity, confidentiality and privacy. WTC's SOC 2 compliance means that an independent auditing firm has reviewed and examined their control objectives and activities and tested the controls to ensure operational excellence. The independent auditing firm found that WTC complies with these principles and has the proper systems and controls in place to protect client information and interests.

Specific details on response activities under Greenspace's privacy breach policy cannot be disclosed, as protected proprietary information. However, any breach would be subject to Greenspace's incident response plan, which structures Greenspace's investigation and resolution of privacy and security incidents using a three-phased approach: identification and notification of relevant individuals, partners and authorities in accordance with applicable laws and contractual obligations; containment and eradication of the threat; and post-incident activity, including reporting, review and prevention.

The incident response training and testing policy requires Greenspace to be prepared to respond to all potential and actual security and privacy incidents by training an incident response team on the company's incident response plan, and by conducting incident response exercises.

As set out in the privacy policy on the WTC portal website, while using the platform users have the option of providing information related to the state of their mental health and personal quality of life. Greenspace is compliant with all Canadian federal and provincial privacy legislation, including the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act; the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, of Ontario; the Personal Information Protection Act of Alberta; the Personal Information Protection Act of British Columbia; and An Act respecting the protection of personal information in the private sector of Quebec.

Question No. 299—**Mr. Ben Lobb:**

With regard to the authorizations of the collection of datasets by the Minister of Public Safety since January 1, 2016: (a) which classes of Canadian datasets were

authorized for collection by the minister pursuant to section 11.03 (1) of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, broken down by year and date of authorization; and (b) for each class of datasets authorized by collection, is the authorization still valid, or has it since been rescinded, and, if so, on what date was it rescinded?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the coming into force of the National Security Act, 2017, on June 13, 2019, Parliament provided CSIS with the authority to collect and retain datasets relevant to its mandate while implementing appropriate measures to ensure the privacy of Canadians.

As part of these measures, the Minister of Public Safety must determine annually, by order, the classes of Canadian datasets that the service may collect under section 11.05 of the CSIS Act. The minister may determine that a class of Canadian datasets is authorized to be collected only if the querying or exploitation of any dataset in the class could lead to results that are relevant to the performance of CSIS's duties and functions. This includes the ability to collect intelligence regarding threats to the security of Canada, to take measures to reduce threats to the security of Canada or to collect foreign intelligence within Canada. This decision must then be reviewed and approved by the intelligence commissioner, or IC, before it can take effect.

In 2019, the Minister of Public Safety issued an order determining four classes of Canadian datasets. The IC found the minister's conclusions to be reasonable and consequently approved the determination of these four classes. The titles of these classes of Canadian datasets are classified and have not been released publicly. In 2021, the minister again determined the same four classes with minor adjustments, to respond to recommendations from the IC. Again, in 2022, the minister issued a determination for these same four classes of Canadian datasets, which the IC again found to be reasonable. None of these determinations have ever been refused or rescinded by the minister or the IC.

Routine Proceedings

CSIS is working closely with the Department of Justice to ensure correct implementation of the requirements of this new and complex authority. The service is working cautiously to implement the framework, which is built upon layers of oversight and review to ensure the privacy interests of Canadians are adequately protected as it fulfills its national security mandate

Question No. 301—Mr. Adam Chambers:

With regard to the Shared Equity Mortgage Providers Fund that launched on July 31, 2019: (a) how many applications have been (i) received, (ii) approved to date; (b) what is the total value of funds distributed to date through the program; and (c) how many units have been built under the program?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the shared equity mortgage providers, or SEMP, fund supports existing shared equity mortgage providers. Repayable loans are offered to eligible proponents to commence new housing projects where shared equity mortgages will be provided, under stream one, or to fund lending directly through shared equity mortgage providers to first-time homebuyers, under stream two. The fund aims to assist in the completion of 1,500 new units and help at least 1,500 homebuyers buy their first home.

The program offers to eligible proponents repayable loans from one of two possible funding streams. Preconstruction loans, under stream one, provide funding for preconstruction cost loans to commence new housing projects in which shared equity mortgages will be provided to homebuyers via SEMPs. Shared equity mortgages, SEM, under stream two, provide loans to SEMPs to fund shared equity mortgages that they provide directly to first-time homebuyers.

For more details visit <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/shared-equity-mortgage-providers-fund>.

In response to part (a), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has received nine applications under the shared equity mortgage providers fund, and five applications have been approved in the amount of \$17 million.

In response to part (b), \$1.3 million has been distributed to date through the SEMP.

In response to part (c), this will support the creation of 700 new housing units.

The data used in the response is as of December 31, 2021.

Question No. 302—Mr. Ed Fast:

With regard to the government's decision on whether or not to ban Huawei from Canada's 5G infrastructure: (a) what is the specific time period for the government to make a decision; and (b) will the government guarantee that a decision will be announced before April 1, 2022?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada will make a decision when the appropriate deliberations have concluded. The government takes the security of Canada's telecommunications infrastructure very seriously.

Question No. 303—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the Vaccine Injury Support Program funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada: (a) what is the budget for the program; (b) how much is being paid to Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton Consulting Incorporated to administer the program; (c) what is the criteria for determining if an applicant will be eligible to

receive funding under the program and how much funding will be provided; (d) how many applications have been (i) received, (ii) successful and granted funding, to date; (e) what are the minimum and maximum funding amounts for which recipients are eligible; and (f) how much funding has been paid out to recipients so far, through the program?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the vaccine injury support program, or VISP, provides financial support to people in Canada in the rare event that they experience a serious and permanent injury as a result of receiving a Health Canada authorized vaccine, administered in Canada, on or after December 8, 2020. The program also provides death benefits and support for funeral expenses in the rare case of a death as a result of receiving a Health Canada authorized vaccine.

The VISP was launched on June 1, 2021, and is being administered independently by Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton Consulting Inc., referred to as RCGT, with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The Public Health Agency of Canada is not involved in individual cases, including in the determination of decisions regarding causality or compensation.

As the independent third party administrator, RCGT oversees all aspects of claims intake and assessment and is responsible for providing periodic public reporting on program statistics. Public reporting began on December 15, 2021, and reflects the first six months of data on the VISP. Public reporting can be found at <https://vaccineinjurysupport.ca/en/program-statistics>.

The Province of Quebec continues to administer its long-standing vaccine injury compensation program. Information on Quebec's vaccine injury compensation program, including program statistics, can be found at <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/advice-and-prevention/vaccination/vaccine-injury-compensation-program#c3895>.

In response to part (a) of the question, a total of \$75 million has been earmarked for the first five years of the program. The actual overall cost of the program will be dependent on the volume of claims and compensation awarded over time.

In response to part (b), a total of \$21.2 million over five years has been allocated to RCGT for the administration of the program. This amount does not include financial support to claimants. Funding will also be provided to the Government of Quebec for the continued delivery of its provincial vaccine injury compensation program.

In response to part (c), the Public Health Agency of Canada has set out the policy parameters under which RCGT is responsible for implementing the VISP, such as the eligibility criteria and the maximum financial support amounts available.

To be eligible for the VISP, an individual must have experienced a serious and permanent injury as a result of receiving a Health Canada authorized vaccine, administered in Canada on or after December 8, 2020.

A serious and permanent injury is defined as a severe, life-threatening or life-altering injury that may require in-person hospitalization or a prolongation of existing hospitalization, and results in persistent or significant disability or incapacity, or where the outcome is a congenital malformation or death.

Claimants will have up to three years after the date of vaccination or date of death, in case of a claim for a death benefit, to file a claim. When a serious and permanent injury becomes apparent gradually, the time limit will run only from the day the injury first becomes apparent.

RCGT's claims assessment process includes a review of all required and relevant medical documentation, as well as current medical evidence, to determine if there is a probable link between the injury and the vaccine. If the RCGT team of medical experts determines a probable link, they will also assess the severity and duration of the injury. This information is used to determine the type and level of financial support awarded to the individual or their survivors.

RCGT is responsible for providing financial support that is comparable to what is provided through the Government Quebec's vaccine injury compensation program and informed by other public and private sector injury compensation practices.

Quebec is continuing to administer its existing provincial program, which has been in place for over 30 years. Individuals vaccinated in all other provinces and territories are eligible under the pan-Canadian program.

In response to part (d), public reporting began on December 15, 2021, and reflects the first six months of data on the VISP. As of November 30, 2021, 400 claims have been received by RCGT, and fewer than five claims have been approved by RCGT. Due to privacy reasons, specific figures cannot be disclosed until a sufficient number of claims have been approved. This approach ensures the anonymity of claimants.

In response to part (d), the program parameters established by PHAC include the following maximum thresholds for financial support categories: income replacement indemnities up to a maximum of \$100,000 per year; injury indemnities up to a maximum of \$275,000; death benefits up to a maximum of \$450,000; funeral costs up to a maximum of \$7,000; and reimbursement of eligible costs including but not limited to medical and rehabilitation costs otherwise not covered by public or private insurance or benefit programs.

As the independent third party administrator of the VISP, RCGT is responsible for establishing a financial support payment framework within these thresholds, while taking into consideration accepted industry practices for injury compensation and ensuring comparable financial support payments to what is provided through the Quebec vaccine injury compensation program.

Routine Proceedings

The amount of compensation an eligible individual receives is determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the injury.

In response to part (f), as of November 30, 2021, less than five claims have been approved by RCGT. Due to privacy reasons, specific figures, including total compensation cannot be disclosed until a sufficient number of claims have been approved. This approach ensures the anonymity of claimants.

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[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions No. 265 and 266, 268 to 276, 279, 281 and 282, 284 and 285, 290 to 294, 296 to 298 and 300 and 304 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 265—**Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to the automotive and manufacturing industry in Canada: (a) has the government worked with any global automotive or manufacturing companies to increase existing, or to bring in a brand new automotive investment in the form of new factories, products, including electric vehicles or batteries, or jobs, to Canada since 2018; (b) is the government considering greenfield or brownfield investment for the automotive and manufacturing industry in Canada; (c) what efforts have been made to invest in existing automotive plants in Canada; (d) has the government requested that the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council meet and consider new investment and greenfield or brownfield investment in the automotive and manufacturing industry in Canada; (e) has the government considered investments for new plants, and, if so, what municipal locations were considered; and (f) what departments, programs and funding have been allocated for the use of hydrogen as part of the auto sector?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 266—**Ms. Leah Gazan:**

With regard to spending directed towards children in foster care, broken down by fiscal year since 2015-16: (a) which programs, initiatives, and funding streams have received funding; (b) what accountability measures does the government use to ensure that the funding is spent in the best interests of the children in care; (c) how much funding in (a) has been recalled due to accountability measures in (b); (d) what enforcement actions have been taken by the government to protect the best interest of children in care; and (e) what is the total number of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children in care, reflected as a percentage of all children in care and as a number?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 268—Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:**

With regard to employee diversity at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), since 2015: (a) what are the titles of reports or reviews commissioned by IRCC relating to (i) workforce diversity, (ii) workplace culture; (b) what reports or reviews commissioned by IRCC are currently ongoing relating to (i) workforce diversity, (ii) workplace culture; (c) broken down by year, occupational group and process (advertised process or non-advertised process), what is the number and percentage of positions that were filled by equity-seeking groups; and (d) broken down by year, occupational group, hiring process used and equity-seeking group, what is the number and percentage of positions that were filled by equity-seeking groups?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 269—Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:

With regard to enforcement of quarantine and COVID-19 testing orders, broken down by period (May to June 2020; July to December 2020; January to June 2021) and nationality of the traveller: (a) how many travellers who were required to quarantine received at least one call to verify compliance; and (b) how many travellers who were required to quarantine were not verified to be in compliance?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 270—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to harassment complaints, workplace violence complaints, and disclosures of wrongdoing related to harassment and discrimination in federal organizations (departments, agencies, Crown corporations, etc.), for fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21, broken down by federal organization, by fiscal year, and for each type of complaint mentioned: (a) how many decisions were made by the organization without conducting an initial assessment; (b) how many complaints were (i) dismissed, (ii) accepted?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 271—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to government measures to address systemic racism in Canada, since January 1, 2016: (a) has the government conducted research to identify and quantify the specific barriers preventing Black, Indigenous, and other minority communities from receiving equal access to financial services; (b) what were the dates and parameters of the research referred to in (a) and what were the institutions directed to carry out this research; (c) what were the conclusions and recommendations of the analyses referred to in (a); (d) which of the recommendations referred to in (c) have been implemented by the government; (e) when and by whom were the recommendations referred to in (c) implemented; (f) has the government conducted research to identify and quantify the specific barriers preventing Black, Indigenous, and other minority communities from receiving equal access to higher education; (g) what were the dates and parameters of the research referred to in (f) and what were the institutions directed to carry out this research; (h) what were the conclusions and recommendations of the analyses referred to in (f); (i) which of the recommendations referred to in (h) have been implemented by the government; (j) when and by whom were the recommendations referred to in (h) implemented; (k) has the government conducted research to identify and quantify the specific barriers preventing Black, Indigenous, and other minority communities from receiving equal treatment in the justice system; (l) what were the dates and parameters of the research referred to in (k) and what were the institutions directed to carry out this research; (m) what were the conclusions and recommendations of the analyses referred to in (k); (n) which of the recommendations referred to in (m) have been implemented by the government; and (o) when and by whom were the recommendations referred to in (m) implemented?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 272—Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to the salmon farming industry and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans: (a) what is the (i) total economic impact of the industry per year from 2011 to 2021 in terms of jobs created, broken down by province, (ii) number of First Nations or Indigenous groups who benefit from agreements with salmon farming companies, (iii) names of First Nations groups who have signed economic benefit agreements with salmon farming companies, (iv) total federal, provincial, and municipal taxes paid per year from the industry, (v) total exports generated per year in terms of tons of salmon and dollar value, (vi) total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contribution of the industry; (b) what is the total economic impact of the salmon farming industry expected per year between 2021 and 2031 in terms of (i) jobs expected to be created in each province, (ii) the number of First Nations or Indigenous

groups who are expected to benefit from agreements with salmon farming companies, (iii) the names of First Nations groups who signed economic benefit agreements with salmon farming companies, (iv) the expected value of benefits in terms of dollars per year to Indigenous or First Nations group by nation and province, (v) total federal, provincial, and municipal taxes expected to be paid by salmon farming companies, (vi) total exports expected to be generated per year in terms of tons of salmon and dollar value, (vii) total projected GDP contribution of the industry to the economy by province; (c) what is the impact of the decision to close the salmon farms on Discovery Island in terms of (i) lost jobs, broken down by province, (ii) lost economic revenue and future revenue by First Nations and Indigenous groups, (iii) the specific actions taken to ensure those who lost jobs have been retrained, (iv) the cost of retaining those who have lost jobs, (v) the estimated cost of reimbursing Indigenous or First Nations groups for lost opportunity, (vi) the incurred cost to date and estimated total cost of litigation to defend the decision to close salmon farms on and around Discovery Island; (d) were prior and informed consultations undertaken by the Crown with each and every impacted First Nations group impacted by the Discovery Island decision prior to the decision being made by the Crown, and, if so, what were the results of the related consultations, including the (i) name of each impacted First Nation or Indigenous group that was consulted, (ii) date and number of times each impacted First Nation or Indigenous group was consulted, (iii) feedback from each impacted First Nation or Indigenous group; (e) what are the details of all consultations the government held with senior officials in the British Columbia government before making the Discovery Island decision, including (i) the name and title of each official, (ii) the dates of the consultations, (iii) the number of times each official was consulted, (iv) whether the official was in support of or opposed to the decision that was eventually made by the government; and (f) what are the government's plans to support the salmon farming industry between 2021 and 2030, including any (i) proposed tax incentives, (ii) research grants, (iii) export or trade promotion support, (iv) innovation and technology support, (v) other incentives to support foreign direct investments in the salmon farming industry in Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 273—Mr. Doug Shipley:

With regard to the National Shipbuilding Strategy: (a) what is the total cost, including working hours, of the first delivered Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS) (Harry DeWolf), broken down by amount spent on (i) engineering, (ii) design, (iii) construction, (iv) commissioning, (v) total hours it took to construct, (vi) overhead under the contract, (vii) the project office; (b) what is the total expected cost for each AOPS from ships one to eight, specifically, the amount spent to date; (c) what is the total spent to date redesigning the AOPS for the Coast Guard and the total expected to be spent by the end of the re-design phase; (d) what are the specific design changes which are to be made on the AOPS for the Navy and the AOPS for the Coast Guard; (e) what is the total anticipated cost to date for the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC), broken down by amount spent on (i) engineering, (ii) design, (iii) construction, (iv) commissioning; (f) how many hours will it take to construct the CSC; (g) what are the specific itemized differences between the T26 and the CSC; (h) what are the top ten risks identified on the CSC program; (i) what are the expected costs of any additional infrastructure required to construct the CSC; (j) are there risks related to the radar systems for the CSC, and, if so, what are they; (k) will the CSC be capable of travelling to the Canadian arctic unescorted and, if so, for how many months of each year during its anticipated 40 years of operational life will it be able to do so;

Routine Proceedings

(l) what is the expected date each CSC will achieve full operational capability to replace the Halifax Class Frigates; (m) what is the anticipated total cost for the Polar Icebreakers, broken down by amount spent on (i) engineering, (ii) design, (iii) construction, (iv) commissioning; (n) what is the total hours it will take to construct the Polar Icebreakers; (o) what are the top ten risks identified on the Polar Icebreakers program; (p) what are the expected costs of any additional infrastructure required to construct the Polar Icebreakers by shipyard; (q) what is the expected delivery date for each Polar Icebreaker; (r) what is the itemized breakdown of the expected savings or value for money for taxpayers from building two identical ships in different shipyards; (s) what is the total cost to date or estimated total cost for the Joint Support Ship (JSS), broken down by amount spent on (i) engineering, (ii) design, (iii) construction, (iv) commissioning; (r) what is the total number of hours it will take to construct the JSS; (t) what are the itemized specific savings or value for money of building two identical ships in the same shipyard; (u) what is the cost of repair for the Halifax Class Frigates between 2019 and 2021 at each shipyard, broken down by the (i) name of shipyard, (ii) name of frigate repairs, (iii) total hours per ship; (v) what is the total anticipated cost to maintain the Halifax Class Frigates from 2021 to 2040, broken down by ship; (w) what is the date of anticipated end of life service for each Halifax Class Frigate ship; and (x) what are the top ten risks related to maintaining each frigate to the end of their anticipated service life, broken down by ship?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 274—Mr. Blake Desjarlais:

With regard to the Canada Student Financial Assistance Program since October 1, 2020, broken down by month: (a) what is the total amount the government has collected in repayments of student loans; (b) what is the total amount of new loans and grants delivered to (i) full-time and part-time students, (ii) students from low-income and middle-income families, (iii) students with dependants, (iv) students with permanent disabilities; and (c) how many new applications have been received under the (i) Repayment Assistance Plan, (ii) Repayment Assistance Plan for Borrowers with a Permanent Disability?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 275—Mr. Blake Desjarlais:

With regard to government funding for fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21 allocated within the constituency of Edmonton Griesbach: what is the total funding amount, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) department or agency, (iii) initiative, (iv) amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 276—Mr. Blake Desjarlais:

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Public Services and Procurement Canada, and Visa Application Centers (VAC): (a) what differences were there between the VAC tender notice posted in June 2020, and the VAC tender notice posted in June 2021; (b) why was the tender notice re-posted; (c) how many bids have been submitted for each tender notice; (d) broken down by start and end date, how many reviews have been conducted on VFS Global since learning that one of their subcontractors was controlled by the Beijing Public Security Bureau; and (e) what recommendations have been made by any such reviews?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 279—Mr. Daniel Blaikie:

With regard to the information collected by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) regarding electronic funds transfers of \$10,000 and over, broken down by fiscal year since 2019-20: (a) how many audits were completed; (b) how many foreign jurisdictions have been reviewed; (c) how many financial institutions have been reviewed; (d) how many international electronic funds transfer operations have been analyzed; (e) what is the total dollar value of the transactions analyzed in (d); (f) how many new files were opened; (g) how many files were closed; (h) of the files closed in (g), what was the average time it took to process the files before they were closed; (i) of the files closed in (g), what was the risk level of each file; (j) how much was spent on contractors and subcontractors; (k) of the contractors and subcontractors in (j), what is the initial and final value of each contract; (l) among the contractors and subcontractors in (j), what is the description of each service contract; (m) how many reassessments were issued; (n) what is the total amount recovered; (o) how many taxpayer files were referred to the CRA's Criminal Investigations Program; (p) of the investigations in (o), how many were referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada; (q) of the investigations in (p), how many resulted in convictions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 281—Mr. Daniel Blaikie:

