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Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada.

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

* * *

[*English*]

LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH ACT

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.), seconded by the member for Edmonton Manning, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-268, An Act to designate the month of November as Lebanese Heritage Month.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House of Commons to introduce my private member's bill on behalf of Lebanese Canadians, and all Canadians, in recognition of the value and contribution the Lebanese have made to Canada's social, economic, cultural and political development.

[*Translation*]

For generations and throughout the country, Lebanese immigrants and their descendants have worked hard and given back, all while honouring their language and their culture.

[*English*]

I introduce this bill in memory of my father Steven Wadiah Metlege, who passed away in 2018. He came to this country in his twenties with no assurances, just the desire to work hard and do right by his family. His story mirrors that of so many Lebanese Canadians. Passing this bill would be a part of his legacy and that of all Lebanese-Canadian trailblazers, past and present.

I will quote Khalil Gibran, who wrote, “Deep is your longing for the land of your memories and the dwelling place of your greater

desires; and our love would not bind you nor our needs hold you.” This speaks to the Lebanese experience, the love of the homeland and an embrace of our chosen country.

[*Member spoke in Arabic and provided the following translation:*]

Lebanon will remain in our hearts and will last.

[*English*]

Let us all join in supporting the designation of November as Lebanese heritage month.

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

* * *

• (1005)

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I am honoured to table this important petition on behalf of my constituents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and other Canadians.

The petitioners call upon the government to treat all Canadians with dignity and respect. They recognize that EI claims have been denied to Canadians based on their personal medical choices, EI parental leave claims have been denied to parents due to insufficient hours resulting from restrictions, and increased demand for EI has resulted in delays, leaving Canadians without benefits when they need them most.

The petitioners ask the government to exercise compassion in resolving these issues, adjust EI eligibility for Canadians impacted by COVID-19 measures and remove discriminatory conditions.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour and privilege today to table e-petition 3726, which was signed by 4,020 signatories.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners cite that the deep sea plays a key role in the health of marine ecosystems and species, making it indispensable for the sustenance of the ocean. The International Seabed Authority is tasked with the protection of the international seabed area for the benefit of all humankind.

The petitioners cite that the International Seabed Authority is considering adopting rushed and inadequate regulations for deep seabed mining in the area. The draft regulations do not require full public consultations, nor will they effectively protect the marine environment, thereby undermining the mission of the International Seabed Authority.

The petitioners also cite that there is enormous scientific concern and technological uncertainty surrounding deep seabed mining, and scientific consensus is that it will cause a net loss in biodiversity.

The undersigned, namely Oceans North, MiningWatch Canada, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Nature Canada, Northern Confluence, West Coast Environmental Law, and the citizens and residents of Canada, call upon the government to support a moratorium on deep seabed mining in the area in line with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's resolution number 122 and immediately halt the granting of exploration contracts and the development of regulations for exploitation by the International Seabed Authority, per the recommendations of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, of which Canada is a member.

UKRAINE

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of many Canadians who want the government to do more to support the people of Ukraine. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to immediately implement a government-assisted refugee program to support those fleeing Russia's war.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last number of weeks, we have seen a great deal of goodwill coming from the province of Manitoba and a great number of expressions of interest in wanting parliamentarians to do what they can with respect to the war that is taking place in Ukraine.

The Russian Federation has launched an unprovoked and unjust war against the people of Ukraine. The Russian President Putin has threatened all other nations, including Canada, who are assisting the people of Ukraine in their valiant defence of their country. It is important to recognize that tens of thousands of children, moms and others are leaving Ukraine every day to escape the horrors of war.

The petitioners are calling for a number of actions. The bottom line is that they are calling for the national government to do what it can to support, in solidarity, the people of Ukraine.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 338, 344, 346, 349, 352 to 354 and 356.

[Text]

Question No. 338—**Mr. Clifford Small:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the Atlantic Seal Science Task Team: (a) how many meetings has the task team had since it was established in 2019; (b) what are the dates of each meeting; (c) what deliverables or accomplishments resulted from each meeting; (d) what specific input has been provided on the priorities of DFO's Atlantic seal science program; (e) what has resulted from the team's examining the application of technology advancements to seal research; (f) what measurable progress has been made on the objective of the team to increase the involvement of the fishing industry in seal science projects; and (g) what specific advice did the team provide on how DFO could better communicate its scientific findings to the fishing industry?

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), as of March 15, 2022, the Atlantic seal science task team has met 15 times since it was convened in 2020.

In response to part (b), as of March 15, 2022, the Atlantic seal science task team met in 2020 on April 23, June 25, July 23 and October 15; in 2021 on February 23, March 12, April 15, May 11, July 15, October 12, November 12 and November 30; and in 2022 on February 2, February 8 and March 4. Deliverables or accomplishments of the task team are being captured in the Atlantic seal science task team report currently under development.

In response to all other parts of the question, input from the task team is being captured in the Atlantic seal science task team report currently under development.

Question No. 344—**Mr. Alex Ruff:**

With regard to Canadian travellers re-entering Canada, provisioned under current or previously issued Orders in Council (OICs) related to minimizing the risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada (quarantine, isolation and other obligations): (a) how many Canadians have been denied entry, or were not able to enter into Canada due to arriving at a land border with a positive test result, broken down by month since the issuing of Order in Council (OIC) 2021-0075; (b) how many Canadians have been denied entry or were not able to enter into Canada due to arriving at a land border with another traveller who presented a positive test result, broken down by month since the issuing of OIC 2021-0075; (c) how many Canadians have been fined due to arriving at a land border with a positive test result, broken down by month since the issuing of OIC 2021-0075; (d) how many Canadians have been fined due to arriving at a land border with another traveller who presented a positive test result, broken down by month since the issuing of OIC 2021-0075; (e) did the responsible minister request a Charter Statement, or similar review, prior issuing OIC 2022-0042 or similar repealed OICs; (f) where can the published Charter Statement in (e) be found; and (g) what health-based assessment was conducted on the risks to Canadian travellers health and safety for requiring these travellers to quarantine in the United States versus quarantining at home; and (h) how frequently has this assessment been reviewed and where are the published results available?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to parts (a) and (b) of the question, Canadian citizens, permanent residents of Canada or persons registered as an Indian under the Indian Act have right of entry into Canada. There is no provision to deny entry to Canadian citizens, permanent residents of Canada or persons registered as an Indian under the Indian Act for non-compliance with the Quarantine Act or associated orders in council.

In response to part (c), the Public Health Agency of Canada does not collect information regarding the citizenship of travellers that are issued fines. In total, 111 travellers have been fined due to arriving at a Canadian border with a recent positive COVID-19 test result. The monthly breakdown of fines issued since this requirement was introduced in January 2021 is as follows: January 2021, zero; February 2021, zero; March 2021, one; April 2021, three; May 2021, five; June 2021, three; July 2021, two; August 2021, six; September 2021, 13; October 2021, seven; November 2021, eight; December 2021, 31; January 2022, 30; and February 2022, two.