With regard to housing and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC): (a) how much insured lending did the CMHC approve for rental financing and refinancing of multi-unit rental assets since 2010, broken down by (i) year, (ii) type of investor (e.g. Real Estate Income Trusts, other capital corporations, property companies, holding companies, individuals, etc.); and (b) how much insured lending approved in (a) is associated with the purchase of existing moderate rent assets, further broken down by (i) average rent of units prior to the acquisition, (ii) the rent trajectory for each year following the acquisition that can be linked to the use of the Annual Rental Market Survey managed by CMHC?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 282—Mrs. Carol Hughes:

With regard to the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA), between March 2020 and now, broken down by month: (a) how many air passenger complaints have been received, broken down by the subject matter of the complaint; (b) of the complaints received in (a), how many have been resolved, broken down by (i) facilitation process, (ii) mediation process, (iii) adjudication; (c) how many air passenger complaints were dismissed, withdrawn, and declined, broken down by (i) subject matter of the complaint, (ii) mediation process, (iii) adjudication; (d) for each complaint in (a), how many cases were resolved by a settlement; (e) how many full-time equivalent agency case officers are assigned to deal with air travel complaints, broken down by agency case officers dealing with the (i) facilitation process, (ii) mediation process, (iii) adjudication; (f) what is the average number of air travel complaints handled by an agency case officer, broken down by agency case officers dealing with the (i) facilitation process, (ii) mediation process, (iii) adjudication; (g) what is the number of air travel complaints received but not yet handled by an agency case officer, broken down by agency case officers dealing with the (i) facilitation process, (ii) mediation process, (iii) adjudication; (h) in how many cases were passengers told by CTA facilitators that they were not entitled to compensation, broken down by rejection category; (i) among cases in (h), what was the reason for CTA facilitators not to refer the passengers and the airlines to the Montréal Convention that is incorporated in the international tariff (terms and conditions) of the airlines; (j) how does the CTA define a "resolved" complaint for the purposes of reporting it in its statistics; (k) when a complainant chooses not to pursue a complaint, does it count as "resolved"; (l) how many business days on average does it effectively take from the filing of a complaint to an officer to be assigned to the case, broken down by the (i) facilitation process, (ii) mediation process, (iii) adjudication; (m) how many business days on average does it effectively take from the filing of a complaint to reaching a settlement, broken down by the (i) facilitation process, (ii) mediation process, (iii) adjudication; and (n) for complaints in (a), what is the percentage of complaints that were not resolved in accordance with the service standards?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 284—Mr. Don Davies:**

With regard to the Public Health Agency of Canada's designated quarantine facility (DQF) program: (a) of the \$200 million or more spent to house incoming travellers at DQF sites, what is the complete and detailed accounting of how much Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has spent, from March 2020 to August 2021, broken down by (i) hotel property, (ii) monthly revenue per hotel, (iii) daily room rate per quarantine hotel; (b) for each of the existing DQF hotels, what is the complete and detailed accounting of how much PHAC has spent, from August 2021 to December 2021, broken down by (i) hotel property, (ii) monthly revenue per hotel, (iii) daily room rate per quarantine hotel; (c) for each of the 13 DQF hotels, what is the number of guest rooms designated under quarantine order; (d) what hotels, if any, are no longer participating in the DQF program as of December 2021; (e) for hotels no longer participating in the DQF program, what was the process for ending the quarantine order at that hotel; (f) what was the process for entering into contracts or, if no formal contract was entered into, the financial arrangements to secure each hotel for the DQF program; (g) what oversight mechanism is in place to review the financial arrangements with DQF hotels; (h) for DQF sites at Pacific Gateway and Westin Calgary Airport, what was the process for selecting these sites for the quarantine program; (i) for the DQF at Pacific Gateway, what is the number of contractors hired by PHAC at this site and what services do they perform; (j) for the DQF at Pacific Gateway hotel, what is the complete and detailed accounting of how many travellers have been housed at this facility, since March 27, 2020, including the (i) daily occupancy or number of rooms occupied by travellers, (ii) daily number of rooms occupied by staff or contractors (non-travellers); (k) for the DQF at Pacific Gateway, what efforts did PHAC undertake to seek out an alternative DQF site in 2021; (l) what future plans does PHAC have to contract out management of the DQF program; (m) what is the end date for use of Pacific Gateway hotel as a DQF site; (n) what is the end date for the DQF program at all current sites; (o) how did PHAC apply a gender-based analysis to the impact of the quarantine program on hotel workers displaced by the program; and (p) if undertaken, what was the conclusion of any gender-based analysis to examine the impact of the quarantine program on hotel workers?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 285—Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and the government's arrangement with the Royal Canadian Legion (RCL) pertaining to accessing VAC's clients' files and My VAC account: (a) what are the confidentiality policies currently in place within (i) VAC, (ii) the RCL, pertaining to the privacy of a client's files and My VAC account; (b) which employees of (i) VAC, (ii) the RCL, are authorized to access a client's files and My VAC account and under what conditions are employees authorized to access a client's files and My VAC account; (c) what steps are taken by (i) VAC, (ii) the RCL, if confidentiality policies pertaining to a client's files and My VAC account are violated; (d) what vetting procedures are (i) VAC, (ii) RCL, employees empowered with the ability to access a client's files and My VAC account subjected to, such as security clearances and background checks; and (e) since January 1, 2016, broken down by year, how many instances is VAC aware of where an RCL employee improperly accessed a VAC client's files or My VAC account, and what corrective action, if any, was taken by VAC in response?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 290—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to expenditures on social media influencers, including any contracts which would use social media influencers as part of a public relations campaign, since January 1, 2021, and broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: (a) what are the details of all expenditures, including the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) campaign description, (iv) date of the contract, (v) name or handle of the influencer; and (b) for each campaign that paid an influencer, was there a requirement to make public, as part of a disclaimer, the fact that the influencer was being paid by the government and, if not, why not?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 291—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to the increases in the federal carbon tax or price on carbon: (a) has the government calculated or estimated how much the increase in the carbon tax on April 1, 2022, will cost a family, and, if so, what are the projections; (b) has the government calculated or estimated how much the increase in the carbon tax that takes effect on April 1, 2023, and in subsequent years, will cost a family, and, if so, what are the projections; and (c) what is the detailed breakdown of how the projections in (a) and (b) were arrived at?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 292—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to the seizure of drugs by the Canada Border Services Agency since 2018, broken down by quarter and by type of drug: (a) what is the quantity of drugs that were seized; (b) how many shipments were seized; (c) what is the estimated street value of the drugs that were seized; (d) what is the breakdown of (a) through (c) by country of origin, or suspected country of origin; and (e) what is the government doing to prevent the future attempted importation of drugs from the countries with significant amounts referenced in (d)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 293—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to expenditures on outside auditors to audit government financial statements, since January 1, 2016, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: what are the details of each expenditure, including (i) the vendor, (ii) the date, (iii) the amount, (iv) which financial statements were audited related to the expenditure?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 294—Mr. Martin Shields:

With regard to the comments from the Director of Media Relations at the Bank of Canada (BOC) that "I do not want to be in a situation where we're allowing Blacklocks' to be asking us": (a) how did the BOC determine that they did not want to be in a situation where they're allowing Blacklocks' Reporter to ask them questions; (b) has the BOC received any advice or direction from anyone outside of the BOC, including the Privy Council Office or the Office of the Prime Minister, related to Blacklocks' Reporter, and, if so, what are the details including the dates and summaries of the advice or direction; and (c) what corrective action, if any, is being taken by (i) the BOC, (ii) every other department or agency, broken down by each department or agency, to address any biases against Blacklocks' Reporter, including what measures are being taken to ensure that Blacklocks' gets their fair share of questions in government news conferences?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 296—Mr. Scott Aitchison:

With regard to the 2021 Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program: (a) how many employers were randomly selected for inspections or audits; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by federal riding; (c) how many employees hired through CSJ were interviewed by government officials as part of the inspections or audits; and (d) what is the breakdown of (c) by federal riding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 297—Mr. Scott Aitchison:

With regard to the \$2,959,500,151 in expenditures on transportation machinery and equipment, as listed in Volume III of the 2021 Public Accounts of Canada: what are the details of each expenditure, broken down by department and agency, including, for each, the (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of goods, including the volume purchased, as well as the make and model, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 298—Mr. Kyle Seeback:

With regard to reports to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and media reports that applications for Permanent Residency which are listed under officer DM10032 have not been advanced through the process since March 2020: (a) who or what is DM10032; (b) how many applications are currently assigned to or marked with DM10032; (c) of the DM10032 applications still awaiting a decision as of January 31, 2022, how many were received more than (i) 30 days, (ii) 60 days, (iii) 6 months, (iv) one year, (v) two years, ago; and (d) why have numerous applications assigned to or marked with DM10032 been subject to significant delays?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 300—**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:**

With regard to the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS): (a) how many companies who received payments under CEWS have since entered receivership or bankruptcy proceedings; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by industry sector and by province or territory?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 304—**Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to expenditures by the government on data and telecommunication services related to mobile devices, such as smartphones or tablets, and broken down by month, since January 1, 2020: (a) what are the total expenditures; (b) how many devices' services are being paid for; (c) how much of the expenditures in (a) are related to roaming or similar charges, such as usage while travelling; and (d) how many devices incurred roaming or similar charges?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

CP RAIL STRIKE

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received a notice of a request for an emergency debate. I invite the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton to rise and make a brief intervention.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 52, I am seeking leave to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing an important and urgent matter.

On Saturday, March 19, the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference commenced a strike in advance of a lockout by CP Rail. This is having immediate and serious consequences in our country. Those in the agricultural sector, in advance, had people not sending them feed for their animals because they did not want the feed to get stuck in railcars and go bad. At the same time, planting season is upon us, and the fertilizer that is needed is not going to get there.

The automotive sector has been suffering. Two years of lockdowns in the pandemic have been compounded by border disruptions that shut down its production, and it has not recovered. These are not normal times. It simply cannot take another hit.

The Chamber of Commerce has called on the House to bring forward back-to-work legislation. This is an urgent issue requiring immediate attention from the House. I am requesting an emergency debate tonight.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for her intervention. However, I am not satisfied that her request meets the requirements for the Standing Order at this time.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 13 minutes.

Business of Supply

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—COST OF LIVING

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith is up, and I know there were approximately six minutes or so left in her time.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, right now we are seeing how big corporations spend their record profits. As just one example, last year Scotiabank made a net profit of over \$10 billion. After jacking up fees for customers throughout the pandemic, it paid out over \$4 billion in dividends to its wealthy shareholders. The same applies to many large grocery store chains that are seeing profits like never before, while the price paid by hard-working Canadians for groceries continues to increase. While corporations raised their prices throughout the pandemic, wages have remained stagnant. It is a broken system and it is only getting worse under the current Liberal government.

Instead of following through with his most recent election campaign promise of raising taxes on the most profitable big banks and insurance companies, the Prime Minister continues to make life easier for the wealthiest and largest corporations. On this side of the House, we know that this surtax cannot come quickly enough. It is also vital that Canada goes beyond just banking and insurance and extends this surtax to oil companies and large grocery store chains with net profits over \$1 billion. Canadians know that these record-setting profits are due to big companies taking every penny from regular people that they can. Supporting this motion will show that the government is ready to stand up for Canadians who elected them instead of just wealthy stockholders.

For months now we have seen Liberals and Conservatives try to score political points around who is to blame for the rising cost of living in Canada, but neither really understands the challenges that everyday people are facing and just how out of reach life is becoming for regular people. In some parts of British Columbia, we have recently seen rent explode by almost 20% in the last six months alone. The price of the average home in Nanaimo, in my riding, recently rose above \$1 million. These prices are absurd and out of reach for seniors on fixed incomes or new families looking to buy their first homes. They are a by-product of investors and private equity firms buying up homes, reducing supply and then driving up prices.

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Shamefully, while Canadians continue to struggle to find homes, they do not have any way to see who they are competing with when trying to do so due to Canada's weak public beneficial ownership registry laws. That is why our motion today also calls for the government to get serious about a beneficial ownership registry. Canada's weak disclosure laws allow for an estimated \$130 billion to be laundered through Canadian corporations each year, and the real estate market is a huge part of this illegal activity. In British Columbia, the provincial NDP has moved forward with a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry, but it cannot do it alone. Unfortunately, the current government has barely begun to scratch the surface. At the rate we are headed, we will not see anything to curb money laundering and tax evasion until at least 2025.

One thing that continues to be true prior to the pandemic and remains the same today is that it is not the workers or those living in the communities who are benefiting from the billions in corporate profit. Instead, it is the wealthy corporate shareholders. It is time to start holding these large corporations to account by paying their fair share and putting it back where it belongs, in our communities.

One of the truly remarkable things about our community in Nanaimo—Ladysmith is the strength of our small and medium-sized businesses. These are businesses that have made our region their home and want to see it thrive. They are invested. Like every-day Canadians, these businesses are also feeling the pinch. Our local chambers of commerce are seeing businesses struggle. They are struggling to find employees because people are being priced out of the housing market. They are struggling to make their businesses work with increased costs from high gas prices and banking fees. This motion is critical to allowing our local small and medium-sized businesses to operate on an even playing field.

I want to close my thoughts by speaking about people like Jocelyn, who feel like they have been left behind, who feel like the system has been built to keep them down while the wealthiest keep getting richer. We can build a system where people are not left behind, where prescription medications, dental care, eye care and mental health services are all part of a public health care system, where we invest in programs to better support seniors living on GIS and CPP and we ensure that everyone is able to afford a roof over their heads and groceries for their families.

• (1545)

A better, more compassionate system starts with the Liberal government getting serious about putting people before corporate greed. It is about the government living up to its campaign promises and getting serious about taxing Canada's wealthiest corporations, and it is about making sure that Canadians can finally have more corporate accountability through a publicly available beneficial ownership registry.

A more compassionate future is possible. We can build a future where everyone has the support they need. I hope every member in the House will help us move forward toward a better future and support this motion.

• (1550)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government have been up on

this particular file from day one when we introduced a tax, a special tax on Canada's 1% wealthiest, shortly after taking the government back in 2015 to just a couple of months ago.

I would ask the member to reflect on what we voted on just a couple of months ago, which was to have an annual percentage tax on individuals who purchased properties in Canada yet are not using them as their residences. Could she provide her thoughts? She talked about the importance of housing and taxation.

What the government needs to do is to look at the ways in which we can ensure that people are paying their fair share of tax. In this situation it is a real tax. It is going to be a real income coming in, making homes hopefully even that much more affordable going forward.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, we know that in 2018, the amount of money laundering was estimated at \$5.3 billion just in British Columbia, my home province, through the real estate sector. We know that money laundering through home purchases is putting an upward pressure on prices. I think we can all agree on that.

We need to see the Liberal government implementing transparency tools that discourage money laundering by criminals and the wealthy at a pace that is much quicker than what we are seeing today. That is why we are putting forward in this motion the need for a beneficial ownership registry that creates a means for us to shine a light on the assets and properties that are owned and may be otherwise hidden by shell companies. I am in agreement that we need to do all we can to move forward.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been interesting for me to observe NDP members over the last few days speaking about gas prices and wanting gas prices to be lower. I thought that Liberal and NDP politicians actually wanted gas prices to be higher. Is it not the point of their carbon tax policy to raise the cost of gas? They think that will discourage people from driving more.

It is curious for me to hear, in the vein of affordability along with the concerns being raised, the New Democrats, in particular, saying that affordability is a problem because gas prices are too high. Why would the NDP not simply reverse its position with respect to the carbon price if it wants gas prices to be lower?

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, we know that we need to be doing all we can to reduce pollution. We are in a climate crisis and we need to be ensuring that we are investing in renewable energy sources and moving away from our reliance on oil and gas. Bigger than that, we need to look at ensuring that the big oil and gas companies that are reaping profits like we have never seen before are paying their fair share. Their fair share of taxes can then be put back into the community where it belongs.

We know the impacts from this high cost of living crisis are being felt disproportionately by those with lower incomes. We need to take the money that is taxed from big oil and gas corporations and put it back into the pockets of everyday people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government members are talking about a tax for the super-rich. In 2015, shortly after being elected, this government offered what it politely called a tax cut for the middle class. In reality, Canadians whose taxable income was between \$90,000 and \$230,000 are the ones who benefited.

Can my colleague tell me whether we can still trust the Liberal Party when it comes to taking care of the middle class and voters?

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, this is a very good question. What we are seeing right now through the pandemic is that the rich are getting richer and the number of people struggling to make ends meet is increasing. We need to make sure that we are looking at how we lift everyone up and that we are taking care of one another. Right now the systems that we have are not set up to do that.

I spoke about Jocelyn, who is a constituent in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. Without her knowing that this motion was coming forward, she spoke about the barriers that she was experiencing in being able to get ahead and that we need to stop and look at the systems that we have so that everybody has an opportunity to—

• (1555)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Whitby.

We are fully aware that the effects of high inflation are being felt across the country. As the member for Burnaby South surely knows, it is a global phenomenon, and the price of goods has increased around the world. This is due to a number of factors.

First, during the pandemic, millions of people reallocated money they usually spent on services to the purchase of physical goods. This put extraordinary pressure on global supply chains and led to shortages and bottlenecks. Furthermore, droughts in the main food-producing regions, including the Canadian Prairies, resulted in higher grocery bills. All of this has been exacerbated by the current instability of global markets following Russia's illegal and unwarranted attack on Ukraine.

President Putin's unjustified war has led to an increase in the price of raw materials and again threatens to disrupt the supply of goods. This puts upward pressure on prices. There is also the pandemic, which continues to threaten global supply chains and in-

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crease inflation as a result of a resurgence of cases in China and another wave starting in Europe at this time.

Many factors are putting upward pressure on prices. Canadians are worried about the rising cost of living and I am too. The Bank of Canada and private sector economists predict that inflation could remain higher for a little longer than initially thought. However, they expect it to go back down to the 2% target over the next two years, as the repercussions of the pandemic start to fade.

Let us face it, these are truly uncertain times on many fronts. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a new major source of uncertainty. The price of oil and energy have recently spiked. Our government acted swiftly and decisively with the European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom to impose the harshest sanctions ever placed on a major economy. For those sanctions to be truly effective and have a real impact, we must be prepared for any adverse consequences to our own economy. This could temporarily affect the cost of living for Canadians.

Opposition members often bring up the rising cost of oil and gas. It is true that prices have risen sharply as of late. However, my colleagues have an unfortunate tendency to make obscure connections to explain this increase, for example by tying it to our pandemic spending or our tax on pollution.

They are obviously ignoring the main factor behind this increase, which is, of course, Russia's unjustified war against Ukraine. The Conservatives like to say that we must do more for Ukraine. They even brought up a no-fly zone over Ukraine before changing their minds a few hours later. They seem to be not only unsure of where they stand, but also completely oblivious to the economic consequences of this war and of our sanctions.

That said, I remind members that the federal government's assistance programs, such as the Canada child benefit, old age security, the guaranteed income supplement and the GST credit are indexed to inflation. This ensures that the benefits will increase in tandem with the increase in the cost of living.

In recent years our government has also lowered taxes for the middle class and increased taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians. We are also working very hard to address the high cost of housing.

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• (1600)

Over the longer term, Canada's monetary policy framework is the best weapon in our arsenal to keep prices stable and keep inflationary pressures in check. That is why, last December, our government and the Bank of Canada announced the renewal of the 2% inflation target for another five-year period. This renewed framework will keep the bank focused on delivering low, stable and predictable inflation for Canada.

Since Canada adopted an inflation targeting framework about 30 years ago, inflation has averaged close to 2%. This has contributed to our country's strong labour market performance, to our economic growth and, of course, to our prosperity. Maintaining a stable environment for the prices that Canadians pay is a paramount objective for Canada's monetary policy, as implemented by the Bank of Canada.

I trust that my fellow members are aware of the efforts that our government is making to address the rising cost of living and to make life more affordable for Canadians. It is also important to remember that the significant support our government delivered to Canadians and businesses during the pandemic has contributed to a rapid and resilient recovery so far.

Canada has far exceeded expectations, surpassing its goal of one million new jobs and posting the strongest job recovery rate in the G7. Still, we recognize that the recovery is happening more slowly in some sectors. That is why the government has shifted from very broad support to more targeted measures that provide help when and where it is needed.

It is also true that some sectors and businesses have seen their profits go way up during the pandemic. We know that banks have continued to make a lot of money during the pandemic. That is why one of the planks in our campaign platform was to raise corporate income taxes on the largest, most profitable banks and insurance companies in the country and on corporations earning more than \$1 billion per year.

That is very important, because we want to build a sustainable, united Canada. We want to build a fairer, more equitable Canada where nobody is left behind. That means focusing on jobs and economic growth. It means making sure the cost of living is within everybody's reach.

I know our government will have much more to say about this in our next budget. I am looking forward to debating it here in the House.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, it has been scientifically proven that prosperity gaps have been increasing steadily over the past few decades. Many economists concur.

Does my hon. colleague not think the government should do more to go after wealthy companies and make them pay more, in order to help the most vulnerable? Does she agree that this motion makes sense and is entirely valid?

• (1605)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, of course I agree. For me and for many of my constituents, raising taxes on the largest

and most profitable banks was an essential part of our election platform.

However, that is not the only thing included in the motion we are debating today, and that is why we are discussing it.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a simple question for my hon. friend with respect to affordability. Gas prices are top of mind for many Canadians. Does the government wish to see gas prices higher, lower or where they are right now?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I was very interested by my colleague's earlier question on this same topic. I would like to remind the member, as well as all members in the House, that the price on pollution that he likes to refer to as a gas tax, which I am fine with, is actually completely compensated, for Canadians and all members of the middle class, through our climate action incentive.

Canadians do not pay a higher rate at the pumps because of our price on pollution. They are paying a higher rate at the pump at the moment because of several factors related to the pandemic, which I detailed in my speech, and because of the unjustified and illegal war that Russia has begun against Ukraine.

I would be happy to engage with my colleague further on the topic, if he likes.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I really am in favour of this motion, and one of the things I want to highlight in it is the last point: a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry. Just within the last few days, an important report was released called "Snow-washing, Inc: How Canada is marketed abroad as a secrecy jurisdiction". This is not just federal. I want to emphasize that this happens provincially too. However, non-Canadian corporations can register and take housing out of our markets for speculators.

Does the hon. member have a comment on that?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, one of the measures that I am very much in favour of is to increase taxes on those who are speculating in our markets here in Canada. We have proposed a tax on foreign buyers who wish to scoop up Canadian homes for the purpose of either flipping them or leaving them vacant in order to have a property sold at a later date. I think we absolutely need to attack speculation, and I thank my colleague for her question.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I listen to my Conservative colleagues, something is bugging me.

They are saying that their constituents like low gas prices, but the oil companies like high gas prices, because the cost structure of these companies means that they are only profitable when the price of oil goes up.

Could my colleague please clarify the following: Do Albertans like expensive oil or cheap oil?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, as a proud Quebecker, I would not dare speak for Albertans, and I think that my colleague would agree with me.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to what degree do we need to count on action by the provinces in order to get meaningful measures to deal with the high cost of things and particularly housing?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, it is important for us to continue to work with the entire private sector and particularly with our banks. As I mentioned in my speech, it was an important platform commitment to raise the income tax for the most profitable and largest banks in the country.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak to the opposition motion before the House.

We are acutely aware that many Canadians are being squeezed by higher prices for groceries and gasoline. Our government knows that elevated inflation, a global phenomenon, is driven by the unprecedented challenge of restarting the world's economy and the instability of global markets as a result of Russia's attack on Ukraine. These factors are leading Canadians to worry, and rightly so, about the cost of living.

The pandemic also continues to be a threat to global supply chains and inflation, with a surge in cases in China and another wave beginning in Europe. As global economies have unwound COVID-19-related restrictions and re-opened their economies, the price of goods has gone up around the world.

This is a result of several factors. One is that during the pandemic, millions upon millions of people redirected the money they usually spent on in-person services towards durable physical goods. This has put an extraordinary strain on global supply chains, leading to shortages and bottlenecks. This has been a significant driver of inflation around the world. Furthermore, the droughts in key food-producing regions, including our prairies, have caused grocery bills to go up, and energy prices have increased at rates not seen in decades.

Indeed, the Bank of Canada and private sector economists anticipate that inflation may stay higher for longer than initially expected, but they expect it to ease back towards the 2% target over the next two years as pandemic-related forces start to fade and as market conditions begin to rebalance and equalize and hopefully return somewhat to normal.

As we have always said, restarting the economy is a complex process, and the Canadian and global economies are still feeling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, along with higher prices for a broad range of commodities, the Russian invasion threatens

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renewed supply disruptions, all of which are expected to add upward pressure on prices.

Our government has been swift and decisive in its actions, along with Europe, the United States and the United Kingdom, to put in place the toughest sanctions ever imposed on a major economy. We remain steadfast in our support for Ukraine and we will do whatever is needed to continue to put pressure on Russia and choke President Putin's ability to fund his illegal and unprovoked war of aggression on Ukraine.

However, in order to really be effective, in order to really have an impact, we are going to have to be prepared for some adverse consequences for our own economy, which could also temporarily affect Canadians' cost of living. That said, Canadians should rest assured that when it comes to government benefits and concerns over inflation, the government indexes the Canada child benefit to inflation, as well as old age security, the guaranteed income supplement, the goods and services tax credit, and other benefits for the most vulnerable people.

Our government has also cut taxes for the middle class while raising them on the top 1%, and we are working to address the housing affordability issues that we see across our country as well. In fact, we have put in place Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, a \$72-billion investment over 10 years that has created hundreds of thousands of affordable housing units, and we have now added a large package of new measures in addition to the national housing strategy, which should help to control the affordable housing problem.

We are also working with provinces and territories to implement a Canada-wide \$10-a-day community-based early learning and child care system that would make life more affordable for families, create new jobs, get parents back into the workforce and grow the middle class while giving every child a real and fair chance at success. Ontario is the only province that has not signed on to these agreements, and we are looking forward to getting that done. It would save families in my riding of Whitby up to \$600 per month in just the first year through a 50% reduction in fees. That is a pretty significant amount of savings for the average family. We could think about that in terms of per-child savings, so if a family has two or three children, there would be even more savings.

● (1610)

I also want to mention renewing Canada's monetary policy framework. Additionally, a strong monetary policy framework is the best weapon in our arsenal to keep prices stable and keep inflationary pressures in check.

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Our government and the Bank of Canada believe that monetary policy can best serve Canadians by continuing to focus on price stability. That is why, last December, our government and the Bank of Canada announced the renewal of the 2% inflation target for another five-year period. This renewed framework will keep the bank focused on delivering low, stable and predictable inflation in Canada.

Since Canada adopted an inflation targeting framework 30 years ago, inflation has averaged close to 2%, which has contributed to our country's strong labour market performance, to our economic growth and to our prosperity. Maintaining a stable environment for the prices that Canadians pay is a paramount objective for Canada's monetary policy. That has been the case for 30 years and it will remain the case for the next five. Doing so supports a strong and inclusive labour market that provides every Canadian with opportunities for a good, high-quality way of life. That is why the review and renewal of Canada's monetary policy framework every five years is such an important moment for our country. This renewal of Canada's monetary policy framework is fundamental to Canada's economic success. It is about continuity and about continuing to do what we know works.

As members can see, our government is already working hard to address the cost of living and to make life more affordable for Canadians. Thankfully, by delivering significant fiscal policy support to Canadians during the pandemic and avoiding harmful austerity policies, we have seen a rapid and resilient recovery so far. The vast majority of the government's recovery plan is targeted towards growth-enhancing and job-creating initiatives, such as investments to support child care and the adoption of new technologies that will help boost supply and increase space for the economy to grow without the risk of higher inflation. Our government has moved from very broad-based financial supports to more targeted measures that will provide help where it is needed and when it is needed.

I am pleased to say that our plan is working. Canada has exceeded its goal of creating a million jobs, well ahead of expectations. It has the strongest job recovery rate in the G7. In fact, as of February, despite the temporary effects of the omicron variant on Canada's labour market, 112% of the jobs lost since the peak of the pandemic have been recouped in Canada. That is significantly outpacing the U.S., which is at just about 90% of jobs recovered.

Canada's GDP has now returned to prepandemic levels. It was reported in the fourth quarter of 2021 that the annualized growth rate of GDP in Canada was 6.7%, which is a pretty incredible economic recovery. We are well on track, and we focus now on shifting to sustaining and enhancing Canada's growth potential. That is going to be important as we move forward.

However, we know that more can be done, especially as we emerge from COVID-19. Despite impressive economic performance in certain parts of the economy, as I stated, our government is mindful of the global phenomenon of elevated inflation and its impact on the cost of living, and mindful that housing continues to be top of mind for many Canadians. As we look to the years ahead, the government's focus will continue to be on jobs and growth and making life more affordable, priorities that will form the foundation of the upcoming budget. The cost of living crisis and making life more affordable have been priorities for our government, and I have

given many examples in my speech today. There is much more work to be done, of course, and this is an ongoing concern for Canadians.

To wrap up, there are many factors due to the current geopolitical context. Our country and Canadians have gone through many crises over the last two years, and our government is doing its very best to remain responsive to the needs of Canadians and address the affordability challenges that every Canadian experiences. By no means have we solved it all, but at the same time we have made a lot of progress, and we will continue to work hard to alleviate the stresses and strains that many Canadians face with the cost of living challenges.

• (1615)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his speech.

In the most recent mandate letters for the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, the commitment to make a beneficial ownership registry public was curiously absent. I would ask the member if he knows if his government is still committed to making this registry public.

Currently, the government only collects limited data on ownership, and money laundering is wreaking havoc on our housing market. Will the member across the way commit today to push his government to make this important registry public?

• (1620)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's push in this direction. It is an important discussion to have. Strengthening the transparency needed for corporate beneficial ownership is a topic that our government is very concerned with and, in fact, has done a pretty substantive public consultation and engagement on.

I note a document posted on the Government of Canada's website from April 6, 2021, provides quite a lot of information about some very detailed and in-depth consultation work that was done. I will read the conclusion, which states:

...stakeholders across the spectrum supported the idea of a central registry (or registries) of beneficial ownership information as an effective tool in making sure that law enforcement, tax and other authorities obtain the information they need to identify the natural persons who own and control Canadian corporations. While there were more mixed views on the value and merits of public access, [this]...remains a priority of the Government of Canada.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned child care in his speech as part of this debate on affordability. He is keen that his province sign on. I will share a big challenge that I am hearing of from child care providers in my province, a province that has signed a deal with the federal government, and that is that the federal plan effectively involves deregulation and limited increases to fees, which are actually below the current rate of inflation.

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Child care providers are very concerned. They are being told that they cannot charge more than a certain amount, that they cannot raise their fees beyond a certain amount, and that is severely limiting their ability to expand to offer more child care services and do what this plan is theoretically supposed to do, which is to increase the availability of child care.

In the short term, it sounds great to say the fees are being regulated, but in the long term, if child care providers cannot expand, cannot afford to offer services and are being forced to close as a result of the cost squeeze on them from inflation and other factors, there is a serious problem. It is a real sort of ticking time bomb in the availability of child care services.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's concern and interest in seeing child care agreements signed across the country and the substantive reduction in fees that families, which are ultimately the consumers and beneficiaries of these services, would experience as a result of the very substantive federal government investments across Canada.

In terms of regulating and capping fees, this is an issue that our government would take seriously. The formula, as I understand it, as it applies to the provinces and territories, seems quite fair from my perspective. Ontario has \$10.3 billion on the table that it can take advantage of to offer children and families across Ontario access to affordable child care. That is an opportunity not to be missed.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, the last two government members who spoke talked to us about the monetary policy framework and tried to reassure us by telling us that there are still two years of higher inflation ahead before it goes back down to 2%.

Let me do the math for my colleague. If we include energy and food, inflation was 6% last year. If that percentage stays the same this year and the next before going back down to 2%, that translates to a 20% increase in prices over four years, or the equivalent of 10 years of inflation in 48 months.

That is why we are asking that old age security be increased by \$110 a month for our seniors. I would like to know if the Liberals do not know how to count or if they have simply forgotten about our seniors.

[English]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's lesson in mathematics. Our government has not forgotten how to count.

As I said in my speech, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement are indexed to inflation. The Bank of Canada has set 2% as a target, and over the course of the next five years, it will be putting a monetary policy in place, including the recent increase in the base interest rate, that will help to control inflation.

• (1625)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the amazing member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

We are here today to talk about an NDP motion that really addresses the key issue of where the bar of dignity is in this country we all belong to. What we are seeing across this country is more and more people falling below it. Members may ask what I mean by the bar of dignity. To me, it means that one has the ability to look after themselves, to have a roof over their head, to be able to feed themselves, to be able to afford the medication they need and to be able to access those basic things that we all deserve to be a part of because we are all Canadians and because we live in a wealthy country that should be looking after all the people who live in it. Right now, we are in another government, another federal government, which passes hands between the Liberals and Conservatives, that continues to take that bar of dignity and lower it and lower it.

We have heard from some of our Liberal friends here today that there are some great economic outcomes. There are more jobs and there are more opportunities. However, when we talk to everyday people who are living through that experience right now, what we see very clearly is that a lot of those folks are working three or four of those jobs trying to make ends meet. We are talking about families who do not get to spend time together as a family because both working parents have to juggle all of those factors. We need to look at this in what we are seeing people do and see where their needs are.

I cannot help but touch on housing. In my riding of North Island—Powell River, we have seen a huge increase in the cost of living. That is largely based around a housing market that has exploded. Parts of my riding, some of the most rural and remote communities, have seen the cost of housing go up between 60% and 80%. That means that people who are living within those communities cannot afford to purchase within their own community.

It has also had a huge impact on people who were renting homes. With the market exploding this way, we are seeing a lot of people who own houses that they usually rent out are selling those houses because they are making a lot of money in doing so. This means more and more people are unhoused.

Just the other day, we had a gentleman walk into our office. My staff were quick to tell me when I came back. It was a gentleman who lives on disability. He has been living in his apartment for many, many years and has just been told that he has to leave because a new person bought the home that has the rental unit he lives in. His reality, and it is the truth because I have heard it from so many people across my riding, is there is nowhere else for him to go. There is no affordable unit for him.

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When I hear that the government is giving money to private corporations that are charging rents that are 30% to 120% higher than the market rate, it just tells us this is not a project or program that the government is taking seriously. It is not about making sure the people who are unhoused, who are struggling, who do not know how they are going to live from day to day are going to be able to have an affordable home to live in. It is about priorities, and that is what this motion is about in this House. It is about saying that the people who work hard every day deserve to be treated with dignity.

I think about these challenges. I have talked to a lot of professionals who have lost their rental units simply because they have been sold from underneath them. They are now living in trailers hoping that trailer parks will not just stay open during the normal summer, spring and fall months, but that they will stay open the whole year, just so they have somewhere safe to live.

I also think about the many seniors who had the GIS clawed back. They were contacting our office. They are very grateful they are seeing those dollars come back to them, but in a lot of cases, they have already lost their home and have already lost where they live. Now, because the cost of living is going up so much and because the cost of rentals are going up so much, they have nowhere to live.

Just the other day I was at Kwesa Place, which is a place in Campbell River that provides showers and laundry facilities for those who are unhoused. When I was there, I met a lot of folks who are just struggling to get by, who are really challenged for multiple reasons.

• (1630)

One of the things that was most startling to me was that inside that space they have a project they are working on. They are building wooden structures that people would be able to pull, either on their own or with a bike, that they can live in, because there is nowhere else for them to live.

I really respect solutions. I really respect when communities come together, look at some of these issues and create solutions, but this tells me we are still not seeing a federal government that sees the right to housing as a basic human right. The government is saying that it is okay for people to scrounge around to make a few thousand dollars and build a wooden box to live in, so they do not get cold in a rainstorm.

As such, I appreciate what Kwesa Place is doing. I really appreciate the warmth it brings and how it helps people be able to wash their laundry, but I want the bar of dignity in this country to be higher. That is what this motion is about.

I have also had some conversation with food banks in my riding. We have talked about the huge numbers of people who are coming through and continue to come through. They are people who have never had to use the food bank before. People who are working hard every day and making a decent income are having to come to the food banks because they cannot afford not to. Why is the government continuing to allow the bar of dignity for Canadians to go so far down?

What I find the most frustrating is that often in these big moments of discussion about how to make the world a better place, I see people fighting one another and people mad because one group of people has one right and another group of people has another right. I think it is important for all of us, as Canadians, to come together and ask what the real issue is here. The real issue here is that wealth is being held by very few in this country, and every year we are seeing their piece of the pie grow larger and everybody else's grow smaller, so I really encourage Canadians to stop fighting about their small piece of the pie and other people's small pieces of the pie.

Let us start talking about what really needs to happen, which is leadership from the federal government to say that, if someone is going to make enormous profits, they need to step up and pay their fair share. I can tell members that the people in my riding, whether they work in the fishing industry, the logging industry, or in education or tourism, are paying their fair share every single day. They care about their communities every single day, but there are those in this country who are not paying their fair share.

I just want to let my constituents know that in 2021, Scotiabank had a net profit of over \$10 billion. It paid \$4.3 billion of those billions of dollars in dividends to the shareholders, and at the same time it increased its customers' banking fees. Then we saw that BMO made a net profit of \$7.7 billion and paid out over \$2.7 billion in dividends, while increasing the fees for its customers' bank accounts.

We can look at Loblaws, owned by the very wealthy Weston family, which made a net profit of \$1.9 billion. They paid \$484 million in dividends to their shareholders. However, they refused to increase the wages of their workers. They refused to supplement those frontline workers who have been working on the front line during this pandemic and who continue to work on the front line. They are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Really, today we are here to talk about fairness, to take up that space and make this country a little fairer. Let us look at this motion. It would direct the Liberals to fulfill their campaign promise. This is perhaps a bit of a new thing for them, but something I am really hopeful they will follow through with. They said they would implement a 3% surtax on banks and insurance companies with net profits over \$1 billion.

We also want to see it extended to oil companies and large grocery chains with net profits over \$1 billion because it is time for a government in this country to finally stand up, stop protecting excess corporate profits and start saying the bar of dignity in this country needs to be higher.

We should not have seniors at the bottom grovelling for the things they need, when they built this country. We should not be asking families to put groceries back on the shelves because they cannot afford them. Hopefully we will see some action on this.

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• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would not want to see false impressions being given when we have seen over the last number of years a progressive government that has focused special taxes on some of the wealthiest in Canada, right from the first budget up to legislation that we just passed.

Recognizing that the member made reference to the cost of housing, we now have an annual tax for individuals who are purchasing condos and so forth, in places such as Vancouver and our other big cities, and using them purely as an investment as opposed to a residence. That is a special annual tax that will be applied to very wealthy people. There are different ways we can approach this.

I would suggest to the member that what she said has been noted, and I appreciate the comments, but I would ask her if she could provide her thoughts on this: When you make reference to banks, we need to be fair. Many of the shareholders of the banks are pension funds and so forth, so it is not only individuals per se.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that I do not participate.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, as always, I appreciate that the member rises almost every time, after almost every single speech in this House, to ask yet another question.

I want to remind the member that it is not the opposition's job to make the government feel better about the inaction of its steps. What I really would like to see is fairness and a bar of dignity. As the great Shania Twain says, "That don't impress me much".

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her very refreshing speech. It is good to hear people propose progressive, tangible ideas.

The Liberal Party had already promised a 3% surtax during the election campaign. The NDP's motion today expands the application of that surtax to oil companies and big box stores. Could my colleague explain this decision to expand the surtax to those two sectors?

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for that thoughtful question. I really appreciate it because one of the things I think is really important in this conversation is that the federal government has the tools in place to measure where wealth is extreme and where profits are coming in at high amounts.

The reality is we know that people living in Canada, everyday people, are seeing poverty grow. They are making decisions that I think Canada does not want them making. This is why we brought forward these additions. These are for folks who have been making a profit in excess of \$1 billion. It is only fair that when one is making an excess of profit that we open up those doors and make sure that no one is left behind.