In response to part (d), no Canadians have been issued a fine due to arriving at a land border with another traveller who presented a positive test result, as this is not an offence under the Quarantine Act or associated orders in council.

In response to parts (e) and (f), charter statements are required to be provided for government bills that are being introduced in Parliament. Accordingly, given that the orders in council are by nature subordinate to legislation, charter statements would not be provided for the orders or similar instruments.

However, although the orders in council are not subject to the regulatory examination process under the Statutory Instruments Act, the Department of Justice reviews the orders using the criteria set out in subsection 3(2) of that act, in its capacity as legal adviser to the Clerk of the Privy Council. These criteria include a review of the orders for consistency with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In response to parts (g) and (h), as set out in the Quarantine Act, the statutory purpose of the act is to protect public health by taking comprehensive measures to prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases in Canada. The associated orders in council are also aimed at achieving this purpose of the act. In accordance with the act, the orders do so by imposing prohibitions or conditions on the entry of persons entering Canada, with the aim of protecting the public health of people in Canada.

The public health assessment of the measures introduced under the OICs is primarily undertaken by the Public Health Agency of Canada, including in consultation with other government departments or agencies as may be appropriate.

When issuing the order in council, the government publishes an explanatory note that accompanies each OIC. The explanatory note provides background information and rationale for the measures imposed in the orders. The explanatory note may provide further information outlining the basis for the various measures that have been introduced via the orders. As explained above, one of the

main focuses of the measures is to protect the public health of Canadians.

Being provided periodically with each order that is made, the explanatory note is published in the Canada Gazette within 23 days of date that the order is made.

Question No. 346—Mr. Brad Vis:

With regard to the AgriDiversity Program administered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada: (a) how many applications were received in 2021; (b) how many projects were successful and received funding in 2021; (c) how many projects in (a) and (b) were to support African and Black Canadian work in 2021; and (d) what are the details of all projects in (c), including, for each, the (i) location, (ii) project description, (iii) amount of federal contribution, (iv) start date, (v) projected completion date?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, 10 applications were received in 2021.

Regarding part (b), three projects were successful and received funding in 2021.

Regarding part (c), two applications related to part (a) were to support African and Black Canadian work.

In response to part (d), information for applications that have not received funding are submitted in confidence and the details of the project could reveal the identity of the third party or organization without their expressed consent.

Question No. 349—Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:

With regard to the applications for the resettlement of refugees from Afghanistan, submitted to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): (a) how many applications were filed under the special immigration program for Afghan nationals, and their families, who assisted the Government of Canada; (b) how many of the applicants in (a) remain in Afghanistan; (c) how many applicants in (a) have been refused; (d) how many applicants in (a) have come to Canada; (e) what is the breakdown of (d) by month, since July 2021; (f) how many applications submitted under the Special Immigration Measures (SIM) program, the Afghan humanitarian Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) program, as well as the Afghan humanitarian Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) program have yet to be processed by IRCC; (g) what is the average amount of time that those applications in (f) have to wait before being processed; (h) how many applications submitted under the SIMs, GARs, and PSR have completed biometrics; (i) how many government employees have been working on applications filed under the SIMs since July 2021; (j) what is the breakdown of (i) by month, from July 2021 to February 2022; and (k) how many IRCC employees were in Afghanistan from August 15 to 27, 2021?

Ms. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), as of February 16, 2022, approximately 14,840 persons' applications have been received under the special immigration program for Afghan nationals and their families who assisted the Government of Canada.

With regard to (b), of the applications in process under the special immigration program for Afghan nationals and their families who assisted the Government of Canada, approximately 7,125 persons' applications are from clients who remain in Afghanistan, based on information provided.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (c), fewer than 10 persons' applications were refused through the special immigration measures program.

With regard to (d), members may refer to the website for the latest key figures, at <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/key-figures.html>.

With regard to (e), members may refer to the website for latest key figures, at <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/key-figures.html>.

With regard to (f), as of February 16, 2022, about 8,500 persons' applications that were submitted under the special immigration measures program and the Afghan humanitarian government-assisted refugees program were in our processing inventory.

The Afghan humanitarian privately sponsored refugee program will facilitate the arrival of a mix of Afghan privately sponsored refugees in the existing inventory and new applications. As of February 16, 2022, there are approximately 7,267 Afghan privately sponsored refugee applications, in persons, in the processing inventory.

With regard to (g), IRCC cannot provide an estimate as to how long it will take to process applications that are currently in the processing inventory. IRCC is processing Afghan applications under the special immigration program for Afghans who assisted the Government of Canada in the humanitarian programs as quickly as possible. The time required to process these applications will depend on a variety of factors, including whether the client is still in Afghanistan.

With regard to (h), as of mid-February approximately 4,455 applicants under the special immigration measures had completed biometrics, while an additional 6,005 persons were exempt from completing biometrics but underwent a modified biographic screening process. Under the Afghan humanitarian government-assisted refugees program, 2,805 applicants had completed biometrics, while an additional 2,140 were exempt from completing biometrics but underwent a modified biographic screening process. Under the privately sponsored refugees program, 2,290 Afghan applicants had completed biometrics, while 1,340 were exempt from completing biometrics but underwent a modified biographic screening process.

With regard to (i) and (j), although IRCC has added significant resources to increase processing capacity, there is no specific data about staff working exclusively on processing applications for Afghan nationals. The department continues to process applications as efficiently as possible, not only by adding resources but also by waiving application fees, as well as mobilizing our global network to process and issue visas on an urgent basis. We have set up a dedicated telephone line, with extended hours, to serve Afghan clients seeking information and assistance.

With regard to (k), similar to other like-minded countries, all IRCC personnel left Kabul on August 15, 2021, with the closure of the embassy. During this period, IRCC mobilized a team supporting the Afghan evacuation efforts 24 hours per day and seven days per week, with employees in Canada, as well as at our missions around the globe, ensuring continuous real-time dedicated support for the air bridge. With the support of the Canadian Armed Forces, a Cana-

dian presence remained in the region for as long as was safely possible.

Question No. 352—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to direction and control regulations as it relates to the Income Tax Act: (a) what is the government's position regarding direction and control regulations; (b) does the government support Bill S-216, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (use of resources of a registered charity); (c) have government ministers met with individuals or organizations advocating for changes to direction and control regulations, and, if so, what are the details of all such meetings, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) names of ministers and Members of Parliament in attendance, (iii) names and titles of ministerial or political staff, as well as government officials in attendance, (iv) names and titles of individuals or organizations in attendance, (v) meeting format (in person or virtual); (d) are discussions ongoing within government about the challenges posed by and possible reforms to direction and control regulation, and, if so, which ministers and departments are involved in the discussions and what is the expected timeline for when (i) the discussions are expected to conclude, (ii) any reforms would be announced or enacted, if applicable?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes that some charities find these rules overly restrictive and onerous, and it is committed to ensuring that the regulatory framework supports the important work that charities perform. This is why in the government's response to the report of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector, the government committed to reviewing these rules to determine if they continue to be appropriate or if improvements can be made. The government is now actively considering how the framework for charities that work in partnership with others both in Canada and internationally could be improved such that it better supports the important work that charities perform while balancing the need for accountability among charitable resources.