Unfortunately, we have systems that continuously leave some people behind. They think that crumbs, a little extra here and there, will make a difference. We need to see that bar of dignity rise. That is why we proposed this motion.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, while big box stores, big banks and big oil companies are making record profits, over half of Canadians are struggling to keep up with the cost of living. I have heard Conservatives in this House imply that extreme wealth inequality is inevitable, but consecutive Liberal and Conservative governments have made choices that got us here. Can the member speak to the responsibility of the current government to own up to what it has done, what got us here, and to take action now?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, the member's question is really perceptive and thoughtful, because that is the reality. What we are seeing is consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments continue to make decisions, make laws and not fight the laws that grow the wealth of the wealthiest people in this country, and that leaves everybody else behind.

As we go through these hard times, as we face challenges of inflation, and I am from B.C. so know how high the cost of gas is, we see that everyday workers, everyday people, and those who cannot work because they have health issues, cannot get ahead or even reach dignity. Therefore, the government has to take action.

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Housing.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I truly believe that every member of Parliament is here for similar reasons. We want to do right by our community and we all have an overall goal of leaving Canada a better place than when we found it. I have always told people in my riding that the politics come into play because we have different ideas on how to achieve those very same ends.

In the present climate in Canada, Canadians from coast to coast to coast are really suffering. There is a lot of struggle out there. This is one of those moments in time when they are really crying out for bold policy. This is an opportunity for members of Parliament to ask themselves why they are here and if they are actually making a difference in people's lives.

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I acknowledge that the motion before the House today, the motion brought forward by the New Democratic Party of Canada, is non-binding on the government. What it does do is send a powerful message because if the House were to vote in favour of this motion it would send a signal to the cabinet. It would send a signal that most of the MPs in this place, representing the majority of Canadians, want to see a shift in government policy to level the playing field and to address the very real concerns of Canadians.

What are we asking the government to do? We are essentially asking it to commit to a campaign promise and commit to a promise that was made in its budget. Excuse me if I sound a bit jaded. They sound like pretty simple things. However, I have been a member of the House since 2015, and I have a lot of unfortunate experience with Liberal promises that were left by the wayside.

It is a government that once promised electoral reform and cynically left it in the dust. It is a government that has promised sincere action on climate change, yet invested billions of public taxpayer dollars into a pipeline. Imagine investing in fossil fuel infrastructure in this day and age when all of the evidence of climate change surrounds us every day. What kind of a message is that sending to our children?

By every metric, whether looking at housing, at fuel, at the cost of food or at wealth inequality, there are multiple failures to be found. I acknowledge that my friends on the Liberal side are, in their way, trying to bring policy to address some of those core concerns. I will acknowledge that. However, if we look at the evidence on the ground we see that they are failing. They are not properly addressing those very real concerns that Canadians have.

In my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, in one year we saw housing prices go up anywhere from 30% to 40%. That is simply unsustainable. When I have families in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, families with two incomes earning six figures, who are put on the street or given notice because the landlord sold their property to take advantage of the skyrocketing housing costs and, with their income level, they cannot find a place to rent, that is a real problem. That is an indictment on the current federal government's housing policy. The market is failing Canadians and, therefore, we must find non-market solutions to address this housing crisis.

Regarding fuel prices, I acknowledge that is something out of our control. There is a war going on in Ukraine and oil is one of the most volatile energy sources on earth. It always will be. It always has been. However, when we see price increases in my riding going up to over two dollars a litre last week, that puts a real strain on family budgets. It increases the cost of everything, from building materials to the cost of food, pretty much everything that is transported by rail or by truck. Families need a break.

If we look at wealth inequality, over the last two years we see Canadian families who have been having to deal with so much. We see that the richest people in Canada have increased their wealth by billions of dollars. That is not fair.

Therefore, what are we asking the government to do with its promises that were made in the campaign and in the budget?

• (1645)

We are proposing that it add a 3% surtax on banks and insurance companies with profits of over \$1 billion. Just so that is clear for the residents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, a company will have had to have made a profit of \$1 billion before the tax would apply. It is simply not right when we have families struggling with the basic necessities of life to be seeing those record profits being made and they are at the other end. We are simply asking that we honour those promises, that we tax extreme wealth at the high end and that we reinvest that money into our communities, reinvest it into working families and reinvest it to make our communities resilient.

I have listened to some of the debate today and Conservatives talk about addressing inflation through building more pipelines, giving a GST holiday to fuel or getting rid of the carbon tax. In my view, that is extremely short-sighted policy because it does nothing to address the inflationary pressures of climate change. It also ignores the fact that oil and gas are, as I said before, our most volatile energy sources.

Speaking of the volatility of that as a fuel source, the inflationary pressures that will come to us from climate change are going to be measured in the trillions of dollars. If we think that fuel prices now are high, imagine what is going to happen when we have conflicts arising around the world because of the scarcity of water resources or the fact that agriculture has been devastated or that coastal cities are inundated because of rising flood waters. These have real economic costs. Forget the ecological argument; listen to the economic argument. How many future tax dollars are we prepared to spend to address these issues?

We know they are going to drive up costs. To suggest in the House that we should build more pipelines and that we should have some kind of small short-sighted tax holiday is completely ignoring what the costs will be if we continue to use fossil fuels and continue to let climate change go on a runaway course.

In the reinvestment in our communities, I will say what I would do in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I have a few areas where that money could be reinvested, the opioids crisis for one. I have too many residents on the streets of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford who are playing Russian roulette with their lives every time they buy toxic street drugs. We have a massive housing crisis. We need to reinvest those funds to make sure that people have the right to housing established clearly, and we need the government to step in and build those non-market units.

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As for pharmacare and dental care, if we want to help working families, why do we not help them with the unexpected budgetary costs they have with dental bills and pharmacare bills? However, when we have given the House the opportunity to vote on those measures, talking about coalitions here, what about the Liberal-Conservative coalition? They combined have voted against dental care. They voted against a wealth tax. They voted against pharmacare, all measures that are designed to help working families. Words are cheap, but luckily this place keeps the receipts. It is noted in Hansard and in the way both those parties have voted. I want to make that very clear.

We could also invest in bigger health transfers. I know my Bloc colleagues have talked repeatedly about provincial demands for more federal health transfers, and I know that has been a demand of all provinces. Surely the last two years have shown us how strained our health care systems have been. This is a real opportunity for us to reinvest those excess profits to build a system we can all be proud of, the system we know we can have in Canada where no one is left behind, to honour the vision of the people who built it in the first place.

I will end by saying that I hope all of my colleagues in the House will find it in themselves to vote for this motion and to signal to the people of Canada that they are serious about enacting the bold policies that we need.

• (1650)

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of sitting beside my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford on the flight last night and talking about one part of the motion, which is the creation of a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry. In the budget last year, we provided funding to set up a beneficial ownership registry for federally incorporated companies. In our platform this past election, we campaigned on a homebuyers' bill of rights to have such a registry for property. Unfortunately, provincially regulated companies would not be covered by that, and land ownership is provincially regulated.

I was wondering if the member could speak a bit more on the third part of that motion, on creating a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry, if that is for property or for companies, and what he sees as the federal government's role in working with the provinces so they adopt similar measures.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, as my friend is a fellow British Columbian, he would know our provincial NDP government has enacted such a policy. It does cover the area of provincial jurisdiction, so I would like to see the federal government move ahead with this.

I referenced promises that were made. One of my colleagues, earlier in an intervention, and I believe it was the member for Victoria, pointed out that key promise was missing from the mandate letters of two ministers. I would encourage the member to speak to the ministers to ensure it is still on the table, because it is something we very much want to see the federal government move ahead on to establish that transparency within the areas it has clear jurisdiction over.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague did lament the fact that somehow some of the parties in the House are not supporting NDP motions or initiatives. The problem is that, whenever the NDP brings forward a motion, it always has poison pills in it that force us, as Conservatives, to vote against these motions. For example, on this motion we are debating today, I believe there is a consensus in the House to support a beneficial ownership registry. We all support that. However, of course the NDP plugs in taxes and more taxes that all trickle down to the consumer.

I am going to ask my colleague from British Columbia why it is that the NDP has this proclivity to undermine its own policy initiatives by adding things it knows we will not and cannot support. It seems counterintuitive that if it wants something to come through that it would do that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I find it quite funny that Conservatives would regard a tax on profits of over \$1 billion to be a “poison pill”. I would love for the Conservative candidate in the next election in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford to explain to voters how that is a poison pill.

The argument that companies are just going to simply pass these on to consumers is simplistic and does not reflect reality. Conservatives need to ask themselves why they continuously vote against measures that are trying to level the playing field and ensure that working families can get ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from British Columbia on his speech. I acknowledge the high calibre of his work and the soundness of his comments.

It is said that a nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members. Personally, I do not disagree with a 3% surtax.

However, the NDP's general comments about the “super-rich” bother me. I realize that they do exist, but when I hear this term, I feel it is an insult to some. Is this an ideological or an economic term?

• (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I will point my colleague to what we laid out in our platform. What it really came down to was a 1% tax on fortunes of over \$10 million. If one is wealthy enough to own \$10 million, that 1% tax on any wealth over and above that, we feel, is a small price to pay and one that is very affordable to people who are in that category. Having that money to reinvest in communities would make a massive difference to working families in my riding and I believe his as well.

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Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on the NDP opposition motion today. It is also a pleasure to see you in the Chair this afternoon. It is great to be back in Parliament and doing the work our constituents sent us here to do. It is always a privilege and honour to represent the wonderful residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge. The great folks in my riding are entrepreneurial, hard-working and quite passionate.

I would like to add that I will be sharing my time with my wonderful friend and colleague for the amazing riding of Davenport in downtown Toronto.

We speak about affordability, strengthening our middle class and helping those who are working very hard to join the middle class. Our government, since 2015, has put forward a number of measures that continue to pay dividends today. The first thing we did when we assumed power in 2015 was cut taxes for middle-class Canadians. It was literally billions of dollars a year, and in over six years we have probably returned over \$20 billion in tax savings to hard-working middle-class Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We also increased taxes on those Canadians who are in the top 1%. This is something that was the right thing to do, and it showed our efforts to make sure that everyone paid their fair share. We also closed tax loopholes. As a finance committee member for my first five years in Parliament, I was very proud to work in that area.

The Liberal government has continued to cut taxes for Canadians. I put forward an idea in our 2019 platform that called for the lifting of the basic personal exemption amount, to expeditiously keep it for middle-class Canadians and not give it to the wealthiest Canadians. That is exactly what we did. It is a great policy, with literally billions of dollars in tax cuts. When it is fully phased in, the first \$15,000 of what every Canadian makes would not be taxed at the federal level. I believe that would be fully phased in next year, in 2023.

Again, we are taking necessary steps to help put more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. This is something I believe in and something that our government believes in. At the same time, we are investing in Canadians. We have the Canada child benefit, which in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge benefits nearly 20,000 kids. It is over \$60 million a year, from the last estimate we got, that goes directly into the pockets of hard-working families. It is tax-free and monthly. It is not sent to millionaires. It is sent to hard-working Canadians in my riding and from coast to coast to coast.

We enhanced the Canada pension plan. This is something we worked together with the provinces on, and rightly so, to help Canadians so they could ensure their retirement. We know defined benefit pension plans are fading in the private sector quite quickly. We know that Canadians need to have a secure and dignified retirement. That is why we have undertaken a plethora of measures to help Canadians in their retirement. We made some commitments in our 2021 platform that we will be fulfilling. It is great to see our government continuing to aid seniors.

One thing I am very excited about, and I know that over three million seniors are very excited about in Canada, including many thousands in my riding, is that effective this July, old age security

will be increasing by 10%. That is nearly \$800 a year in the pockets of seniors. That is something that would assist them, especially with affordability.

With regard to today's opposition motion, we know affordability is of paramount concern to all families. I have three children at home. We go grocery shopping literally almost every day. We know what the cost of formula is, and we know what the costs of cereal and other necessities are for our kids and what they like to eat. Prices are elevated. Prices are higher. We all know that. We know it is having a real impact on the lives of many people in Canada.

We know high inflation is also a global phenomenon. Rising prices are the result of unprecedented challenges in reopening the global economy. We have talked about the supply chain and its impacts. We could look at what the shortage of chips, which are used in almost every product in the world, has limited. It has limited vehicle production, and it is impacting used vehicle prices. It is something we need to be very aware of.

That is why, as a government, we are not standing idly by. We are focused on supporting families and, again, growing and strengthening the middle class, which is the heart of the Canadian economy, and on improving the standard of living for Canadians.

● (1700)

We are taking real action to support Canadian families and making life more affordable for them. This includes historic investments in early learning and child care. Because I am an economist, early learning and child care excites me. It increases the productive capacity of our economy. It is a supply side measure. That improves the standard of living for Canadians and makes our economy more productive. I am very happy to see that nine out of 10 provinces, and all of the territories if I am not mistaken, have signed on to agreements.

I look forward to seeing, fingers crossed, an announcement between the federal government and the Province of Ontario on a child care deal sooner rather than later. My wife and I are putting our young daughter Leia in child care in September or October, so hopefully we will have that child care agreement in place. We know that it is the right thing to do. The \$10-a-day regulated child care spaces for children under six years old are a nearly \$30-billion investment over five years to help reduce child care costs across Canada. We have signed agreements with all of the provinces except Ontario, and we are working hard to help Ontario families like the ones in my region of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

For those of my colleagues who may not know, child care costs in York Region are among the highest, if not the highest, in the country. I am one of 10 members from that area. We need this deal. This will literally save families thousands of dollars a year in after-tax money. This is not before tax, but after tax. Finance folks should think about the before-tax costs of child care when paying \$1,500 to \$2,000 a month for a child. It is quite expensive.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian and Quebec governments have also signed an asymmetrical agreement to strengthen the early learning and child care system in that province, a system that already provides affordable services. Access to quality, affordable child care is not only an important economic policy, it is also a major social policy. It makes life more affordable for families with children. It enables mothers and fathers to work, increasing the workforce.

[*English*]

It creates more labour force participation. That is a great thing for the economy.

[*Translation*]

It also creates good, well-paying jobs for educators. It will give kids the best possible start in life.

The Canada child benefit is another key part of our efforts to make life more affordable for Canadian families. This program helps 3.5 million families with children every year and puts more money into the pockets of nine in 10 Canadian families, compared to previous child benefit programs. The Canada child benefit has already lifted 435,000 children out of poverty. Payments are indexed yearly to keep up with the rising cost of living.

We realize that COVID-19 has made life harder for Canadian families, which is why, in 2021, the families that are eligible for the Canada child benefit received up to \$1,200 extra during the pandemic for each child under the age of six. This was our way of directly giving more money back to Canadian families to help them deal with pandemic pressures.

• (1705)

[*English*]

The government has also introduced a number of measures to help those who need it the most, some of which complement existing protection. Seniors, as I said at the beginning, will get a 10% increase in old age security payments starting in July for those aged 75 and older. That is almost \$800 more for pensioners over the first year. We have to remember that old age security is indexed. That is wonderful. It is great to see, and it will help the 3.3 million seniors who will receive this 10% increase. This is the first permanent increase in old age security since 1973.

I want to mention housing. The city of Vaughan in my riding, which is where I live, has the largest housing developers in the country. We are home to housing and infrastructure. There are so many builders in my riding that I think they control nearly the entire housing market in Ontario. I interact with them all the time. We need to get housing supply built. We need more homes for Canadians. These participants, the developers, builders or however we refer to them, are ready. They have the resources. They want to get

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the zoning bylaws passed more quickly and get the regulations reduced so that they can build more housing for Ontarians and all Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked a question earlier about gas prices and I did not really get a good answer from the government.

I want to understand just whether the government thinks gas prices in an ideal world would be higher, lower or at the same level. I thought that one of the intentions of the government's policy around the carbon tax, around imposing a tax on things that produce carbon, was to intentionally increase the price of gas. I know that the member will tell me that we rebate portions of it. He might even say all of it, but that does not really answer the core question.

I would like to know this. Does the government wish to see gas prices be higher, lower or at the same level they are now?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, what I would say is that WTI and WCS refinery margins are not controlled by the government. There is a market for that.

We obviously want to see Canadian energy used as much as possible. We want to see Canadian energy exported as much as possible. I think we earn about \$200 billion Canadian a year from energy exports. Over 800,000 people are employed in the energy industry here in Canada. I am proud of those workers who go to work every day and work in that resource industry. It is going to be part of our future for years to come.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, Charlevoix is a major tourist area, and all the tourism companies are looking for workers right now. Charlevoix sometimes relies on immigrants or students to fill labour shortages, but there are fewer and fewer of them around. Companies cannot find enough workers to replace those who are retiring.

Retired workers are willing to keep working, but they have no incentive to do so. The situation is urgent. Does my colleague agree that, in this act and in future decisions, the government should immediately guarantee sufficiently significant incentives to persuade seniors who would like to return to work to do so?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I visited Quebec City over the weekend.

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[English]

I know how important tourism is to all of Canada, and especially to the province of Quebec.

[Translation]

I agree.

[English]

We should look at measures that entice and that keep folks from exiting the labour market across the country. We did something in the budget by raising the guaranteed income supplement earnings exemptions so seniors could keep more of their hard-earned dollars as they stayed in the labour force.

Any measure that increases labour supply and the productive capacity of the Canadian economy should always be examined. I know, for my part as an economist, that I always take a look at those types of measures because they improve the standard of living for all Canadians and they help provinces such as Quebec fulfill their labour needs. We know that, in Canada, we have a great economy and a strong economy, and we need more workers.

• (1710)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, near the end of my hon. colleague's speech, he touched on a point that I think is extremely important. He mentioned the development capacity in Vaughan—Woodbridge and working to actually expedite and move forward with development agreements at the municipal level.

I think we would all agree in the House that housing is a complex challenge. It is actually going to involve all three levels of government, the private sector and the non-profit sector.

What would the member say about the role of municipalities working closely with developers, not necessarily to completely steamroll the process, but to make sure there are efficiencies so that those additional costs and that red tape is not then passed on to homeowners? That could be resulting in some of the prices we are seeing today.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, where there are overlapping regulations in place, where there are access-to-development charges put in place, where there is red tape to put shovels in the ground, we must always look at eliminating those, with the caveat of ensuring safety and protection for all standards that are put in place. We need to do that in Ontario. I think the estimate is that we need 1.5 million houses to be built.

Houses are not just houses. They are homes for Canadians and for our families, and they are where we create our memories. We need to put the shovels in the ground to actually build them. We need all levels of government working co-operatively together, and we also need to eliminate layers where we possibly can.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Davenport, whom I am so proud to represent, I appreciate the opportunity to take part in today's debate on the opposition day motion put forward by the leader of the NDP on tax cuts and fairness. It is indeed a rare pleasure to debate a motion that is supportive of our federal government's platform commitment

to reduce taxes for middle-class Canadians while raising them on the wealthiest.

I should begin by thanking the hon. member for Burnaby South for his support. It is my sincere hope that this partnership toward a fair tax system for all Canadians remains long and productive.

As the hon. member knows, and indeed all members of the House know, one of our key priorities when we were first elected in late 2015 was to reduce taxes for middle-class Canadians while raising them on the wealthiest 1%. We have delivered on that commitment in real terms. We have also increased support for fairness and for low-income workers through programs such as the Canada child benefit and the Canada workers benefit, which have helped lift over one million Canadians out of poverty since 2015, including 435,000 children.

We have also increased the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit for low-income, single seniors and enhanced the GIS earnings exemption, and are increasing old age security for Canadians aged 75 and older beginning in July of this year. Moreover, we have increased the basic personal amount that Canadians can earn before paying any federal income tax. To ensure that this support is targeted at the middle class, the benefits of the increased basic personal amount are phased out for high-income taxpayers. When this measure is fully implemented next year, single individuals will pay \$300 less in tax each year and families will pay \$600 less, which will be a huge savings for both families and individuals.

In addition to these new tax breaks for Canadians and Canadian workers, our federal government has also targeted new tax relief this year to businesses that are doing their part to create jobs and growth by investing in a better future for all Canadians. For example, as more countries commit to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, the demand for zero-emissions technology will only grow. To create jobs and support the growth of clean technology manufacturing in Canada, budget 2021 proposed to reduce by half the general, corporate and small business income tax rates for businesses that manufacture zero-emissions technologies. This tax cut applied as of January 1, 2022.

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What is more, we are not just providing tax breaks to innovative businesses that are doing their part to protect the environment this year. We are also helping the many small businesses that are doing their part in fighting COVID. Small businesses understand that proper ventilation makes indoor air healthier and safer, helping to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Many want to make further improvements to their indoor air quality to protect their workers and customers, but they have been finding that investing in equipment to improve ventilation can be costly. That is why our federal government has proposed a temporary, refundable small business air quality improvement tax credit of 25% on eligible air quality improvement expenses incurred by small businesses. Businesses would receive the credit on eligible expenses incurred between September 1, 2021, and December 31, 2022, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per location and \$50,000 in total. That is not just good for their businesses; it is also good for the health and safety of Canadians.

As members can see, where our government delivers tax cuts to businesses, it is doing so strictly with a view to encouraging the sort of investments that support Canadians and their highest priorities. At the same time, we are ensuring that taxes are appropriate and fair and discourage the sort of activities that are not helpful to Canadians.

• (1715)

A prime example of this is our proposed tax on non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential real estate that is considered to be vacant or underused. This tax would become effective as of January 1, 2022. While this tax would not be paid by individual Canadian homeowners, it would certainly benefit Canadians. That is because the recent and rapid rise in housing prices has made finding an affordable place to call home increasingly difficult, and the underused housing tax would help support investments in housing affordability so that all Canadians can have a safe and affordable place to call home.

Another important example of how our government is ensuring that Canadians do not have to bear the burden of other decisions is the price that we have put on carbon pollution in Canada. The fact is that climate change presents a threat to our long-term health and economic prosperity, and putting a price on carbon pollution is the most effective policy to address it. Fortunately, our federal government, along with the hon. member for Burnaby South and many other members of this House, understands this, as do most Canadians and provincial governments. That is why we have recently confirmed our plan to increase the carbon price through to 2030.

At the same time, we will continue to return the direct proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system to the province or territory of origin. In jurisdictions that do not have their own fuel charge consistent with the federal benchmark criteria, and that would be Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, approximately 90% of the direct proceeds from the fuel charge are returned to residents of those provinces through the climate action incentive payments.

As a result, in most households these climate action incentive payments actually represent more than the increased cost they face from the federal carbon pollution pricing system. What is more is

that the remaining fuel charge proceeds, about 10%, are used to support small businesses, farmers, indigenous groups and other organizations. Not one dollar stays with the federal government, and going forward, the federal carbon price will continue to be revenue neutral for the Government of Canada.

Our federal government is also well aware that even as Canadians have sacrificed to keep our economy going through the pandemic, some of the wealthiest have done very well for themselves. We have already taken action on the understanding that those who can afford to buy luxury goods can afford to pay a bit more. To that end, our federal government is following through on its commitment to introduce a tax on select luxury goods.

In budget 2021, we proposed the introduction of a tax on the sale of new luxury cars and aircraft with a retail sale price over \$100,000 and on boats priced over \$250,000. This tax would be calculated at the lesser of 20% of the value above these price thresholds or 10% of the full value of the luxury vehicle, aircraft or vessel.

To implement this, recently at committee on March 11, 2022, we released draft legislative proposals for public comment. These draft legislative proposals reflect and respond to input received during consultations with the stakeholders. With the support of our partners in the House who share our goal of a fair tax system, this tax would come into effect on September 1, 2022. Revenues raised by this tax can be used to offset costs for Canadians and invest in a strong economic recovery that supports their highest priorities.

In conclusion, when taken together, all of these measures that I have touched on today show that our government is following through on its commitment to a fair tax system. We will continue to follow through on this commitment as we move forward, including with respect to our commitment to ensure that large, profitable banks and insurers pay their fair share as well. I am pleased that with today's motion for debate, we will have the support of the hon. member for Burnaby South and his colleagues as we do so. I appreciate the opportunity to make the case and speak in the House today.

• (1720)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford spoke about the litany of broken Liberal promises. I am concerned that the Liberals may break their promise to create a publicly accessible nationwide beneficial ownership registry. This would not only help tackle money laundering, which is having a devastating impact on our housing market, but it also would make it easier to identify assets connected to sanctioned Russian oligarchs and strengthen the enforcement of sanctions.

Can the member speak to the need for a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry and commit to pushing her government to fulfill its promises?

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Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I would say I am very proud of our government and the promises that we have kept. Many of them I mentioned in my speech, including increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1%, reducing them on the middle class, supporting our families both with respect to introducing the Canada child benefit and now a national child care plan, which all provinces and territories, except for Ontario, have already signed on to. There have been many other promises to try to reduce income inequality and create tax fairness in this country.

In terms of the publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry, I fully support it and am very proud that our government has committed to implementing it. Money laundering is indeed a very serious issue. It is one that is increasing in complexity, so I support this program and I absolutely support continuing to encourage our government to implement it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about how, at the beginning of its mandate, the government raised taxes on some people. The promise it had made at the time was that the tax shifting it was doing would be revenue-neutral. However, in the end it was not. It significantly added to the deficit, and we have seen continuing measures that have added to the deficit.

I think what the member glosses over in her remarks is just how unequally and disproportionately the effects of high levels of deficit spending, leading to inflation, fall on middle and lower-income Canadians. Those who are very wealthy have a variety of tools at their disposal for protecting themselves from the effects of inflation, but everyday working Canadians simply do not have the same opportunities. We are passing on costs to those who can least afford it and to subsequent generations.

Does the member acknowledge this problem and believe the government needs to do more to confront inflation and other ways in which out-of-control spending is passing costs on to those who can least afford it?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, through you, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. It is an important one. I would like to respectfully disagree with the member. I think we have done a lot. We have implemented many things to do everything we can to try to reduce income inequality in our country. Whether it was the introduction of the Canada child benefit, the increase in the GIS, taxing the top 1% and reducing tax on the middle class, or introducing increases in the Canada worker benefit a couple of times, there have been a number of measures we have taken to try to reduce income inequality in our country.

Inflation absolutely is a huge issue and I think it impacts everyone. We should mention that there are a number of measures in place that will help to protect those on the lower end of the income scale in our country, indexed to inflation, so our—

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to allow the opportunity for another question.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would say to my hon. colleague that I am particularly

concerned. Since this has come up in her speech, what can we start doing? We know this is about beneficial ownership that is absolutely hidden. Foreign corporations can be running shell companies in Canada. There is no way to track them down. This applies across a number of provinces as well as federally. Canada is now being advertised in places like Russia as the place to hide one's assets. A recent report called "Snow-washing, Inc." draws attention to it, so it is both federal and provincial.

I would love to hear my hon. colleague's comments on when we can crack down on this, particularly in light of what has happened with respect to the Russian assets of oligarchs around the world.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her excellent question and for bringing this back to the fore.

I agree 100% that we need to do everything we can to bring this beneficial ownership registry into effect. We have to do everything we can to make sure it is transparent with respect to who owns the public assets. This should be a key priority for our government moving forward.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

The pandemic has made it very clear that we are not all in this together. We are living in a growing corporate dictatorship where some of us are on lifeboats and some of us are sailing on yachts, where the privileges of corporations are increasingly usurping the rights of workers, Mother Earth, individuals and families, and where the divide between the haves and the have-nots is growing in favour of the ultrawealthy who are becoming richer by the minute while more and more people are finding it increasingly difficult to survive.

Meanwhile, many of my constituents are barely able to make rent. The rising cost of food is making food insecurity even more common. The most basic human rights continue to be up for debate in this House while the government continues to reward its corporate friends on the backs of people, including my constituents in Winnipeg Centre. For workers, real wages are falling and Canadian billionaires are becoming richer, including a \$78 billion annual increase in their wealth a year after COVID began, an unprecedented pandemic that has left more and more people scrambling to survive.

This increase in their wealth has been generated with a complete disregard for human rights, including the rights of workers. Take, for example, Sobeys, one of Canada's largest grocery chains, its parent company Empire got rid of its \$2 an hour pandemic hero pay, like Loblaws and Metro. It was hero pay for workers who put their lives on the line during the pandemic so that people could continue to be fed. Adding insult to injury, most Sobeys stores are not even unionized. It is a company that has fiercely and fearlessly resisted organizing efforts, showing a total disregard for the rights of workers.

This disregard for workers by Sobeys was not because it wanted to keep food costs down for consumers. In fact, people are paying more for groceries than ever, 6.5% grocery inflation, the highest in more than a decade. It is because of greed, uncontrolled greed with CEOs laughing all the way to the bank. Sobeys just reported a quarterly profit of \$203.4 million, up from \$176.3 million last year, and it is not the only one laughing. In fact, Loblaws saw its fourth-quarter profit more than double compared to last year, with its net earnings available to common shareholders rising to \$744 million. Metro grocery reported net profits of \$207 million at the end of 2021.

It is uncontrolled greed with no shame, as we witnessed from Sobeys president and CEO Michael Medline, who boasted on a conference in December about how much money they were raking in, stating, "It was a straight-up good quarter, well-executed by our teams across the country."

It was not "a straight-up good quarter" for my constituents who shop at FreshCo on Sargent Avenue, struggling to put food on the table because every trip to the grocery store is more expensive than the last. It was not "a straight-up good quarter" for workers who had their hero pay taken so that CEOs could line their very deep pockets with more cash. Our economic system is rigged, with corporate greed and wealth borne on the backs of individuals and families that is even impacting their ability to have their most basic human rights respected, including the right to food security.

Seriously, workers and consumers are seeing no benefits from the major grocery chains' record profits, which are rising because prices are rising. Profits are growing because they are cutting workers' pay and sometimes even violating their human rights, including the profits that were made possible by the many migrant farm workers who grow the food that is sold in these stores, some of the most exploited and mistreated workers in the country.

● (1730)

In fact, last December the Auditor General found that the government failed to protect migrant farm workers during COVID-19, revealing that the federal department responsible for keeping them safe did not properly enforce health and safety measures related to the pandemic. At least three migrant farm workers died from COVID, and many more became sick.

For the Liberal government to wilfully turn a blind eye to this human suffering is unacceptable, demonstrating time and time again that it is way too close to its corporate friends. What has the Liberal government done to require large companies like Sobeys, Loblaws and Metro, which have earned windfall profits during the pandemic, to share this wealth with workers and communities to

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ensure the human rights of workers are upheld? Nothing. In fact, the government has yet to implement a tax on excess profits of banks and insurance companies, despite promising to do so in the last election.

What are Liberals waiting for? They need to immediately implement the 3% surtax and expand it to include big grocery chains, big-box stores and big oil companies that continue to earn record profits. We need this revenue to make life easier for individuals and families who are struggling to afford to live with the skyrocketing cost of living.

It could fund, for example, a new and expanded income support program for seniors, students, people with disabilities and individuals with complex mental health needs and trauma, who are some of the hardest hit by these price increases. It could pay for a national school meal program that would ensure no child ever has to attend class on an empty stomach. It could help fund a guaranteed livable basic income like the one I am proposing in Bill C-223.

It is clearer than ever that we are not all in this together. So many people are just trying to survive at this point, while the wealthy elite have never had it so good. They are in their luxury yachts and rocket ships while more and more people are surviving in lifeboats.

Enough is enough. It is time to grow workers' paycheques, and not CEO bonuses and shareholder dividends. It is time for the biggest corporations that have made a killing during the pandemic to pay their fair share. It is time to put people before profits and give people who are struggling the support they need to survive, and not just to survive but to thrive. It is time for all people to have what they need to live in dignity.

● (1735)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the intervention by the member from Manitoba and could not help but reflect, as I was listening to what she was saying and was being accusatory toward a Liberal government, on the fact that the Manitoba NDP government, on I believe either four or five consecutive occasions, decreased the corporate income tax in the province of Manitoba.

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I realize that does not necessarily negate anything she said, and I am certainly not saying that, but I am wondering if she has the same criticism toward the NDP party within Manitoba for essentially doing the thing she is accusing consecutive governments within this chamber of doing.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, if my hon. colleague would like to run to become a Manitoba MLA, I am certainly sure I could connect him with somebody in Manitoba.

I am a federal member of Parliament and I am calling on his government, which has given multiple corporate bailouts since the time I was elected, to take responsibility for its failure to individuals throughout this country who are struggling and to make sure the ultra-rich are paying their fair share, to make sure people can stay housed and to make sure they can afford to eat and have their basic human rights respected.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about concerns regarding corporate power in this country, and that is one of the reasons I put forward Bill C-257, which would add political belief and activity to the federal human rights code. I am concerned about situations where an employer might use their privileged position to discriminate against workers who engage in political activity that an employer does not agree with. In addition to other criteria in the human rights code, it is a reasonable way of limiting the power of government or corporations over a private individual's ability to have and express political beliefs.

I am wondering if the member or her party has a perspective on Bill C-257 and adding political belief and activity as prohibited grounds in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I do have caution here. My hon. colleague was one of the members who supported conversion therapy, so when we are talking about—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: What? That is a lie. That is a lie—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. We do not call people liars.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, as you indicated, it was quite clear to members in this room that the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was calling another member a liar. Perhaps he would like to rise and apologize to the member for that comment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is what I was trying to address, and I would like to be able to do my job, if the member does not mind.

I remind the hon. member that it was very audible and everybody heard it. I invite the member to please apologize to the other member, because we are not in the habit of accepting the calling of names in the House.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, objectively, what the member said was inaccurate. I would invite her to withdraw her comments, and I would be pleased to withdraw mine in the spirit of a similar withdrawal.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I will not be withdrawing that comment. It was in the news, and I am certainly willing to give the hon. colleague the news clip.

In saying that, I have caution regarding his intervention and belief. I have not read his bill, and I have caution on what he is trying to promote in it. However, I am certainly willing to review it.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and her party for bringing this issue forward today. Like most of my colleagues, I believe the rising cost of living is having a big impact on people in my riding who are trying to make ends meet. With the rising cost of rent, groceries and gas, it is becoming harder and harder to get by, so I think this surtax is a good idea.

Still, there are other ways to find money. We need only think of the fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance. I know my colleague agrees with this kind of proposal, but I wonder whether she thinks the government should put other measures in place, as well.

What would she say to amending the Income Tax Act and its regulations so that corporate income repatriated from tax havens would no longer be exempt from taxation?

Furthermore, would she agree that the government could decide to tax multinationals based on profits made in Quebec and Canada rather than where they are registered?

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with my hon. colleague. I absolutely think it is time that we go after offshore tax havens and that the ultrawealthy and multinational corporations pay their fair share and be held to account. I think it is beyond time. Certainly, the government, which has been elected since 2015, has had lots of time to amend the tax system to make it fairer and make sure that people's needs are met, but it has failed to do so.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, almost two-thirds of the children living in northern Manitoba live in poverty, the highest number in the country. For them there is never enough. There is not enough food. There is not enough housing, and there is not enough medical care. There are communities such as Shamattawa, which in the last couple of years has dealt with a lack of clean drinking water, a COVID outbreak, a tuberculosis outbreak and an acute lack of housing. There are few communities in the country that better represent our collective failure as a country than Shamattawa does.

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There is a stain of settler colonialism and an uncaring government that leaves people and communities like these to die. Garden Hill, York Factory, Tataskweyak Cree Nation and Red Sucker Lake are all communities, just from our part of the country alone, that the government has turned its back on. They are communities that do not know week to week whether the water they depend upon will be clean enough to drink or bathe in, whether there will be access to the medical care they need in their community if a loved one gets sick. These are communities that, during the H1N1 pandemic, were sent body bags and, during the COVID pandemic, were sent tents in the middle of winter.

For isolated communities like these, how can we ever talk about affordability when people's basic needs are not being met? These are communities that do not have enough doctors. These are communities that have a third world housing crisis. We are talking about 12, 15 or 20 people living in a home that is often infested with mould and inadequate for our climate. Fundamentally, these are communities that successive Liberal and Conservative governments will not stand up for, and it is everywhere.

In my hometown of Thompson, we see the struggle every day. It is a working class town that has lost most of its good jobs. They were sold off by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. People are worried they cannot make their rent or pay for their medication. People are out of work and they cannot make ends meet. These are people who have seen government rely on platitudes rather than supports they desperately need.

This is repeated in communities across the country. The ever-increasing concentration of wealth with the one percent while more and more are lost and struggling. It is a rigged system and the government shows its true colours every day.

The Liberals will say that we are all in this together to a family who just lost their job and cannot afford to fix the broken fridge, but they will actually give \$12 million to Loblaws to buy new fridges. The government said that nurses and grocery store clerks were the real heroes of the pandemic, but they never got disaster pay, while wealthy CEOs used the wage subsidy to fund their bonuses. The Liberal government does not care about struggling people. It just plays that role on TV.

During the last election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to raise income tax on the most profitable big banks and insurance companies. We are still waiting for the Liberals to do that. Canadians expecting their government to stand up for them are still waiting. The reality is that in the six and some years they have been in power, the Liberal plan has made life easier for the wealthiest and largest corporations while everyone else is worse off. Time and time again, people who have so little have had to watch the government cater to those who have so much while people suffer. They are indigenous people, northerners, working people and the poor.

The billionaire class, not just from Canada but from all over the world, benefits from the government's inaction on tax fairness. Canada's reputation is used to advertise to oligarchs around the world, showing how generous Canadian tax laws are to help them develop their tax avoidance schemes. This was demonstrated in the latest report from Transparency International Canada, Canadians for Tax Fairness and Publish What You Pay Canada, which quotes:

Canada is a new player in the world of offshore companies...it has no negative offshore reputation and no association with tax avoidance or evasion. It is by far one of the best neutral jurisdictions, providing offshore benefits without any of the traditional offshore drawbacks.

This is Canada. We got to this point by design, not by accident. Canada's tax laws were left untouched despite a flurry of scandals and leaks from the Panama papers to the Pandora papers and more. These should have been a wake-up call the world over, but the Liberals have not budged. Despite losing tax case after tax case, and despite clear evidence that Canadian laws are not up to the task of dealing with tax evasion, tax avoidance and tax havens, we have yet to see the desperately needed overhaul of the tax system.

● (1745)

What should we expect from the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party who regularly fundraise off the billionaire class? Of the 100 richest families in Canada, each of them worth over \$1 billion, 56 of them have contributed to the coffers of one or the other of Canada's ruling parties. Last week's report made it clear that they are getting their money's worth. The capacity of the Canadian tax code leaves the door open for tax dodgers to do as they please. As private companies can be owned anonymously, the shareholders, partners and other beneficiaries can act in darkness, sheltered by Canada from paying their fair share. There is no oversight as financial reporting is not mandatory.

Acting now is a matter of fairness and justice. There needs to be more transparency and disclosure in order to close this gaping tax loophole. These companies that act as fronts for tax havens must be brought to light and made accountable. Beneficiaries must be named. Disclosure must be required, to know on behalf of whom these companies are operating. There must be accountability requirements as well as real enforcement in case of false declarations and non-compliance.

Given that Canada has failed to successfully mount any cases against major tax cheats with its existing laws, and given that Canada is failing at prosecuting major corporate tax cheats despite regularly promising to add to the CRA's capacity to do so, we need to make sure that there is real enforcement of those needed changes to Canada's tax laws. We are not asking for much. Canadians are not asking for much. They are just asking for the Liberal government to live up to its rhetoric rather than continue along the path it always has, which is one of catering to the billionaire class rather than standing up for people.

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With respect to big banks, big-box stores, insurance companies and oil companies, I implore my Liberal friends to trust me: These do not need their solidarity. In a time of record profits, they do not need the Liberals' help. A 3% surtax on these industries would still mean record profits and bonuses, but it would be world-altering for communities and people on the margins. They are the ones the government should be helping out. They are the ones who need our solidarity. They are the ones who want and need to see a plan from the government. It is time we stopped standing idly by and refusing to fix the loopholes that allow these companies to take the wage subsidy and, instead of investing it in workers, hand out million-dollar bonuses to those who do not need the money.

We must start taking seriously the issue of tax evasion and bring in a beneficial ownership registry in the upcoming budget to help tackle tax evasion and money laundering in real estate. Approximately \$130 billion in illicit funds is laundered each year in Canada, mostly through businesses. This is not surprising, as Canada has some of the least transparent corporate laws in the world.

At a time when the Liberal government is not doing enough to build more affordable housing, billions of dollars in laundered money through home purchases put upward pressure on prices. That is why the government needs to accelerate the adaptation of transparency tools that discourage money laundering by criminals and the wealthy, including a nationwide publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry.