The government will communicate its position on Bill S-216, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (use of resources of a registered charity), during the legislative process in the House of Commons.

Question No. 353—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to the government listing Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist entity: (a) is the government reviewing whether or not to list the IRGC as a whole as a terrorist entity, and not just the Quds Force; (b) has the government reached a decision about whether or not to list the IRGC as a whole; (c) if the government has reached a decision, what is it; and (d) if the government has not reached a decision on the IRGC, when will it reach one?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, keeping Canadians safe is of paramount importance to this government. We are working with like-minded countries to ensure that Iran is held to account for its support of terrorism.

The Criminal Code sets out a terrorist listing regime to help prevent the use of Canada's financial system to further terrorist activity and to assist in the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences. The Minister of Public Safety may recommend to the Governor in Council, GIC, that individuals or groups be officially designated as "terrorist entities" pursuant to subsection 83.05(1) of the Criminal Code, on "establishment of list", if there are reasonable grounds to believe that an entity has knowingly carried out, attempted to carry out, participated in or facilitated a terrorist activity, or has knowingly acted on behalf of, at the direction of, or in association with, an entity referred to in paragraph (a).

The term "entity" is defined as "a person, group, trust, partnership or fund or an unincorporated association or organization". The definition does not include reference to a state.

Canada has robust measures in place to hold Iran and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC, accountable for their support for terrorism, including some of the toughest and most comprehensive sanctions against Iran in the world. Canada continues to look at all possible options to further constrain the activities of Iran that threaten national security.

Canada has maintained the listing of the IRGC Qods Force as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code since 2012. The Qods Force is recognized as responsible for terrorist operations and for providing arms, funding and training to other terrorist groups. The Government of Canada also continues to list terrorist entities that have benefited from the Qods Force patronage, including Hezbollah, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Taliban, and three Iran-backed regional militias that were listed as terrorist entities under the Criminal Code in 2019.

Canada has implemented sanctions decisions of the United Nations Security Council, UNSC, into domestic law under the United Nations Act. Among a wide range of restrictions, the Regulations Implementing the United Nations Resolutions on Iran also include a dealings ban on persons listed by the UNSC, including senior members of the IRGC.

Other existing measures against the IRGC include the sanctions imposed under the Special Economic Measures Act (SEMA (Iran) Regulations), in response to Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. The regulations explicitly target IRGC organizations, including the IRGC Air Force and Air Force Missile Command, IRGC Logistics and Procurement, IRGC Missile Command, IRGC Navy, and several members of its senior leadership. The SEMA (Iran) Regulations include a dealings ban on designated individuals and entities, which include the aforementioned IRGC organizations, effectively freezing their assets in Canada. These measures are also intended to restrict Iran's access to sensitive goods from Canada, especially with respect to nuclear proliferation and the development of ballistic missiles.

On February 21, 2020, the Financial Action Task Force, FATF, the international standard-setting body for combatting money laundering and terrorist financing, called on its members, including Canada, to impose countermeasures on Iran to help mitigate the risk the Islamic Republic of Iran presents to the international financial system. On July 25, 2020, the Minister of Finance issued a ministerial directive due to Iran's failure to address strategic defi-

Routine Proceedings

ciencies in its anti-money-laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism, or AML/CFT, regime. The measures identified were applied to the areas of greatest risk and include the requirement for financial institutions, credit unions and money services businesses to treat every financial transaction originating from or bound for Iran as a high-risk transaction and to report all transactions, regardless of their amount, to the Financial Transactions Reports and Analysis Centre.

Finally, Canada lists Iran as a state supporter of terrorism under the State Immunity Act, SIA, which allows civil actions to be taken against it under the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, the JVT Act.

We remain unwavering in our commitment to keep Canadians safe, including by taking all appropriate action to counter terrorist threats in Canada and around the world.

Question No. 354—**Mr. Kyle Seeback:**

With regard to the government's invocation of the Emergencies Act and the Emergency Economic Measures Order: (a) which crowdfunding platforms or payment service providers registered with the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada in relation to the order; (b) how many (i) suspicious, (ii) large value, transactions were reported by each platform or provider in relation to (a); and (c) what is the total value of the (i) suspicious, (ii) large value transactions reported by each platform in relation to (a)?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, due to the revocation of the Emergency Economic Measures Order and the limitations on the disclosure of information that are set out in subsection 55(1) of the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, or FINTRAC, and the Department of Finance cannot respond to the question.

In processing Parliamentary returns, the Department of Finance and FINTRAC also apply the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and this information constitutes personal information held by third parties that the government is not legally able to share.

Question No. 356—**Ms. Lianne Rood:**

With regard to expenditures by the government on the rental or purchase of cots or folding beds which were delivered to the government lobby in the House of Commons on February 17, 2022: what are the details of all related contracts and expenditures, including, for each, (i) the amount spent, (ii) the vendor, (iii) whether units were rented or purchased, (iv) the number of units?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government did not buy or rent any cots or folding beds for the government lobby in the House of Commons for February 17, 2022.

Routine Proceedings

[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 response to Questions Nos. 337, 339 to 343, 345, 347, 348, 350, 351 and 355 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 337—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF): (a) which businesses and communities have applied for funding; (b) for each business and community that have applied, was their application accepted or rejected, and if it was accepted, how much funding did they receive; (c) for each successful application, how many jobs were (i) initially meant to be saved by receiving funding through the RRRF, (ii) actually saved; (d) what specific follow-up measures were taken with each successful applicant to ensure that the funding was actually used to save jobs; (e) how many of the jobs saved by the RRRF were located (i) in Canada, (ii) outside of Canada; and (f) is the government aware of instances where funds from the RRRF were used inappropriately or for ineligible expenses and, if so, what are the details of all such instances, including the (i) recipient, (ii) value, (iii) summary of goods or services inappropriately purchased?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 339—Mr. Rick Perkins:

With regard to employees at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): (a) what was the total number of employees or full-time equivalent on the (i) Fisheries section, (ii) Oceans section of DFO, broken down by year since 2015; (b) what was the number of fishery offices field supervisor positions in conservation and protection at DFO, broken down by year since 2016; (c) what is the current number of fishery offices field supervisor positions in conservation and protection; (d) how many positions at DFO were eliminated in conservation and protection in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021, (iii) 2022; and (e) how many positions at DFO were eliminated in total in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021, (iii) 2022, broken down by section of DFO and type of position?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 340—Mr. Rick Perkins:

With regard to research conducted by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO): (a) what dollar amount and percentage of DFO's scientific research budget has been provided to the (i) oceans department, (ii) fisheries department, broken down by year since 2016; and (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by topic or area of research?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 341—Mr. Rick Perkins:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Eastern Shore Islands Area of Interest (AOI) and the proposed marine refuge off the Scotian Shelf bioregion: (a) how many (i) groups, (ii) individuals, have been consulted since January 1, 2019, regarding the AOI or the proposed marine refuge; and (b) what are the details of all such consultations, including, for each, (i) the date of the consultation, (ii) the format, (iii) the name of the individual or group consulted, (iv) who conducted the consultation, (v) the summary of the feedback or submission related to the consultation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 342—Ms. Michelle Ferreri:

With regard to the various government relief programs for businesses put into place since March 1, 2020, and broken down by each program: (a) what was the number of incorporated businesses that (i) applied for funding, (ii) were provided funding, (iii) had their application rejected or not accepted; (b) what was the average amount of funding provided in (a)(ii); (c) what was the number of sole proprietorship businesses that (i) applied for funding, (ii) were provided funding, (iii) had their application rejected or not accepted; (d) what was the average amount of fund-

ing provided received in (c)(ii); and (e) what is the breakdown of each of the sub-parts in (a) and (c), by sector and industry, if known?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 343—Mr. Alex Ruff:

With regard to Canadian travellers re-entering Canada, provisioned under Order In Council 2022-0042 (Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Quarantine, Isolation and Other Obligations)): (a) on what date (s) were the webpages "COVID-19 vaccinated travellers entering Canada", "Find out if you can travel to Canada – Citizen with symptoms – By land or sea", and "COVID-19 testing for travellers" on the government's travel website updated to reflect the entry requirements that Canadians must wait at least 10 calendar days after a positive test result before entering Canada, to avoid being fined \$5,000 per traveller (plus surcharges); (b) which department is responsible for (i) drafting communications regarding this provision, (ii) updating the webpages in (a); and (c) what are the details of all other communications which were issued regarding this entry requirement, including, for each, the (i) date issued, (ii) medium, (iii) summary of communication?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 345—Ms. Michelle Ferreri:

With regard to the requirement for fully vaccinated travellers to have a recent negative COVID-19 test before crossing the land-border or face a \$5,000 fine: (a) was this decision based on any scientific research, other than political science, and, if so, what specific scientific studies or data was it based on, and what are the specific website locations where the studies and data is located; (b) has the government conducted a cost-benefit analysis of maintaining the test requirement, either molecular or antigen, and, if so, (i) who conducted the analysis, (ii) what were the findings; and (c) what specific criteria or metrics must be met (i) at the land border, (ii) on flights from travellers from the United States, (iii) on flight from other international travellers, before the antigen test requirement for returning travellers is dropped, and on what dates does the government anticipate meeting each of these metrics or criteria?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 347—Mr. Marty Morantz:

With regard to the "Other consolidated specified purpose accounts", listed on pages 133 and 134 of the 2021 Public Accounts of Canada, Volume 1, and broken down by each account: (a) what is the current balance of the account; (b) how many (i) individuals, (ii) corporations, (iii) other entities, have received payments from the funds, broken down by fiscal year since 2016-17; (c) what is the total value of the expenditures in each subpart of (b); (d) what is the annual cost to the government to operate and maintain each fund; (e) what is the itemized breakdown of (d); (f) how many employees or full-time equivalents are assigned to administer each fund; and (g) which minister and department has responsibility for the employees in (f)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 348—Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:

With regard to the refusal of applications submitted to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada: (a) how many applications were submitted between January 1, 2014, and January 31, 2021; (b) how many applications in (a) were refused; (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by (i) country of applicant, (ii) line of business being applied to, (iii) month; (d) how many applications in (a) were processed using Chinook; (e) what is the breakdown of (d) by (i) country of applicant, (ii) line of business being applied to, (iii) month; (f) of the visa offices using Chinook, what is the refusal rate of applications, broken down by line of business; and (g) what is the breakdown of (f) by year from 2017 to 2021?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 350—Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:

With regard to the use of the Chinook software program at Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): (a) what oversight of Chinook is in place; (b) has Chinook undergone a performance audit; (c) when was the last time Chinook was audited; (d) what quality assurance is in place for Chinook; (e) what training materials are used to train IRCC employees on the use of Chinook; (f) what is the content of those training materials in (e); (g) what training is given to IRCC employees using Chinook specifically to prevent racism and discrimination; (h) what is the content of the material used for the training in (f); (i) what consultation with stakeholders was done by IRCC on the implementation of Chinook before it was implemented; (j) has any consultation with stakeholders been done by IRCC since Chinook was implemented; (k) were any immigration lawyers or consultants consulted by IRCC before Chinook was implemented; (l) if any stakeholders were consulted by IRCC on Chinook, how many stakeholders were consulted; (m) what was the result of the Privacy Risk Assessment of Chinook conducted in August 2019; (n) what is the content of the Security Assessment Report conducted for Chinook in January 2020; (o) why are the visa offices in Algiers, Havana, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and Tel Aviv not using Chinook; (p) are notes about immigration officers' decisions while using Chinook kept; and (q) why is no list provided to applicants of the software that is used to process applications, including the use of Chinook?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 351—Mr. Garnett Genuis:

With regard to the requirement for federal public servants to be vaccinated against COVID-19: (a) how many public servants have been placed on unpaid leave as a result of their vaccination status; (b) how many public servants have received health exemptions; (c) does the government gather information regarding the nature of individual health exemptions, such as the condition causing the need for the exemption, and, if so, what is the prevalence of different kinds of health exemptions; (d) how many public servants have received religious exemptions; (e) does the government gather information regarding the nature of individual religious exemptions, such as the particular faith of those with the exemption, and, if so, what is the prevalence of different kinds of exemptions; (f) how many public servants have applications for health exemptions pending; (g) how many public servants have applications for religious exemptions pending; (h) by what date does the government expect the applications in (f) and (g) to be resolved; (i) how many public servants had applications for a health exemption denied; (j) how many public servants had applications for a religious exemption denied; (k) for each response in (a) through (j), what is the breakdown by department, agency, or other government entity; (l) how many replacement workers has the government (i) contacted, (ii) hired, to fulfill functions previously performed by those who are on unpaid leave as a result of their vaccination status, broken down by department or agency, type of job, and job title; (m) what is the government policy related to the ability of the individual placed on leave to return to their position after it has been filled with a replacement worker; (n) what ordinary functions of the government are not currently being carried out as a result of unvaccinated workers being placed on leave without pay; (o) has the government assessed the impact on public services resulting from the decision to place unvaccinated workers on leave without pay, and, if so, what are the details of the assessment, broken down by the impact on each department; (p) how many workers are being expected to perform additional tasks as a result of colleagues being placed on leave without pay as a result of these new requirements, broken down by department or agency; (q) how many of the workers in (p) are receiving any additional compensation directly related to their colleagues being placed on leave; (r) has the government identified any increase in stress or strain for the workers referred to in (p) as a result of additional workload, and, if so, what are the details; (s) how long will the workers in (p) be expected to perform additional tasks; (t) does the government intend to hire additional replacement workers if the workers on unpaid leave continue to be on leave for more than (i) six months, (ii) nine months, (iii) 12 months; (u) has the government received legal advice regarding whether this policy is consistent with (i) existing labour agreements, (ii) the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, (iii) other human rights codes, laws, or agreements which bind the actions of the federal government; and (v) what legal advice did the government receive respecting the items in (u)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 355—Mr. Kyle Seeback:

With regard to the government's invocation of the Emergencies Act and the Emergency Economic Measures Order: (a) how many (i) personal, (ii) business, banking accounts have been frozen under the order; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) (i) and (ii), by financial institution; (c) what is total value of the accounts in (a)

Speaker's Ruling

(i) and (ii), broken down by financial institution; and (d) has the government set up any fund or compensation program for individuals or businesses that have their accounts frozen as a result of error or mistaken identity related to the order and, if so, what are the details?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

● (1010)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER**ROYAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BILL C-215—SPEAKER'S RULING**

The Deputy Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised on March 22 by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader regarding Bill C-215, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine), standing on the Order Paper in the name of the member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

[English]

During his intervention, the parliamentary secretary argued that Bill C-215 seeks to increase the maximum number of weeks during which sickness benefits can be paid, which would entail a new and distinct charge to the consolidated revenue fund. He pointed out that, as there is currently no statutory authority or appropriation authorizing this new and distinct charge, a royal recommendation is required, as required by the Constitution Act, 1867, and the Standing Orders of the House.

As indicated in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 838, “Without a royal recommendation, a bill that either increases the amount of an appropriation or extends its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications is inadmissible on the grounds that it infringes on the Crown’s financial initiative.”

I have carefully studied Bill C-215. It would amend paragraphs 12(3)(c) and 152.14(1)(c) of the Employment Insurance Act in order to increase the maximum number of weeks during which benefits can be paid in the event of an illness, injury or quarantine from 15 to 52 to weeks. It seems clear, therefore, that the bill seeks to increase the duration of the period of employment insurance benefits.

[Translation]

The Chair has already ruled on questions similar to the one that concerns us today. It was effectively the case in rulings on almost identical bills in 2006 and 2021.

Speaker's Ruling

In the ruling of April 15, 2021, on Bill C-265, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (illness, injury or quarantine), found at page 5691 of Debates, the Chair also indicated that the bill had to be accompanied by a royal recommendation since it sought to increase the maximum number of weeks during which benefits can be paid in the event of an illness, injury or quarantine from 15 weeks to 50.

In light of the analysis of the bill standing in the name of the member for Lévis—Lotbinière and the precedents cited, the Chair is of the opinion that by amending the Employment Insurance Act to increase the maximum number of weeks during which benefits can be paid in the event of an illness, injury or quarantine from 15 weeks to 52, Bill C-215 would entail an increase in public spending in a way and to an end that is not currently authorized. As a result, the Chair concludes that it must be accompanied by a royal recommendation before it can proceed to a final vote in the House at the third reading stage.

Meanwhile, however, the next time the House considers this bill, the debate will be on the motion for second reading, and that motion shall be put to a vote at the end of the second reading debate.

I thank all members for their attention.

• (1015)

ROYAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BILL C-237—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the points of order raised on March 1, 22 and 28 by the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and the member for La Prairie regarding Bill C-237, an act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the Canada Health Act, standing on the Order Paper in the name of the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel.

During his intervention, the sponsor of Bill C-237 argued that it entails no new expense and does not change the transfer amounts or its purpose nor does it change the beneficiaries or how the funding is allocated to them. He continued by saying that all C-237 does is reduce federal control over the management of provincial programs in the provinces' own jurisdictions.

The member added that his bill seeks to exempt Quebec, and only Quebec, from the application of the Canada Health Act. The member for La Prairie added to these arguments that a bill that amends a condition or qualification of an existing act should be accompanied by a royal recommendation only if that amendment entails an increase in these costs or changes the purpose, which he argued is not the case with C-237.

[English]

For his part, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader argued that the bill seeks to eliminate conditions and qualifications associated with the legislative spending power enacted by the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the Canada Health Act. He thus contended that a new royal recommendation is needed for the purposes of the Canada Health Transfer to the provinces as proposed by Bill C-237. I reviewed the bill and I have reached the following conclusions concerning this impact on the royal recommendation.

Section 1 of the bill provides that Quebec need not apply the conditions set out in paragraph 24(a) of the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act in order to obtain the amounts referred to in subsection 24.1(1) of that act. Section 3 of Bill C-237 provides that Quebec receives the full monetary contribution provided for in the Canada Health Act without being subject to the various grant conditions set out in that act. In other words, the result of the mechanism proposed by Bill C-237 would be to exempt Quebec from having to fulfill the conditions to which it is currently subject in order to receive the Canada Health Transfer, which originate in the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the Canada Health Act.

[Translation]

The member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel argued that these changes have no financial effect in terms of either the amounts or their destination. However, these changes would amend the terms and conditions initially attached to the Canada health transfer, which were approved by Parliament.

[English]

On this, page 838 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states:

A royal recommendation not only fixes the allowable charge, but also its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications. For this reason, a royal recommendation is required not only in the case where money is being appropriated, but also in the case where the authorization to spend for a specific purpose is significantly altered. Without a royal recommendation, a bill that either increases the amount of an appropriation or extends its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications is inadmissible on the grounds that it infringes on the Crown's financial initiative.

[Translation]

As the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel indicated in his intervention, the bill seeks to exempt Quebec from the application of the Canada Health Act. Thus, after analysis and in keeping with the precedents, including the rulings by Speaker Milliken on May 8, 2008, and by my predecessor on December 6, 2016, the Chair is of the opinion that the implementation of Bill C-237 would contravene the conditions initially provided for in the royal recommendation. Accordingly, the Chair is of the view that Bill C-237 must be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

Consequently, the Chair will decline to put the question at the third reading stage of the bill in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

When this item is next before the House, the debate will only be on the motion for second reading of the bill, and the question will be put to the House at the end of this debate.

I thank all members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SPENDING ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC) moved:

That, given that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance has made an immeasurable contribution to peace, security, and prosperity for all its members, the House call on the government to increase spending on national defence to at least two per cent of Canada's gross domestic product, in accordance with NATO's 2014 Wales Summit Declaration.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

The world as we see it today is a violent place. We have entered a new stage in great power competition, where those great powers seek to maximize their influence on a global scale. The once-great superpower of the United States is now in a strategic competition with China and, to a much lesser extent, Russia. We have seen the traditional great powers of France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan, which supported the rules-based world order, under pressure from both Russia and China and regional rogue states such as North Korea and Iran.

I can remember when people said that there would never again be a war in Europe after the end of the Cold War. It was wishful thinking. No sooner had people uttered those words than we saw the Yugoslav civil war, Kosovo, the Georgian war, the Azerbaijan-Armenia war, the Russian seizure of Crimea, the Donbass, and now the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Today, we are witnessing the largest ground war we have seen in Europe since World War II.