We must start investing in communities' infrastructure needs. Indigenous and northern communities that are at the forefront of the climate crisis need a partner in the federal government. We must use the Canada Infrastructure Bank to prepare communities that need it most to take on the climate crisis. The Infrastructure Bank, with its \$35-billion budget, has yet to complete a single infrastructure project almost five years into its existence.

Today, what we are asking is for the government to match its rhetoric with its actions, to stop talking about standing with communities and actually stand with them, to stop being part of the problem and to start being part of the solution.

• (1750)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague touched upon grocery outlets and big-box stores, as did her colleague for Winnipeg Centre who spoke before her.

One of the things that we are studying right now at the agriculture committee, and which was brought up today, is that sometimes retailers are unfair to suppliers in terms of their expectations and some of the additional costs. That has given rise to the idea of a grocery code of conduct. The member for Sarnia-Lambton actually read out a passage where, with the CP Rail strike and the fact that there could be disruptions, the retailer was still expecting the producer to provide the product with basically no recognition that there could be a disruption.

My question is twofold for the member opposite. Would she support the idea of a grocery code of conduct to try to create a regulatory environment for larger chains, to have some type of recourse available to producers? *Vis-à-vis* the CP Rail strike, does the mem-

ber think that at some point the government will have to move in to protect collective interests and maintain rail services across the country?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that the NDP is a party that clearly stands in support of workers' rights to bargain collectively. We do not support legislating workers back to work. We are very much in solidarity with rail workers, including CP workers right now. It is shameful to see governments, both Liberal and Conservative, that claim to stand up for working people abuse the fundamental right of workers to bargain collectively and legislate them back to work, and we certainly will be fighting any attempts to do so.

More broadly, it is clear that what we need from government is to rein in corporate Canada, including the big grocery stores that have made incredible profits throughout this pandemic. We know they have not supported their workers in the most fundamental ways, including health and safety. We know that certainly their profits have not been reflected in lower prices for consumers, and really, we need to see the Liberals stop favouring their friends in corporate Canada and stand up for Canadian workers and consumers.

We certainly believe the government has the power to do that. We are still waiting.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the infrastructure bank and how, five years in, there still has not been a single project that has been completed. I am wondering if she could go into a bit more detail about the failures of the infrastructure bank, what kind of projects it should be working on and how it has been really costly and ineffective.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that more and more Canadians are tuning in to the fact that one of our Crown corporations that was created to meet the infrastructure crisis across the country is simply not delivering. It has turned into a corporate welfare model pushing disastrous PPP projects with a for-profit agenda, and ultimately the result is that we have not seen one project brought to completion. This is unacceptable from a public entity or Crown corporation that is sitting on money that is ours as Canadians, an entity that we desperately need to do the work of meeting Canada's infrastructure needs, particularly in the face of the climate crisis. That is why I am proud of my private member's bill, Bill C-245, which I hope MPs will support, which would allow us to reform the bank so that it works in support of Canadians and Canadian communities in the fight against climate change.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and the NDP for this fantastic initiative, because it is worth discussing.

I come from an entrepreneurial background. All my life, I have heard it said that small businesses and self-employed workers are the backbone of the economy. In my riding, there are a lot of small and medium-sized businesses that are driving the economy.

I would like my colleague to give me some insights into how we can deal with large corporations, which often receive subsidies and then engage in tax avoidance. In the post-pandemic era, how can we urgently find a way to recoup this money?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would say the first step is to support our motion.

We based our motion on the recently published report about Canada's reputation as a great place for tax evasion. That is appalling, it is unfair, and it calls for urgent action.

Obviously, we need to see action on multiple fronts to recoup money from big corporations that profited from the pandemic crisis, as my colleague said. That money then needs to be reallocated to help workers, Quebecers, Canadians and our communities.

That is clearly not something the Liberals are doing right now.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some want to talk about contrast, so they will probably get a bit of contrast now. Listening to the member from Thompson can get fairly depressing for those who are following the debate. I suggest there is a great deal of variation from the truth in what we have been listening to.

At the end of the day, I would like to share with members a better sense of the reality that has been taking place over the last six years. They should not have fear: It is nowhere near as bad as the member from Thompson has tried to portray. I understand why the member from Thompson said those things. It is because in some ways, the NDP has that attitude. It is an attitude of superiority about all social issues. If someone does not believe them, just ask one of them and they will reaffirm it.

I will cite one very short example. The member made reference to infrastructure. She criticized the Government of Canada, saying that in the last six years, we have not done anything on infrastructure, and she cited an example. I would challenge any member to show me a government that has invested more in infrastructure in Canada in the last 50 years than this government has done in the last five years. We have invested historic amounts of money in our infrastructure, and that is in every region of our country. That is what I mean in terms of a bit of variation.

The member also made reference to the infrastructure bank, saying it has not completed anything. Well, the infrastructure bank is relatively new and has to review and approve projects first, let

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alone get some of them completed. To try to give a false impression that the Government of Canada, over the last number of years, has not done anything on infrastructure is just wrong.

Let me continue with the motion we have before us. The motion tries to give a false impression that we in the Liberal Party, in particular the Government of Canada, do not understand the issue of income inequality and have not made any policy decisions to address that issue.

It was interesting. My colleague and friend from Kingston posed a question to the member for Winnipeg Centre. I thought it was a good question. The member was criticizing the Government of Canada because we are apparently in the pockets of big corporations. I must say, to both the member for Winnipeg Centre and the member from Thompson, that this is not the case. I will tell members that when I sat inside the Manitoba legislature, it was not once, not twice, but I believe five or six times that the New Democratic government in Manitoba reduced corporate taxes. That was the provincial NDP, and there is a difference. The NDP at the provincial level has been in government, and every one of those governments often reflected the opposite of what the NDP will preach in the House of Commons.

Corporations do play a very important role in our society, but some try to give a false impression that we are in the pockets of corporations. I can tell colleagues that former NDP premiers Gary Doer and Greg Selinger, based on what I have heard, were more in the pockets of corporations than this government is. In fact, taking a look at our election laws, there are limitations on what a corporation can give, which is nothing. It is individuals who can give.

Members take shots at the big banks. I am no friend of the big banks; I would like to see banks pay more too. However, they try to give an impression that with big banks, we mean a handful of elite, wealthy people, which is not the case.

• (1800)

If we look at it, we will find that these big banks and the people they are paying dividends to often are unions. They are people who have invested in banks because there is a relatively high rate of return. I believe it is an exceptionally high rate of return during the pandemic, and this is something the government is looking into. The good news is that the budget is not too far away. The 2022-23 budget is just on the horizon, and I know members are very keenly waiting to hear from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, who has done a phenomenal job in bringing us through this pandemic on a number of fronts.

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We will have the opportunity in the House to present to Canadians a budget that we can all be proud of, a budget that will reflect a lot of the discussions that have taken place, whether it was with constituents and members of Parliament, who were used as a vehicle to communicate priority issues, or the many stakeholders. This government, particularly the Prime Minister, has made it very clear to all members, at least within the Liberal caucus, that we want individual members of Parliament to bring constituents' interests and thoughts to Ottawa, not vice versa. As a result, when the 2022-23 budget is unveiled, we will see a budget for all Canadians in all regions of our country that will have an impact and that will see a better equalization of income, something we have seen from day one.

Need I remind members that one of the first pieces of legislation we brought forward was reducing the tax rate for Canada's middle class? A good portion of that reduction, the money to facilitate that reduction, was a special tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%. If that is not directly what New Democrats are hoping to accomplish with this motion, I do not know what is.

I would remind members in the chamber that the Conservatives voted against the tax cuts for the middle class and, surprisingly, New Democrats voted against the additional tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%. We are the only party from day one, since we have been in government, that has consistently come up with financial initiatives, legislative initiatives and policy decisions to ensure that Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it have advanced their interests.

We have gone beyond that. When we talk about putting money in the pockets of people in need, one only needs to look at some of the other initiatives we have taken, such as the Canada child benefit program, a program that, shortly after becoming government in 2015, we retooled and changed. Millionaires no longer qualified.

Instead, we put more money toward those who had a higher need. Not only did we reorganize it in that sense, we also put in hundreds of millions of additional dollars to ensure this program would be there for families in all regions of Canada. That made a difference in a very real and tangible way. All one needs to do is look at children in poverty.

● (1805)

I have cited this in the past. Well over \$9 million a month comes to Winnipeg North as a direct result. I can say, to the best of my knowledge, that there are no billionaires in Winnipeg North. Over \$9 million a month, and probably over \$10 million but I do not know that for a fact, is coming from Ottawa to support children because of a policy change that was made a number of years ago under this administration. Hundreds of children in Winnipeg North have been lifted out of poverty as a direct result.

I can talk about the substantial guaranteed annual income increase that was given shortly after the 2015 election. Once again, in Winnipeg North, as in every riding in this country, hundreds of seniors were lifted out of poverty as a direct result of a government policy. The Government of Canada, the Prime Minister, ministers and the caucus understood the importance of supporting Canadians in a very real and tangible way, which lifted seniors out of poverty by the thousands.

Those are the types of policies that matter and have been making a difference.

If we look at some more recent things, we passed legislation to deal with the issue of housing. Here is a tax change that not only brings in more revenue for the Government of Canada but also has a positive spinoff on housing prices. We all know that there is a huge demand from abroad to invest in Canada. One of those investments we have seen over the years is in housing, such as condominiums. Whether it is in downtown Toronto, downtown Vancouver or municipalities throughout Canada, individuals are purchasing these properties. Many of them remain empty. I am quite surprised by the thousands of units, worth millions of dollars, that sit completely empty.

Just a couple of months ago, we brought in legislation, which I believe the Conservatives voted against, that would ensure that the owners of those vacant properties being used in that sense would have to pay an annual tax. Members have talked about the increases to housing prices. A direct result of that policy change would have a positive impact in two ways. It would generate additional revenue, which is a good thing, because our current Minister of Housing likes to spend money, and we are all glad about that. He can use those millions of dollars that would be generated, because we understand how important the non-profit housing sector is. There are many among my caucus colleagues who talk about initiatives such as housing co-ops, investing in non-profit housing banks and other opportunities in housing. In fact, the minister is out extensively consulting on how the national government can continue to invest in housing.

We understood the importance of housing, not just during the pandemic, but even prepandemic. That is why we brought in the first-ever national housing strategy. It was not just a piece of paper. It was supported by billions of dollars over a period of time. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars subsidizing tens of thousands of units in every region of this country. I have witnessed first-hand the Minister of Housing come to Winnipeg, both physically and virtually for a number of different announcements. Yes, there is a need for us to do more on that front. We do not need to be told that. We understand that. That is the reason why we continue to look at ways in which we can enhance housing. We want it to be affordable, but let us recognize that it cannot just be Ottawa.

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• (1810)

When we talk about inflation or some of the issues that are of great concern to Canadians, we need to incorporate the idea that we need to work with provinces and municipalities. Many of my colleagues were mayors and councillors, and they understand the process of going through a municipality to get a house developed, built or even renovated. Municipalities have to play a role, and so do provinces, as provinces are often administering the non-profit housing units. Governments need to work together. For the first time in a long time, we have a national government that is spending historic amounts of money on housing. We have a federal government that wants to play a role, and we will play a role, and we will look for partners in order to make that happen.

With regard to resolving the issue of tax fairness, we have now put through a budget that increases the basic personal exemption by thousands of dollars. What does that actually mean in a real sense? In a real sense, it means that individuals will not have to pay taxes on a larger percentage of their income. I could be a little out on this, but I think that by the end of 2023, it is going to be something in the neighbourhood of \$15,000 that one would not have to pay federal tax on. Provinces will do what they do, but hopefully many of them will see what we are doing and follow suit. This would help greatly, and for those who are working so hard at the lower end, it enhances their opportunity to keep money in their pockets.

When we see the actions that are taking place, whether five or six years ago when we brought in the tax break for the middle class and put in the extra tax for the wealthiest, or today with the annual tax for those people who are investing in homes in Canada, I like to think that we understand the imbalance that is there, and we are taking action to rectify it as much as we can. If we take a holistic approach to what this government has done over the last six or seven years, I would argue that we have seen a government that has done more to address income inequality than any other government in the last number of generations.

We have seen this in the policy decisions that have been made, not only directly through taxation but also in the child care benefit. I believe Ontario is the only province that has not signed on, but hopefully it will. Who benefits the most under that program? Ultimately Canada as a nation does, but individuals are also going to be better empowered to go into the workforce and do the other things that are necessary, whether it is in the workforce or in volunteer work. Canadians are fantastic volunteers. One only needs to take a look at the pandemic.

However, we are creating opportunities that were not there. We have seen how well the child care program worked in the province of Quebec, and it is nice that we live in a federal system with other provinces so that we could duplicate that idea and turn it into a national program. In this way, people will be in a better position to be able to go to work, and we know that because we have seen the impact it has had in the province of Quebec.

However, the importance of taxation has not been lost on us. What my constituents want is the same as what all our constituents want. They understand the need for taxes, but they want their taxes to be fair and they want their tax dollars to be spent wisely. These

are the things that we as a government, through accountability and transparency, strive for every day.

• (1815)

In fact, we have invested close to a billion dollars in additional financial resources for Canada revenue to look at ways in which some of these wealthier people in particular are getting away with not paying their fair share of taxes. We have given hundreds of millions of dollars to CRA to ensure that there is a sense of fair taxation across the country.

I am very optimistic, given what we have seen from Canadians over the last couple of years, that our future is positive and that we have reason to be optimistic. I look forward to the 2022-23 budget, because I know it will be a true reflection of what Canadians want, and it will be something we can all be proud of.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the NDP's motion is slightly different from the Liberal government's election promise made during the last campaign. The motion adds oil companies and big box stores to the list.

Can the member explain why the Liberal government does not support this motion? Is it because they want to protect oil companies?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if one takes a look at the different election platforms over the last three elections, we will find that a vast majority of the promises and commitments that were made have actually been kept, with a good percentage of them still in progress. We cannot simply click our heels and implement everything that was said through three different platforms. Some of it is in progress. Most of it, or a good portion of it, has actually been fulfilled.

There are some, which are very rare, that we were not able to move forward on, and I would be more than happy to sit down with the hon. member, or any other member, on why we could not move forward on the issue of electoral reform. It is somewhat unfortunate, but there was a reality at the time that prevented us from doing so.

• (1820)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is very interesting to listen to this colleague, who spends a lot of time in the House speaking. In fact, I would not be surprised if he does not have one of the highest speaking times of all the members here. Perhaps I should send him my congratulations for that role he takes in his party.

Business of Supply

What I found concerning about his very long speech, which was amplified, and he does not need a mike in this place, is this discussion on the variation of truth. I want to remind the member that this is really a motion that talks largely about a commitment that they made in the last election. We are just encouraging them to do it quickly, to get it done efficiently, and to focus on the people who are hurting.

I wonder if this member actually talks to the people who cannot afford their food, who cannot afford their medication, who do not know how they are going to feed their children and who do not know if they are going to be able to afford gas to get to work. Does he talk to those workers who are paying these huge amounts every single day? I am just asking for a friend.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I am not a New Democrat, but I can tell members, and anyone else who is listening, that I am very much in contact with people. I believe in the importance of being grassroots-oriented, in terms of talking with people. In fact, for 30 years now, with the pandemic being an exception, every Saturday, for example, I would be at the local McDonald's, where we would deal with dozens of people and constituents on a wide variety of topics, much of it dealing with poverty. I am in constant contact, now in virtual meetings or Zoom meetings.

I do not necessarily need to be lectured about the importance of talking with real people. I have been doing that for over 30 years, and I take a great sense of pride in ensuring that many of the policies that we have been bringing in are a reflection of Liberal members of Parliament, in good part, communicating with constituents and bringing them to the table so that we can help people in all strata of our society.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like the member for North Island—Powell River, I will thank the member for the fact that he is usually on his feet here and he is usually talking a lot of important sense.

Some hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be able to finish my question to the member, if the member for North Island—Powell River could stop heckling me in the background.

My question is simple. My colleague did a great job highlighting some of the government programs around affordability, the measures that the government has undertaken. This motion, at its core, is about affordability. I had the opportunity to look at the text of the member for Abbotsford's opposition day motion for tomorrow. It is also on affordability.

I live in a rural area. I know my colleague is from an urban area in Manitoba. I think inner-city busing right now is an important element for vulnerable individuals. I know that, ultimately, the Government of Canada has to work with provinces and territories in that regard. I do not know where Premier Stefanson might be on this, but would my hon. colleague agree that inner-city busing for individuals who are vulnerable would be something the government could and should look at in the days ahead to support those who are vulnerable?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is something the Government of Canada has been doing for the last number of years. Just prior to the pandemic, the Prime Minister was actually in Winnipeg at the Winnipeg transit garage where we had announced supports for public transit. Over the last number of years, we have seen a national government take an interest in busing and in public transport. Earlier today in question period, the minister was asked about CP Rail. At the end of the day, we are talking about huge investments to assist in facilitating transportation. Whether it is inner cities or rural communities, we are investing hundreds of millions of dollars and I suspect we will continue to see these types of investments. For me, it was really nice to see money being allocated to things such as building bus shacks, which helps a lot of inner cities and so forth.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North knows just how much I enjoy listening to him and, in some respects, he knows that he inspires me, especially when he leads the charge against NDP misinformation.

I am going to talk about the tax cut for the middle class that the government made in its first term, because the Liberals do not understand the marginal tax rate.

They lowered taxes by 1.5% for people who fall into the \$49,000 to \$98,000 tax bracket today. What does that mean? I did a quick calculation. Currently, the middle-class tax cut for a family with two incomes of \$50,000 would be \$29. I checked the Société de transport de Montréal website and that amount of money is not enough to buy 10 subway tickets. A family with two incomes of \$150,000, or total family income of \$300,000, will get a \$1,470 tax cut thanks to the Liberals, or 50 times the amount received by a family with two incomes of \$50,000.

Given these calculations, does my colleague still believe that a family with an income of \$300,000 is part of the middle class? Does he not agree, as he himself admitted, that they should have thought about this before and perhaps increased the basic exemption in their first term rather than in their third term?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one of the problems in questions and answers is that the Speaker is not going to let me give a full, detailed answer. Suffice it to say that what members need to recognize is that, when we brought in these measures of the special tax on Canada's 1% wealthiest and the tax break for the middle class, it actually came along, at the end of the day, with the reform of the Canada child benefit program, and that enhanced disposable income for many individuals. I am sure my friend would have liked to see that and he would have no doubt supported it had he been here.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:28 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

[English]

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

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, we would certainly like to see a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, March 22, 2022, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:43 p.m.

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

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

It is agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the answer I received to my initial question, one that I support, outlines Canada's efforts to assist people trying to flee the violence in Ukraine. I support our nation's legacy of providing shelter to those in dire need. Forty years ago, it was my parents and other refugees who were being generously welcomed to Canada. I would not have the honour of standing before members today if not for the compassion of Canada.

However, my question was not on Canada's effort to assist Ukrainian refugees to come to Canada, but on whether Canada would be providing assistance to Poland and other NATO allies that have opened their borders to the Ukrainian exodus. Three weeks ago, when I asked the government if it would assist, there were 115,000 refugees headed for Poland. Today, 3.3 million Ukrainians have fled their country to seek sanctuary. Poland has welcomed more than two million of them.

Poland is a nation of honour. The Polish know what it is like to stand up to aggression and they know what it is like to stand up to tyranny. It is why the first line of the country's national anthem is "Poland is not yet lost". It is why the country's historical unofficial motto is "for our freedom and yours".

I have seen first-hand the courage and honour of the Polish people as a proud member of the Warsaw Security Forum community. I see the efforts of my friends in Poland who are doing everything they can to support Ukrainians who have sought shelter in their

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country, but resources are being stretched to the brink. Thus, my question remains relevant: Will Canada support our allies at this tragic time?

I am asking if my hon. colleague can inform the House whether Canada will be providing help to those nations that have opened their borders to the sea of humanity seeking safety. That is my question that I am asking again, both of the government and of my hon. colleague.

• (1830)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague for Spadina—Fort York has raised an incredibly important question.

We continue unequivocally to condemn President Putin's unprovoked and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine. Our hearts break as we hear about untold suffering, particularly in cities such as Mariupol, where thousands of people are trapped without electricity, water, gas or a way of communicating with their loved ones.

[Translation]

The most vulnerable are in need of humanitarian assistance.