Russia was once a superpower, and is now a great power in slow decline. It is a Eurasian land power with residual air and sea capabilities, and it has the world's largest nuclear arsenal. Russia has successfully developed hypersonic cruise and ballistic missiles that are geared to defeat western missile defences, and it has weapons that are geared to destroy American port cities and flood them with radiation.

The goal of its government and Vladimir Putin is to put the old Russian empire back together with the Soviet empire's borders. The threat of a new USSR threatens the Balkans, the Baltic states and Poland directly. In the past month, we have seen a Russian army of over 200,000 men invade Ukraine in a ghastly war that has created millions of refugees and tens of thousands of casualties, with no end in sight. We are seeing evidence of a number of potential war crimes in the path of the Russian invasion and retreat in the north of Ukraine.

The People's Republic of China is a superpower on the rise. Time will tell the outcome of its strategic competition with the U.S. and its allies. It is important to note that the only successful drive for power between great powers and the international system was the transfer of power between the United Kingdom and the United States in 1945. It is very unlikely that we will see a peaceful transition of power this time around.

Business of Supply

China has the world's largest army, and it is well equipped. China now has the world's largest navy. It is a blue-water navy with frigates, destroyers, cruisers and amphibious ships. The newest variants of those warships are as capable as their western equivalents. China has two aircraft carriers and a third under construction. The country's first two aircraft carriers are of limited capability, but the third, which is currently under construction, is as large as a Nimitz-class U.S. aircraft carrier. China maintains a large air force and has started to produce fifth-generation fighter aircraft similar to the F-35. While China's strategic deterrent remains small, it is geared for deterrence and there are signs that China has recently constructed 500 new silos to house new missiles. In the next few years, China could have one of the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons.

China has also developed hypersonic cruise and ballistic missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles and air launch ballistic missiles. It maintains one of the largest missile inventories in the world, if not the largest. Many are dual-purpose, with either nuclear or conventional warheads geared to threaten, and if necessary overwhelm and destroy, their neighbours, while their strategic deterrent prevents the U.S. from intervening on their behalf.

We have watched China creep into the territory of its neighbours in the South China Sea. It has created artificial militarized islands and seized the possessions of others. We have seen China threaten India, seize land that has been Indian territory since the 1940s and set up communities in the territories of Bhutan and Nepal. It is engaged in genocide against the Uighur people. This past summer, China conducted a test of a fractional orbit bombardment system, where it launched an intercontinental ballistic missile to the south. The rocket popped out over South America, went into a fractional orbit, and flew north of the north pole. This is especially concerning, as it was very hard to detect: North America's missile defence and early warning system face north, with no coverage to the south.

• (1020)

Rogue states such as North Korea are building one of the largest inventories of missiles in the world. They are developing nuclear weapons, and we may see a North Korean nuclear test in the very near future. North Korea's intercontinental ballistic missiles are believed to be able to reach just west of Ottawa, and it too is experimenting with hypersonic weapons. The North Koreans are close to developing an effective submarine-launched ballistic missile, and they have one of the world's largest armies. The opacity of North Korean decision-making and the rationality of its leadership make it a threat to its neighbours and to North America in general.

Business of Supply

Iran, the most powerful country in the Middle East, is on the verge of developing nuclear weapons. It has missiles for deployment and uses a network of about 22 proxy militias to terrorize its neighbours and Israel. Iranian militias are active in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and much of the Middle East, including the Palestinian general authority.

Maybe Canadians watching are wondering what all this has to do with Canada. Maybe, up until a month ago, they thought the same about Ukraine, but I am here to tell them and the House that the world is an unsafe place and there is evil in our midst. The best way to avoid war is to prepare for it. The only way to deter an opponent is by being strong and being determined. That is why we are members of NATO, NORAD and the Five Eyes. Neutrality is not really an option for Canada, and we cannot take our own security for granted anymore. We can no longer assume that others will look out for Canada unless Canada pays its fair share and looks out for itself.

Today's opposition motion before the House ahead of the coming budget is to say to the government that it is time to pay up and purchase the equipment we need for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces. There have been enough back-slapping platitudes and word salads. We must live up to our shared NATO commitment of spending 2% of GDP on defence. The Canadian forces have been allowed to decline by the government over the past seven years.

We are on the precipice and we are standing into danger. The government has a choice: to increase spending to meet the NATO required 2% or not. I know the Liberals' political dance partners in the NDP believe that 2% is an arbitrary number, but in fact that is the number the Government of Canada signed up for in the 2014 NATO Wales Summit declaration. Right now, the government could do itself and Canadians a big favour and sign the contract with a firm delivery schedule for the F-35s. The government knows only too well that there is no negotiation and no refinement of numbers. As a consortium member, we get the F-35 at the exact same price as the United States. It is not going to be any cheaper. There are no negotiations: the price is fixed. It is fixed by the fiscal year we buy them in. Let us sign the deal and get on with it.

We also need Arctic icebreakers, and we need them now. Russia has 40 Arctic icebreakers, 20 nuclear and 20 conventional, a string of bases across the north and a specialized northern brigade. The Russian fleet in the North Sea is its main naval strike force. It is the home of the bulk of its strategic missile-carrying submarine fleet. It is from the north that Russian bombers cross the Arctic Ocean and approach North America, and where they conduct fire drills from what are called fireboxes off our air defence zones.

What does Canada have in the north? It does not have very much on a permanent basis, save our rangers, a reserve company and Alert. The F-35 is a start. Arctic ice breakers are a start, but we need new submarines that can go under the ice and stay under the ice, and those could be nuclear-powered submarines. We need surface warships, and we need them soon. We need to cut steel on an off-the-shelf design that has been proven. We need to expand our ranger program and rebuild our army. Canada needs to replenish its war stocks of modern anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, and provide the same to Ukraine in military aid.

The government's sole accomplishment on the defence file today is buying used, obsolete Australian fighter planes that we did not need. When Prime Minister Harper's government was in power, Canada bought C-17s, C-130Js, Leopard 2 main battle tanks, LAV armoured fighting vehicles and Chinook helicopters.

Enough is enough. Surely the men and women of the Canadian Forces deserve the best equipment. These are dangerous jobs. These are our countries' best citizens and our most selfless citizens. Otherwise, the verdict of history on the current government is going to be both too little and too late.

● (1025)

[*Translation*]

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

It is pretty clear that there needs to be more investment in the Canadian Armed Forces. The 2% target was set during an international agreement with people from NATO and it is reasonable.

However, there are a lot of questions about procurement and many concerns about wasting public money. I would like my colleague's opinion on that.

We only have to look at the saga with the fighter jets that were cancelled in 2015. The Liberals promised they would never buy them, but now they announce that they are doing just that. If those jets had been purchased several years ago, they may have been less expensive.

We can also think of the submarines. It makes no sense to buy four used submarines, one of which caught on fire. That claimed the life of one of our soldiers. What is more, if only one submarine had been purchased, it might still be operational.

I would like my colleague to tell us what can be done to improve the way public funds are managed. Is there a way we could pass a budget and depoliticize the procurement process? Could we entrust this to professionals to prevent it from becoming a promise made by a politician during an election campaign to win votes?

● (1030)

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. friend on all his points, because there is a lot of waste in procurement. It is overpoliticized with this government. It needs to be streamlined.

Business of Supply

We streamlined the procurement process when we were in Afghanistan. Canada showed it can be done. Once we withdrew, it became more complicated all over again. In the last seven years, the Liberal government has spent \$865 million, and it spent another billion on used aircraft from Australia, only to get us back to the F-35s, which were the best choice all along for our needs here in Canada.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the Parliamentary Budget officer, for Canada to meet that 2% of NATO spending that the Conservatives are calling for, we would have to spend an additional \$54 billion to \$56 billion annually on defence, which is approximately double what we spend now.

Can the member clarify which government programs the Conservatives would cut in order to justify that increase in spending?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for working alongside my friend on the Standing Committee on National Defence, where we usually get along very well.

The 2% is a pledge we made, and we should meet our commitment. We should be moving toward it and we should meet it. We have already semi-committed to the F-35s, although the minister said in the House that they are still working on it and the other minister said it is a done deal, so I am a little confused on that file. What I do know is we are in desperate need, and my friend knows this as well, being on the defence committee. We are understaffed and underequipped, and we need to fix it now.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague about the Cormorant helicopter fleet, because that is another category where the government has been dragging its feet. It initially budgeted to upgrade and repair the 14 helicopters back in 2017, but it seriously underbudgeted for that project. Those helicopters are essential for our air and sea rescue operations, and I am wondering if my hon. colleague could comment on this further foot-dragging by the Liberal government.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, of course that is kind of the name of the game: the government dragging its feet when it comes to procurement and paying attention to what we need in search and rescue equipment for our military. Right now we have a retention and recruitment problem, and yet we are offering new recruits old equipment, which is equipment that literally may not work and might put their lives in danger. One of the best tools for recruitment and retention is to get the tools we need. Our SAR personnel are the best in the world, and they deserve the best equipment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been looking forward to joining the debate on this motion. As a former member of the military, I understand the importance of adequate funding for national defence and the importance of Canada's role on the international stage.

The purpose of the debate is to bring all parliamentarians to a clear consensus on our defence posture. The motion specifically calls for an increase in the defence budget to reach the NATO target. However, we also need to find another time to discuss the state

of the troops and lack of members. There is a reason for all that, but we will come back to it another day.

From the outset, I must say that the Liberals' rhetoric about military spending has never translated into concrete action, and that is very disappointing. Most frightening is this recent partnership between the Liberal Party and the NDP socialists. It is no secret that the NDP has never been in favour of a healthy and well-funded Canadian military. Under a NDP government, the Canadian Armed Forces' budget would basically be eviscerated. As a result of this romance between the Liberals and the NDP, there is uncertainty among our troops across the country and abroad.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, all NATO partners were again challenged to meet or maintain the defence spending requirement of 2% of GDP, 20% of which must be allocated to military equipment. This renewed commitment had actually been discussed at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, in response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the unrest in the Middle East at that time. NATO leaders agreed to reverse the downward trend in defence spending and decided that the allies already meeting the 2% guideline on defence spending would strive to continue doing so and that the allies spending less than 2% of their GDP on defence would strive to increase that spending in real terms within 10 years.

That commitment was made in 2014, and now, eight years later, Canada ranks 25th out of the 30 NATO countries in terms of military spending. NATO's latest annual report shows that Canada spent just 1.36% of its GDP on the army and new defence equipment in 2021.

In contrast, the Conservative Party of Canada declared in its policy statement that a Conservative government will work towards spending at least the NATO recommended 2% of our GDP on national defence. Furthermore, in our latest platform, in 2021, we said, "Canada's Conservatives will renew Canada's commitment to NATO by increasing spending on national defence to move closer to our 2% aspirations".

The large-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, accompanied by mounting evidence of war crimes in full view of anyone on social media, clearly gives Canada good reason to considerably increase its defence spending.

There is no doubt that Canada's biggest challenge has always been its procurement system, which involves too many departments and not enough political responsibility. This system essentially created a bottleneck that prevents even the current budget increase from being spent effectively. The lack of political leadership keeps projects from moving quickly. Every independent procurement expert who testified before our committees has said as much.

Business of Supply

According to the most recent public accounts, \$1.2 billion of 2021 defence spending was not invested, despite the fact that the Liberal's 2015 election platform explicitly states, "We will not let Canada's Armed Forces be shortchanged, and we will not lapse military spending from year to year." However, last month the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a report detailing how the Liberals are constantly pushing spending to coming years. In other words, the Liberals have consistently broken their promise to invest in new equipment.

To be honest, when the "Strong, Secure, Engaged" defence policy was published in 2017, I was impressed. During a meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence, at the time, I remember saying to the chief of the defence staff and the Minister of Defence that 80% of what was in the white paper advocated a Conservative approach. I asked how they were going to fund it. The told me that the decision was not theirs to make. We saw what happened next.

• (1035)

At the same time, Canada's defence policy entitled "Strong, Secure, Engaged" demonstrates how the Liberals calculate defence investments so as to meet NATO criteria. It is as though they are comparing this year's 1.34% with the Conservatives' percentage, which the Liberals estimate at just under 1%. We need to compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges.

The Liberals added elements to the NATO calculations. There are ongoing discussions about applying the same yardstick. Certain elements have been included, such as payments made to veterans. They were not part of the NATO calculations, nor were peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, defence-related IT support, centrally funded defence personnel expenditures, or support for defence programs.

The Liberals took a look and, anywhere they saw the word "defence" or "veteran", they decided they would take that and put it all together to inflate the percentage so they could say that they are doing more. That is the big difference between what was done by the Conservatives at the time, in other words, real and actual defence work, and the other things that the Liberals picked at here and there.

We know that the Liberals are sneakily trying to cover up their failure. However, Canadians are not fools. They see what the Liberals are doing. The only major project that the Liberals have completed in nearly seven years is buying a bunch of rusted-out CF-18s from Australia for \$360 million. We congratulate them on that.

With regard to Ukraine, Canada can and must do more. We have a lot of surplus military vehicles that could be dispatched around the clock with our C-17s. However, the government has not indicated whether it has even considered such action. We could also call upon third parties to buy air defence equipment, such as Stinger missiles or drones and send them to Ukraine. Once again, the senior officials who appeared before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates repeatedly suggested that these ideas are not even being considered right now.

Furthermore, all military purchases under this Liberal government are or have been delayed. For example, when will Canada sign the notorious F-35 contract? We have been in the consortium

for decades. Why do we have to wait seven months to enter into dialogue with Lockheed Martin? We have already been talking to them for quite a while now. In addition, when will construction on the polar icebreakers begin? Why is the Davie shipyard still not officially part of the national shipbuilding strategy? What is this government waiting for? How are we going to protect Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic? The NORAD alert system is totally obsolete. Has the government considered purchasing airborne warning and control system aircraft? What are we doing to speed up the procurement process? What is the status of the submarine replacement program?