[English]

This is why Canada is deeply concerned with the ongoing challenge to ensure humanitarian access to besieged cities and to help those who are trapped to meet their immediate and most basic humanitarian needs. Canada will continue to call on Russia to uphold its obligations under international humanitarian law to allow humanitarian access and to facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Canada has consistently supported the humanitarian response in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries such as Poland since 2014. Our funding has been provided to experienced humanitarian partners, including United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which are all working to help the most vulnerable people in Ukraine.

[Translation]

We saw a dramatic rise in civilian casualties and humanitarian consequences last month, as a result of Russia's invasion and disregard for international humanitarian law. We remain steadfast in our commitment to alleviating their suffering and protecting human dignity.

[English]

In 2022 to date, Canada has committed \$145 million to supporting the humanitarian response in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. Of this amount, \$95 million has been allocated to experienced Red Cross, UN and non-governmental humanitarian partners. This includes a very successful \$30-million matching fund with the Canadian Red Cross.

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To respond to requests for in-kind assistance from the ministry of health of Ukraine, Global Affairs Canada is coordinating with provincial and interdepartmental partners to support the donation of relief supplies that can be effectively integrated into humanitarian response operations through international partners. This will support a coordinated international response, which has been rapidly scaling up, and make use of the supply pipelines that are already being established to deliver relief items.

Through these pipelines, Canada's in-kind assistance will be channelled directly to the needs of the most vulnerable in Ukraine and in the region.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Given the scope of the crisis, there is an increasing need to provide international support to countries on the front line, such as Moldova and Poland.

[*English*]

To support their efforts, Canada is providing unearmarked funding to key humanitarian partners to help provide immediate services to refugees in support of host government-led responses.

In conclusion, Canada's commitment to stand united with those affected by the conflict in Ukraine is clear. We are continuing to work in close collaboration with our allies and our humanitarian partners on the ground to monitor the development of this rapidly evolving crisis.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for expanding on the support we have been providing to Ukraine and to neighbouring countries. Not only do we have to stick together; we must stand together, and we will win together. I thank the member and the government for all we are doing to support Ukraine, Poland and our neighbouring NATO allies.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, Canada remains steadfast in its commitment to address the humanitarian needs in Ukraine as well as the needs of those who have fled to neighbouring countries. We reiterate our deep concern for the increasing number of civilian casualties as well as for the growing number of people crossing the border into neighbouring countries in search of safety, and we continue to call for safe passage for the most vulnerable as well as for the principal delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Let there be no doubt: Canada's commitment to stand in solidarity with Ukraine is demonstrably clear. Our significant support, both financial and in kind, is critical to supporting our humanitarian partners in addressing the most pressing humanitarian needs on the ground in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries.

[*Translation*]

We are prepared to provide additional assistance if and as required.

[*English*]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 11, I raised a question concerning the impact an RCMP payroll increase and back pay will have on the rural com-

munities of Yorkton—Melville. The agreement reached last June between the federal government and the National Police Federation includes a \$20,000 payroll increase for the more than 19,000 regular members of the RCMP. It also provides for retroactive pay dating back to April 2017.

In rural Canada the RCMP are our source of stability and safety. Officers are our friends, neighbours and a staple of our communities. We know that our members and reservists are deserving of a long overdue raise. We are frustrated that the government has failed to increase the number of members in the west as promised, and we are deeply concerned for the health and safety of those who are serving rural Saskatchewan.

I have raised this issue on behalf of my municipalities and constituents who had no say during the federal government's unilateral negotiations. I am asking the minister to answer to concerned mayors, councillors and my constituents who are footing the entire bill for this pay increase. The minister is not oblivious to the growing economic hardships of Canada's rural communities. He knows the government's spending is out of control with no plan to rein it in. Inflation is the highest it has been in over 30 years and four in five Canadians are saying they changed their food buying habits because of increased costs.

He also knows that, effective April 1, the government's carbon tax will add 12¢ to every litre of gas with further increases to come. We have a cost of living crisis in this country. Canadians do not have the flexibility to absorb yet another steep increase in their taxes, but that is exactly what will happen as a result of poor planning or intentional design on the part of the Liberal government. The largest of my riding's communities is the city of Yorkton, and it is a prime example of how this deal has thrown a huge wrench into their budgeting plans.

Yorkton councillor Quinn Haider has told me that, in addition to the increase in salary, they are being expected to absorb the retroactive costs from as far back as 2017. The RCMP agreement came their way with the cost being about \$2.1 million and, like a responsible administration, Yorkton had been diligently planning accordingly by putting significant funds into an RCMP reserve for the back pay. However, the cost is ending up to be \$1.4 million, nearly double the amount set aside. The city has used up its entire reserve and has had to draw from other reserves in order to cover these costs. The council has had no choice but to plan for a 4.86% increase in taxes this year, 2.36% of which is solely for the RCMP pay increase and back pay.

The councillor told me, "I don't believe anyone on council has a problem with the RCMP getting a raise, but this is a significant hit. We didn't have any say in these contract negotiations whatsoever. We're not the only city around who's in the same predicament. Everyone is. This hurts."

For some perspective, last year, the city of Yorkton's tax increase was 0%. The city honoured hard-working taxpayers and gave them a break during the difficulties businesses and workers were facing with COVID lockdowns by making sacrifices and finding efficiencies. This year, council was hopeful for a modest 2% increase in municipal taxes, but now, because of a well-intentioned but unfair federal deal, residents of Yorkton can expect to pay more than double that amount.

Yorkton and many cities like it are being left to explain such a sharp tax increase to their residents and wondering what is motivating the federal government to stay so silent on doing its part. When will the Liberal government take responsibility by revisiting this deal and announce its commitment to cover the RCMP back pay, which it unilaterally negotiated and then dropped exclusively on the provinces and our municipalities?

• (1840)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to address this historic first collective agreement for Royal Canadian Mounted Police members.

Let me begin by saying that there is no greater responsibility for the Government of Canada than to keep our citizens and communities safe. RCMP members continue to play a primary role for Canadians in supporting this objective. The RCMP provides policing services across Canada, including much of rural Canada, all of the Canadian north and many towns and large urban centres. It delivers local and regional policing services under a contracted cost-sharing agreement with jurisdictions that have opted to have the RCMP as their police service of jurisdiction. They include all provinces except Ontario and Quebec, as well as the three territories and 155 municipalities.

The Government of Canada shares the cost of RCMP contract policing by paying 10% of salary, equipment and other costs in large municipalities and 30% of these costs in municipalities with a population of less than 15,000. This collective agreement between the Government of Canada and the National Police Federation, the bargaining agent for RCMP members, went into effect on August 6, 2021. It provided a reasonable economic increase and market adjustments to address long-standing wage differences that existed between RCMP members and reservists and other police services across Canada. As a result of the agreement, RCMP salaries are now in line with those of other police services across Canada.

The agreement marked the first time that RCMP members received a pay increase since 2017. Government officials kept partners informed throughout the collective bargaining process starting in 2017, including on anticipated salary increases, to help them plan accordingly. However, the Government of Canada is mindful that policing represents a significant cost for all communities, including municipalities that contract RCMP police services. We have heard the calls from municipalities that the cost of the agreement, while fair for regular members, presents challenges. For this reason, our government remains committed to continuing to meet with contract policing partners in order to effectively implement the collective agreement. In the coming weeks, officials will sit down with jurisdictions to discuss the impacts of the agreement and their specific needs.

Adjournment Proceedings

The women and men of the RCMP work tirelessly to serve and protect Canadians, including those in rural areas, and for this I thank them wholeheartedly. Our partnerships with all contract jurisdictions to support the RCMP in the communities they police are strong. In these challenging times, our government remains committed to working closely with contract partners, and indeed with all provinces, territories and municipalities, to achieve our shared public safety priorities. We will listen and be there for all communities to support them in ensuring that the public remains safe and secure.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Speaker, responding to my question on February 11, the Minister of Public Safety stated:

...to be clear, there are long-standing arrangements that exist between the federal government, the provinces and the municipalities. Of course, we remain in very close touch with them to ensure that there is fair and equitable support when it comes to the RCMP.

We will always be sure that the RCMP are properly resourced...

Saskatchewan requested the federal government to absorb the retroactive costs of this contract and rightly accuses the government of ignoring the 2021 agreement, which states, "The contract parties are committed to a more co-operative and collaborative relationship." The province and its municipalities were not consulted during negotiations. Minimal and infrequent information on progress is not consultation.

If the minister was really committed to ensuring the RCMP is properly resourced, he would have worked collaboratively with Saskatchewan and its municipalities, which of course are prepared to honour future agreements. When will he announce that the federal government will absorb the financial impact of its unilateral decisions for retroactive compensation from 2017 to 2021?

• (1845)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that the Government of Canada remains committed to the public safety of all Canadians across the country and remains proud of the services the RCMP provides to our contract police jurisdiction partners. The agreement was fair for our hard-working RCMP members and for Canadian taxpayers.

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To reiterate, we appreciate the financial planning challenges and the complexity of the implementation of the collective agreement, and we are mindful of the significant cost this represents for municipalities, provinces and territories. The Government of Canada remains steadfast in our commitment to continue our strong collaboration with our contract partners, with a view to supporting their ability to meet their financial obligations under the contracts.

HOUSING

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise tonight to follow up on my question period topic from a few weeks ago on the issue of housing and the crisis our country finds itself in.

Having only 35 seconds to ask a question in question period is not the easiest to summarize a major national issue. I hope this 10-minute back and forth tonight will be a bit more helpful.

I hear repeatedly across my riding, whether in the city of Cornwall, the united counties of SDG or in Akwesasne, from a number of people who are struggling when it comes to housing and, equally as important, the rental market in our region. I know our region is not unique. Frankly, it is a national crisis we find ourselves in today.

As opposition MPs, we are not on the government side. I wish we were, and I aspire to get there some day. One of the things I want to address is that part of our job as the opposition is to propose ideas, and I have a few that I will suggest later. It is also to scrutinize and ask tough questions about what the government has proposed. In this case it is to address housing, to present some facts and figures of the reality of what has happened in the past few years, and to bring a local context here to the floor of the House of Commons. Sadly, I can do that, again between Cornwall, SDG and Akwesasne, because the stats and figures paint a very bleak picture when it comes to housing affordability for Canadians.

The Cornwall and District Real Estate Board and its president, Troy Vaillancourt, recently gave the February statistics of where the housing situation was in our region. The average price of homes sold in February 2022 was a record \$434,000. That was up 28.5% from last February. If we go back five years, housing prices in Cornwall and area have doubled since that time. Active listing supply is a major challenge on this problem. Active listings were down 65% below the five-year average, and 81% below the 10-year average for the month of February.

As we talk about this, we are likely going to hear, in the response from my colleague across the way, the Liberals trying to tout their national housing plan. It is a 10-year plan that was introduced in 2017. Simple math would tell us that it is halfway through. We are going to hear a sunny ways picture of the billions here and the billions there that they are spending to help the housing market.

Five years in, I would encourage the Liberals to pull back on that plan because it is clearly not working. If the plan is to make housing more affordable and to get younger people to realize their dream of home ownership, it is absolutely not working. In my region, housing prices have doubled in five years. Rent is skyrocketing. If we talk to local real estate agents or the Canadian Real Estate Association, it is scheduled to get no better.

We need a change of course. I asked the government about this printing money and adding to debt. Even its shared equity program is absolutely flawed, and we need to make sure that it never comes back again. All that giving new homeowners interest-free money to buy new houses is doing is raising prices further. More and more people are realizing they can borrow more interest-free loans, and it is making the market even worse.

I will ask the government a question again in my comments, and in my rebuttal I will give some ideas. Will the government acknowledge that its housing plan has been a failure five years in? What could it do differently to finally make home ownership more affordable and make renting more affordable in this country?

● (1850)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is proud of its record of putting roofs over Canadians' heads, and I would like to thank my colleague for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry for the opportunity to speak about what we are doing for Canadians and how we are tackling the housing affordability crisis in this country.

We know that the main way to address housing affordability is to address supply. That is why this government launched the national housing strategy in 2017, the first of its kind in Canada. It is an ambitious 10-year plan backed by more than \$72 billion in investments. It is supply-oriented and includes a range of initiatives that address housing affordability from every angle that would have an impact.

Since 2015, we have invested over \$30 billion, creating and repairing nearly 480,000 units in Canada. That is 10,000 homes for tens of thousands of Canadians. It includes homes in my colleague's region of eastern Ontario. In Brockville, the Marguerita Residence Corporation is building an 88-unit, affordable housing complex for seniors thanks to the federal funding delivered through the Canada-Ontario community housing initiative.

A major partnership with Habitat Humanity is also giving low-income families across the country a chance to access the dream of home ownership, including in my colleague's city of Cornwall. These are just a few examples from one region. The successes are repeated across the country.

Yes, we recognize that we need to and can do more, and that we must do that. Since the last election, this government has set out an ambitious new agenda for further activities to make housing more affordable for all Canadians. We have planned new initiatives, such as the housing accelerated fund to help cities speed up the development process, a rent-to-own program to help renters get on the path to ownership and an expanded access to funding to support green home retrofits.

We will be working with the provinces, territories and municipalities to develop a fairness in real estate action plan to ensure that there is more protection and transparency for homebuyers and renters. We will also be collaborating with indigenous partners to co-develop an urban, rural and northern indigenous strategy and Canada's first-ever national indigenous housing centre.

Even as we are proud of our successes in improving housing affordability, we look forward to doing more, and I look forward to the exchange with my colleague on this issue.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the reply, and I will summarize again what I said in my intervention.

We are five years in and halfway through the \$72 billion that was promised. The Auditor General said that the Liberals actually did not spend what they said they were going to. Actually, I am kind of glad about that, because if they had spent more than they already have, we would be further in debt, and I think housing prices might be even higher. We need to stop printing money and debt and giving it to people, which is inflating the market.

The national housing plan is not working. Here are some ideas that the Conservatives are proposing: ban foreign buyers, which the government had an opportunity to do through a committee but refused to do; tackle money laundering; make changes to encourage building more apartments and rental housing; and look at mortgage and lending rules and incentives.

We need to invest urgently, in my view, in infrastructure for water and sewer, which presents an issue in my riding. We can talk to the mayors of my riding in Glen Walter, Winchester and Ingleside for examples of where that challenge is.

Habitat for Humanity is a wonderful organization and social housing is helpful in our community, but we need more action and we need more resolve. Again, clearly, the direction with five years in of a 10-year plan has failed to date, and my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry is a good example of that, unfortunately.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the urgency and importance of this issue, which is why our government has made it a priority. We implemented Canada's first national housing strategy, and it is why we continue to deliver on these programs and work towards the goal of housing affordability for all. I urge my colleague and members of all sides of this House to work with their constituencies to make sure that they use the programs that are available to them. They are there for Canadians just as this government is there for Canadians.

I hope that this time around the party opposite will support the measures that we will be addressing in the future on this problem.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:55 p.m.)

APPENDIX

[*English*]

Address

of

His Excellency Volodymyr Zelenskyy

President of Ukraine

to both Houses of Parliament

in the House of Commons Chamber, Ottawa

on

Tuesday, March 15, 2022

His Excellency Volodymyr Zelenskyy was welcomed by the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, by the Honourable George J. Furey, Speaker of the Senate, and by the Honourable Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons.

Hon. Anthony Rota (Speaker of the House of Commons): Your Excellency, President Zelenskyy, Prime Minister, Speaker Furey, party leaders, honourable parliamentarians, distinguished guests, *mesdames et messieurs*, welcome to this extraordinary event, a joint address to Parliament by His Excellency Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.

I thank all those who have made it possible for us to hear from President Zelenskyy today, whether here in the chamber or by video link.

[*Translation*]

I now invite the Prime Minister to address us.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Esteemed parliamentarians, friends and colleagues, good morning and thank you for being here today to welcome a courageous and exceptional leader.

[English]

President Zelenskyy, on behalf of parliamentarians and all Canadians, it is an honour to welcome you to our House.

Mr. President, Volodymyr, you are a friend. Canadians and Ukrainians are friends, and they have been for a long time. Our people share deep historical ties. In the early 20th century, a massive wave of Ukrainian immigrants came to Canada. Many of them settled in the Canadian Prairies. They worked the land, they built churches distinguished by their beautiful spires and they helped shape Canada in significant ways.

[Translation]

Today, there are 1.4 million Ukrainian Canadians in our country. This is the second largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world. Whether as farmers, scientists, community leaders, athletes or frontline workers, Ukrainian Canadians continue to make a tremendous contribution to our country.

The friendship between Canada and Ukraine is based not only on this shared history but also on our shared values.

[English]

Volodymyr, in the years I have known you, I have always thought of you as a champion for democracy. Now democracies around the world are lucky to have you as our champion.

Your courage and the courage of your people inspires us all. You are defending the right of Ukrainians to choose their own future and, in doing so, you are defending the values that form the pillars of all free democratic countries. Freedom, human rights, justice, truth and international order are the values you are risking your life for as you fight for Ukraine and Ukrainians. Beyond that, you are inspiring democracies and democratic leaders around the world to be more courageous, more united, and to fight harder for what we believe in. You remind us that friends are always stronger together.

With allies and partners, we are imposing crippling sanctions to make sure Putin and his enablers in Russia and Belarus are held accountable. Today, in line with our European Union partners, I can announce that we have imposed severe sanctions on 15 new Russian officials, including government and military elites who are complicit in this illegal war.

[Translation]

Canada will continue to support Ukraine by providing military equipment as well as financial and humanitarian assistance. We will be there to help rebuild Ukraine once the aggressor is repelled.

[English]

In Canada, we like to root for the underdog. We believe that when a cause is just and right, it will always prevail, no matter the size of the opponent. This does not mean it will be easy. Ukrainians are already paying incalculable human costs. This illegal and unnecessary war is a grave mistake. Putin must stop it now.

[Translation]

Vladimir Putin's blatant disregard for human life is absolutely unacceptable. Canada continues to demand that Russia stop targeting civilians and that it end this unjustifiable war.

[English]

Ukrainians are standing up to authoritarianism and, as parliamentarians united in this House today and all Canadians, we stand with you. As friends, you can count on our unwavering and steadfast support.

Now it is my great privilege to introduce to you all the President of Ukraine, our friend, Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy (President of Ukraine): [*The President spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:*]

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister, dear Justin, members of the government, members of Parliament and all distinguished guests and friends, before I begin, I would like you to understand my feelings and the feelings of all Ukrainians, as much as is possible, over the last 20 days of the full-scale aggression by the Russian Federation after eight years of fighting in the Donbass region. Can you imagine that at 4 a.m. each of you started hearing bomb explosions, severe explosions?

Justin, can you imagine you and your children hearing all these severe explosions, the bombing of airports, the bombing of the Ottawa airport, in tens of other cities in your wonderful country? Can you imagine that?

Cruise missiles are falling down on your territory and your children are asking you what is happening. You are receiving the first news as to which infrastructure objects have been bombed and destroyed by the Russian Federation, and you know how many people have already died. Can you only imagine? How can you explain to your children that a full-scale aggression just happened in your country? You know this is a war to annihilate your state, your country. You know that this is a war to subjugate a people.

On the second day you receive notifications that huge columns of military equipment are entering your country. They are crossing the border. They are entering small cities. They are laying siege, encircling cities, and they start to shell civilian neighbourhoods. They bomb school buildings. They destroy kindergarten facilities, like in our city in Sumy, in the city of Okhtyrka. Imagine that someone is laying siege to Vancouver. Can you just imagine that for a second and all of the people who are left in such a city? This is exactly the situation that our city of Mariupol is suffering right now. They are left without heat or hydro, without a means of communicating, almost without food and water. They are seeking shelter in bomb shelters.

Dear Justin and dear guests, can you imagine that every day you receive memorandums about the number of casualties, including women and children? You have heard about the bombings. Currently, we have 97 children who have died during this war. Can you imagine if the famous CN Tower in Toronto was hit by Russian bombs?

Of course, I do not wish that on anyone, but this is the reality in which we live. We have to contemplate and see where the next bombings will take place. You have your Churchill Square. We have our Freedom Square in the city of Kharkiv. We have our Babyn Yar, the place where victims of the Holocaust were buried. These have been bombed by the Russians.

Imagine that Canadian facilities have been bombed similarly to how our buildings and memorial places are being bombed. A number of families have died. Every night is a horrible night. The Russians are shelling us from all kinds of artillery and tanks. They are hitting civilian infrastructure. They are hitting big buildings.

Can you imagine a fire starting at a nuclear power plant? That is exactly what happened in our country. In each city they are marching through, they are taking down the Ukrainian flags. Can you imagine someone taking down your Canadian flags in Montreal and other Canadian cities?

I know that you all support Ukraine, and we have been friends with you, Justin, but I would also like you to understand and I would like you to feel what we feel every day. We want to live and we want to be victorious. We want to prevail for the sake of life.

Can you imagine calling your friends, friendly nations, and asking them to please close the sky, close the airspace, please stop the bombing? You ask them, “How many more cruise missiles have to fall on our cities until you make this happen?” In return, they express their deep concerns about the situation, when you talk to your partners. They say please hold on, hold on a little longer.

Some people are talking about trying to avoid escalation. At the same time, in response to our aspiration to become members of NATO, we do not hear a clear answer. Sometimes we do not see obvious things. It is dire straits, but it also allowed us to see who our real friends are over the last 20 days, as well as the eight previous years.

I am sure that you have been able to see clearly what is going on. I am addressing all of you. Canada has always been steadfast in its support. You have been a reliable partner to Ukraine and Ukrainians, and I am sure this will continue. You offered your help and assistance at our earliest request. You supply us with military assistance and with humanitarian assistance. You have imposed severe sanctions.

At the same time, we see that unfortunately this did not bring an end to the war. You can see that our cities, like Kharkiv, Mariupol and many other cities, are not protected like your cities are protected, like Edmonton and Vancouver. You can see that Kyiv is being shelled and bombed, and Ivano-Frankivsk. It used to be a peaceful country with peaceful cities, but now they are being constantly bombarded.

What I am trying to say is that we all need to do more—you need to do more—to stop Russia to protect Ukraine, and by doing so to protect Europe from Russian threats. They are destroying everything: memorial complexes, schools, hospitals, housing complexes. They have already killed 97 Ukrainian children.

We are not asking for much. We are asking for justice, for real support, which will help us to prevail, to defend, to save lives, to save life all over the world. Canada is leading in these efforts, and I am hoping that other countries will follow suit. We are asking for more of your leadership. Please take a greater part in these efforts, Justin, and all friends of Ukraine, all friends of the truth. Please understand how important it is for us to close our airspace to Russian missiles and Russian aircraft. I hope you can understand. I hope you can increase your efforts and you can increase the sanctions so they will not have a single dollar to fund their war effort. Commercial entities should not be working in Russia.

Probably you know better than many other countries that this attack on Ukraine is nothing less than an attempt to annihilate the Ukrainian people. This is the main objective. It is actually a war against the Ukrainian people. It is an attempt to destroy everything that we, as Ukrainians, do. It is an attempt to destroy our future, to destroy our nation, our character.

You Canadians know all this very well, and that is why I am asking you to please not stop your efforts. Please expand your efforts to bring back peace to our peaceful country. I believe that you can do it and I know that you can do it. We are part of the anti-war coalition, and jointly I am sure that we will achieve results.

To our Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, this is a historical moment, and we need your support, your practical support. We hope that with your practical steps, you will show that you are part of more than Ukrainian history. Please remember that this is a practical, modern-day history of Ukraine. We want to live. We want to have peace.

I am grateful to everyone in the Parliament of Canada who is present and to every Canadian citizen. I am very grateful to you, Justin. I am grateful to the Canadian people, and I am confident that together we will overcome and we will be victorious.

Glory to Ukraine. Thank you to Canada.

[Applause]

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Mr. President.

I now invite the Hon. George Furey, Speaker of the Senate, to say a few words.

[Translation]

Hon. George J. Furey (Speaker of the Senate): Good morning, President Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Trudeau, Chief Justice Wagner, Speaker Rota, fellow parliamentarians, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. President, it is a great honour and privilege for me to thank you for your very powerful and inspiring words.

[English]

On behalf of all senators, members of the House of Commons and indeed on behalf of all Canadians, please know, Mr. President, that Canadians stand with you. We know what is at stake. You are battling for your people, for your country and for all of us who believe in peace and democracy, in truth and justice. You are battling for all of us who stand against tyranny, lies and the horrific war crimes that have been committed against the Ukrainian people.

There is a word in the Bible, one word, that expresses so much of the courage that you, Mr. President, and your fellow Ukrainians are showing the world. In the original Hebrew, the word is “*hineni*”. Literally, it means “here I stand”. It was said by the great Old Testament leaders when called upon to lead their people. It is a statement of stepping up to leadership in the face of overwhelming odds. It is clearly what you are saying, Mr. President, by your actions, and it is what all Ukrainians are saying in this terrible time of crisis. The world is witnessing a Ukraine united more than ever in common cause to secure its place among the family of nations. As Prime Minister Trudeau has made clear by his words and actions, Canada stands with you.

I know I speak on behalf of all Canadians when I express our admiration for the leadership and courage you have demonstrated as the Ukrainian people struggle to repel a brutal and illegal invasion. You have shown the world that Ukraine will not cower, will not falter and will not be defeated. The heart and soul of Ukraine are strong. Canada recognizes your fortitude, your resilience and your strength of purpose. Canada stands with Ukraine and her many allies in the pursuit of a swift and peaceful resolution to this conflict. This resolve rests upon our shared commitment to democracy, to human rights and to the sovereign equality of all nations.

For Canadians, Ukraine is permanently woven into the fabric of our culture. Ukraine, simply put, is family. Mr. President, to you and the people of Ukraine, please be assured of our solidarity in the days and weeks ahead.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. President, for your great strength and courage.

[English]

We thank you once again for your courage and determination in the face of this horrific onslaught and for your inspiring words to Canada and indeed to the world today.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Speaker Furey.

[Translation]

Mr. President, most of us can only imagine the hardship, sorrow and fear that the people of Ukraine are enduring as their nation is attacked and its very existence threatened.

[English]

The extraordinary courage and defiance that Ukrainians are demonstrating in defending their country and their way of life is an example to all freedom-loving people, and it is clear that many of

our fellow citizens are drawing strength from your own determination to repel the invaders and protect your homeland.

You are not just the president anymore; you have proven to be a great leader of your nation. As Ukraine continues to fight for its freedom, please know that you are not alone, and that you will not be left behind. We will be there with you. We may be distant cousins in terms of geography, but Ukraine is woven into the very fabric of Canadian society, thanks to more than a million Canadians of Ukrainian descent.

In an interview you gave two years ago, you said, “We must remember the heroes of today, heroes of the arts, heroes of literature, simply heroes of Ukraine. Why don’t we use their names—the names of the heroes that today unite Ukraine?”

To the people of Ukraine, to your friends in Canada and around the world, you, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, are one of those heroes.

Heroyam slava.

[Translation]

Mr. Zelenskyy, on behalf of all parliamentarians, thank you for addressing the people of Canada and for showing us the true meaning of courage, freedom and patriotism. May we prove worthy of the friendship between our peoples and our countries.

Slava Ukraini.

[English]

I now invite the Hon. Candice Bergen, interim leader of the official opposition, to address us.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by first and foremost stating on behalf of my Conservative caucus our complete admiration and respect for the people and the nation of Ukraine.

To President Zelenskyy, let me express to you how much I admire your courage and your sacrificial leadership at this critical time in Ukraine’s history. The kind of leadership that you are showing, sir, is very rare, and it serves as an inspiration to all of us who are elected. You are the leader of Ukraine for such a time as this, and we remain indebted to you.

[Translation]

President Zelenskyy, I thank you for your leadership in this war against your country and for defending democracy. The official opposition stands with Ukraine. It is our duty. We will also be there when this conflict is over to help you rebuild Ukraine. Your courage inspires us.

[English]

The images that we are seeing from Ukraine, as you described them, President, are heartbreaking and painful. We see families huddled in bomb shelters, the ruins of a children's hospital and a maternity ward, the elderly who are trying to find their way to safety, but there is also inspiration as we watch ordinary people, men and women of all ages, defending their homeland.

We are witnesses to the strength and the defiance of Ukrainians standing up for their freedom, their independence and their sovereignty. Ukrainians are not just fighting to defend themselves; let us be very clear. They are defending all of Europe because Putin's brutal attack on Ukraine is an attack on all of us. That is the lesson history has taught us and one we cannot ignore.

It is why we must help the people of Ukraine in every way possible. Canada has the largest number of people of Ukrainian descent outside of Ukraine and Russia. For a century, they have enriched our communities and our culture, especially in the Canadian Prairies, which is where I am from. Canada and Manitoba, in particular, share ties with Ukraine that cannot be broken. Now, almost 1.4 million Ukrainian Canadians are watching what is happening. Their hearts and their souls are reaching out, hoping, praying for the nation and the people of their forebears.

This war of naked aggression has revealed Vladimir Putin for what he really is: a warmonger and a violent predator with no regard for human life and suffering. He has crossed lines that after two world wars we thought would never be crossed, and he has shaken the rules-based order that has kept millions safe since 1945. Every day he tells the world lies and then he proceeds to kill innocent and vulnerable Ukrainians, including women and children. While on his rampage he continues to threaten the world, saying if he does not get his way he will use the worst extremes possible. It is sickening to watch.

Putin must be brought to justice. He must be held to account for his crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court at the Hague. This is not just a war against Ukraine. It is a war against the free democratic world. We must stand with Ukraine. It is not a choice; it is a moral duty.

Canada was the first country to recognize Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union. Now it is time to honour that legacy. We must do more together with our allies to secure Ukraine's airspace. We need to protect, at a minimum, the airspace over the humanitarian corridors so that Ukrainians can seek safe passage away from the war zones and humanitarian relief is allowed to reach those areas under siege.

Canada must do whatever it can to cut through any red tape and welcome Ukrainians who are fleeing, although we all know that what Ukrainians want most is to be able to live in their home nation, free, sovereign and peaceful.

President Zelenskyy, I want to reassure you that Canada will be a safe haven for Ukrainian citizens who choose to come here until the battle is over. While they are in Canada, we will cherish them, care for them, provide for them purpose and hope, and when it is time, they will return to their beloved Ukraine and their families. This is our pledge to you.

To the people of Ukraine, let me conclude by saying simply that Canadians support you today as you face Putin and his reckless empire building. Conservatives stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine and we will continue to support you when this terrible conflict finally ends and you rebuild your homes and communities. Your courage, your faith and your fortitude in the face of adversity are an inspiration to all of us.

Slava Ukraini. Glory to Ukraine. Glory to the heroes. Keep fighting. Keep believing. Keep hoping.

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Ms. Bergen.

[Translation]

I now invite the leader of the Bloc Québécois to address us.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, esteemed colleagues, and, especially, Mr. President, it is difficult for me today to express myself in simple words, which cannot convey or express all the sadness, indignation and anger roused by the dirty war inflicted on your great nation and your great people.

It is also difficult for me to admit to a certain powerlessness to do much more than express our compassion and our desire—which is only a shadow of your own—to awaken from this nightmare that haunts our television screens every day.

Of course, the Quebec nation—I believe it is safe to say—is overwhelmingly behind you, behind your people. Of course, we have asked that Canada act in the only viable way, together with the free countries of the world and with major international organizations, including economic, military or humanitarian groups. Of course, we are also calling for increasingly severe economic sanctions to ensure that this senseless attack is brought to an end from within Russia itself and through balanced negotiations.

We are strongly urging the Canadian government to reduce the barriers to welcoming refugees from Ukraine. There are people, families and Ukrainian nationals in both Quebec and Canada who want to welcome these refugees. We must also put in place a humanitarian bridge between your nation and our nations.

It was difficult to hear your call for more weapons. You are entitled to these weapons. You need them. The Quebec nation is a peaceful nation. The Ukrainian nation is a peaceful nation. I think it is with a heavy heart that you ask for these weapons. Your people have the right to defend their loved ones. They have the right to defend their land. Yes, we need to get more weapons to Ukraine and quickly.

We realize this is far too little, every time a man, woman or child is killed, or every time a hospital, day care, school, park or even a single flower is destroyed. Every single time we are reminded that we have done too little, too late, in some respects.

Mr. President, I like to think that we cannot judge a people by its leader. I believe that the people of Russia are the first victims of the dictator in the Kremlin, but there are leaders, officials, governors, who do speak on behalf of their people. There is no doubt that you are one such leader.

You have managed to turn one of the enemy's biggest weapons against itself. The Kremlin's powerful, vicious and malevolent deception and disinformation machine was designed to promulgate a false narrative rewritten by the dictator to serve his own ends and for his own personal glorification.

You, on the contrary, took a simple, honest and courageous approach to force the hand of the entire world, to make everyone across the globe see what is happening to your people and, in doing so, you have managed to get the help that you might otherwise not have received, and you must still ask for more.

Mr. President, what we cannot do is experience the brutal reality of this vile war. That is the cruelest thing of all. We cannot sit in dark basements as the walls rattle from the bombs being unleashed on your cities and towns. We cannot know what it is like to worry about your loved ones or be unsure of the future. We cannot know what it is like to dread a rebuilding that will last at least a generation or to be afraid.

There is little we can do to allay the deep fear the children of Ukraine are feeling, and we are so sorry about that. Mr. President, your enemy does not have the heart, the courage, the strength or the dignity to overcome the bravery of the Ukrainian people.

You, President Zelenskyy, will be victorious. Freedom will be restored, and Quebec, in its own humble way, will celebrate with Ukraine.

[English]

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Monsieur Blanchet.

I now invite the leader of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Jagmeet Singh, to speak to us.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): I want to thank President Zelenskyy. We heard his words today. We want to thank him for his courage, his inspiration and his resilience. We want to thank the people of Ukraine for their courage and resilience.

He asked us to imagine what it is like to wake up at four in the morning to bombing. He asked us to imagine what it is like to explain to children what is going on. Why are we being bombed? Why are we being attacked?

He asked us to imagine what it would be like to lose 97 children to a war. He asked us to imagine what it would be like in our major cities and places in our country, such as Montreal, our capital city of Ottawa, or Toronto or Vancouver if tanks rolled into these cities. He asked us to imagine what it would be like to see bombs fall on our homes, on our cities, our communities, our schools, our hospi-

tals. He asked us to imagine that, and frankly, we cannot imagine that in a city in Canada. It is unimaginable.

But we have seen the horrors unfolding in Ukraine. We have heard the words of President Zelenskyy. We have spoken with Ukrainian Canadians who share with us the pain that they are experiencing right now, not knowing if their loved ones are going to survive the night. We have heard from families that call constantly, asking if people are okay and still alive. It is unimaginable for us. He asked us to imagine what it is like, and to please help. He asked for more help. He acknowledged that so far Canada has been a strong ally, but he asked for more help, and we must answer that call. Canadians stand with Ukraine and will answer that call to provide as much help as possible in this time.

Canadians want to do more. We heard from President Zelenskyy that sanctions are important, and we want to increase those. We know that is one of the most important things we can do. We know that President Putin does not care about the people and he does not care about his country, but he does care about his wealth. We know the way to attack Putin. The way to make sure that he feels the pressure of the sanctions is to target him where it counts, and that is to target the wealth that is held by his allies and oligarchs. We are on that path and we need to continue to apply the most severe of sanctions possible to specifically target President Putin and his wealth.

We know that we can provide humanitarian help. Canada has done its part and needs to continue to do that. We need to welcome Ukrainians who are fleeing this crisis and seeking refuge. We need to provide humanitarian help on the ground and continue to provide that support.

[Translation]

President Zelenskyy asked us to imagine the horrors of this war. He asked us to imagine this war happening here, in Canada. That is unimaginable. He also asked us to increase assistance to Ukraine, and we must make that happen. We must increase sanctions. We must answer the call from Ukrainians. We will do so.

[English]

I think about the words that we have heard from President Zelenskyy and the speeches that he has given, and I think about the moments of courage that we have seen reported from everyday Ukrainians standing up to this violence, standing up to this flagrant aggression by President Putin, which is something that we clearly and firmly denounce. We see in those moments incredible courage, and I struggle to find the words to describe it.

I think about something my mom always taught me, a phrase in Punjabi, which is *chardi kala*. I always misunderstood what it meant. She said that it means “rising spirits in the face of difficult odds”, and I cannot think of a more fitting phrase to describe the courage of Ukrainians and the courage of President Zelenskyy. I cannot think of a more fitting moment to describe *chardi kala*, rising spirits, as it defines optimism. In the face of one of the largest armies in the world, Ukrainians are saying, “We will not back down. We will not give up.”

We are so incredibly inspired by them for their fight for democracy, for their fight for freedom, and we stand in full solidarity. We wish for their *chardi kala*, their rising spirits and their defining optimism to continue, and we will be with you every step of the way.

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Mr. Singh.

I now invite the House leader of the Green Party, Ms. Elizabeth May, to say a few words.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Thank you, President Zelenskyy. I am honoured to rise and speak to this extraordinary and historic moment. I also want all my esteemed colleagues here in the House to know that we stand united.

The Green Party of Canada is part of a big Green family spread out around the world, in 80 countries. A few days ago I received the following letter from the president of the Green Party of Ukraine, Vitaliy Kononov:

[*English*]

He writes, “Dear Green Friends! We are writing to you from bomb shelters, from our home Ukraine, which is mercilessly attacked and bombarded by Russian forces since the fateful day—February 24, 2022. Ukrainians are indiscriminately hit, collateral damage amounts to total destruction of cities, many civil and social infrastructures that have no relevance to the military are destroyed, thousands of civilians dead and injured. Millions are fleeing their homes. Ukrainian army and civil defense volunteers have taken up arms and are fighting for the survival of Ukraine. And they are successful to a great extent. But, missile and bomb attacks by air are causing greatest damage. We are helpless. We have no weapons to counter air attacks. We appeal to you for support. Please urge your governments to help protect our sky by having a no-fly zone. For the sake of world peace and security, for democracy and resolution of conflicts through peaceful means and for a rule based world order, please help Ukraine!”

It broke my heart to write our dear colleague in Ukraine that all elected Greens around the world have come to the same conclusion, that a no-fly zone would risk a wider war and even a nuclear war. We know these reasons are solid, even though they ring hollow, but we must use every tool and I fear the tools we have in front of us are inadequate to the task. President Zelenskyy, we do not want to let you down. We fear that we may inevitably let you down, but we will find every tool we can find, and where there are not adequate tools, by God, let us invent them.

In 1956, during the Suez crisis, not yet prime minister, Lester B. Pearson, a Canadian, invented UN peacekeepers. We love ourselves here in Canada and although we are an insignificant country in the

massive geopolitics of superpowers we sometimes get good ideas. We need to invent something now that is effective to stop the war, to stop Putin, to save Ukraine. We have to use every single idea, every single sinew, every muscle. We must not relent for one single second.

We have seen illegal wars. I have lived long enough to see many illegal wars based on lies, in Vietnam, in Afghanistan and in Iraq, with too many innocent lives lost, and now, never again, not one more Ukrainian child. Please, God, stop the bombs. Please let us have a ceasefire. Please leave a pathway for Vladimir Putin to make it to a negotiating table and find a peace.

How do we stop lies? We stop them with the truth, and the truth is the courage of the Ukrainian people. The truth is the courage and the unexpected reality of you, President Zelenskyy, an honest-to-god democrat, a human being, a *mensch*, a man of such moral courage that the world is inspired.

We must not let you down because God knows you will not let us down. We must do more. We know this. You are, as our Prime Minister just said, a champion of democracy. May we be worthy to stand by you. May we find the ways that make it meaningful that we stand with you.

Not one more lost life, please, God. Not one more mother in Russia who weeps for a lost son in an immoral and illegal war. I thank the brave Russians who have faced jail just to go out on the streets and say, “Stop the bombing. No more war.”

I close with this. President Zelenskyy, what I want and what I pray for, and I pray for you constantly and for Ukraine, is that you come here in person, that we invite you and we see you here as the president of a country at peace, of a free, democratic and victorious Ukraine.

Please come here so that we can hope that, in your eyes, we remain worthy to be called your friend.

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Ms. May.

[*Translation*]

Again, I thank His Excellency President Zelenskyy for addressing us today. I know that we will not soon forget this exceptional man.

[*English*]

Thank you. *Dyakuyu*.

I would also like to thank all parliamentarians and all our distinguished guests for having attended either in person or by video link. This historic joint address to Parliament will continue to be that, a historic event.

[*Applause*]

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