In addition, this partnership between the Liberals and the NDP is a pretty good indication that this government is unlikely to increase investments in the Canadian Armed Forces in the short term. Indeed, how many times have we heard NDP statements or resolutions calling for Canada to withdraw completely from NATO?

When we, the Conservatives, were in power, we finalized the purchase of five C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft, 17 CC-130J Hercules transport aircraft, 15 Chinook helicopters and some Leopard 2 tanks. We modernized the CP-140 Aurora surveillance aircraft and the Halifax class frigates. We approved the construction of the *Asterix* auxiliary supply ship, which the Liberals tried to cancel at their first cabinet meeting in 2015, despite Admiral Norman's objections. We established the national shipbuilding strategy, which, despite all its problems, is finally starting to produce some ships, such as the Coast Guard's science vessels and the Arctic offshore patrol ships.

The Conservative government has always taken the need to provide adequate funding to our Canadian Armed Forces seriously, whereas the Liberals are known for spewing empty rhetoric. I will close by saying this. Let us do better in military procurement, let us be efficient and let us ensure we have the means to do so.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his intervention today. I know that when he and I were on the defence committee together a number of years ago, I believe it was in 2016 or 2017, the defence committee had brought forward a report that had a recommendation in it. It was the opinion of the committee at the time to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP, notwithstanding the fact that there can be a lot of complications with respect to that 2%, because not every country calculates it the same way.

Can the member comment on what, if any, work the committee has done since my time with him on that committee in terms of making any further recommendations around this issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I am no longer a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, so I am not completely up to date on all the reports that have been produced over the past five years, but the fact remains that the 2% issue keeps coming up. Something tangible needs to be done. The budgets have been lacking the past few years. For example, there is the “Strong, Secure, Engaged” policy. The committee can say what it wants, and it makes recommendations in its reports that are often quite good, but the government never follows through.

• (1045)

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is some catching up to do when it comes to equipment. My colleague talked about that. The national shipbuilding strategy is very costly and is experiencing near-record delays.

Would immediately fast-tracking the inclusion of a third shipyard be a solution not only to improve this 2%, but also to increase youth engagement in our naval force and in shipbuilding?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Everything having to do with defence forms a big circle. Having operational resources and good, modern equipment encourages young people to enrol in the Canadian Forces and serve their country.

I doubt that 17- or 18-year-olds are reassured by what is happening with the jets and the ships. They are not sure what is going to happen. Eventually, they will decide to do something else with their life.

An acquaintance of mine, who had dual French and Canadian citizenship and wanted to be a pilot, decided to return to France after seeing the state of the F-18s compared to France's aircraft. Now he is piloting French jets. That just proves that we really do not have anything to offer that would appeal to young Canadians, unfortunately.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles has missed a couple of things. I know he was only elected in 2015, so he missed the fact that the Conservatives let defence spending drop to its lowest level since the 1930s while they were in government. He seems to have missed that the NDP has voted for every increase in military spending since 2016. He also seems to have missed that the NDP changed its policy on NATO nearly 30 years ago.

I wonder if the hon. member would like to explain how the Conservatives have gone from taking defence spending to its lowest level ever to now endorsing an arbitrary doubling of defence spending.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Those were different times. Let us not forget Afghanistan and spending on the operation in Afghanistan. The equipment I mentioned in my speech was purchased by the Conservatives to quickly meet an urgent need to support the troops.

Business of Supply

Ask anyone who was in the Canadian Armed Forces when the Conservative government was in power if they were ashamed to serve their company, and no one would say they were. The military knew very well that the Conservative government was there to support them to the fullest extent, and that it could react quickly and send in the operational equipment that was needed on the ground. That is more important than any speech.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank and congratulate my colleague for the good work that he does at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and on this type of national security file.

I filled in for my colleague once at a committee. At that meeting, we learned that contracts to upgrade radar systems in the Canadian Arctic had not been awarded.

Are there concerns about the government's refusal to upgrade radar systems in the Canadian Arctic?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière. The Arctic is an immense and complex area that requires surveillance. Essentially, that requires an effective radar system. At present, the radar system in place is outdated. The government has stated that it has invested more than \$600 million, but that is for standard maintenance. It is not deploying any new equipment. The U.S. is worried and is asking us to do our fair share and invest in equipment in order to provide air and maritime surveillance as quickly as possible.

[English]

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Don Valley West this morning.

I rise in the House to talk about the progress we have made in implementing Canada's defence policy of Strong, Secure, Engaged. When we first released SSE back in 2017, we provided a comprehensive list of capital projects, policies and procedures to ensure that our military could meet our biggest defence and security threats now and into the future. To help fund these items, SSE also forecasted a steady increase in defence spending from \$18.9 billion in 2017-18 to \$32.7 billion in 2026-27. That is an increase of 70% to our defence spending. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's unprovoked war in Ukraine and the myriad of other defence and security challenges we have faced over the past five years, we were already on track to increase defence spending by more than 70%.

While SSE remains our main guide for making sure CAF members are well supported and well equipped, the evolving global security environment has underscored just how important and urgent our investments in defence are. That is why, as both the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence have indicated, we will be further increasing our investments in defence, including a comprehensive spending package going toward continental defence.

Business of Supply

With that in mind, I want to give the House an update on the progress that DND has made in implementing this policy so far, and on the work that we are doing to safeguard our country and continent and support our allies and partners in good times and in bad. Key to these efforts is having a well-supported, resilient workforce that feels safer coming to work every day. When DND launched SSE in 2017, it included several critical initiatives aimed at supporting CAF members and their families throughout their entire careers. This included developing a total health and wellness strategy with the goal of supporting defence team members' mental and physical well-being at all times.

I am pleased to note that National Defence launched this strategy earlier last month. Over the next several years, it will invest more than \$950 million to enhance health and wellness programs and services for defence team members, including expanding the Office of Disability Management by adding more regional offices across the country, providing personalized support services to injured, ill and impaired public service employees, and improving care for Canadian Armed Forces members who are recovering from an illness or injury. Through SSE, National Defence has also done important work expanding the services offered to military families through military family resource centres, and has helped address the challenges that come with a life in uniform through the seamless Canada initiative, which helps to address gaps in service when military families are posted across the country and must navigate new school systems, careers and health care settings.

These are just a couple of the initiatives in SSE aimed at supporting defence team members and their families. We know that Canada's position in the world and our safety and security here at home come down to the well-being of those who serve in it. All that we do, from procurement to health care to cultural change, must be focused on the people who put service before self, the members of our Canadian Armed Forces.

At the same time, we know that our people in uniform need the right equipment to do the difficult jobs that we ask of them. They need state-of-the-art fit-for-purpose tools that can meet the challenges of modern warfare across all domains. In SSE, National Defence outlined over 300 capital projects critical to our military success and our continued interoperability with allies and partners for decades to come. While the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly contributed to project delays and supply chain disruptions, we remain committed to delivering on these projects, providing the very best equipment for our people in uniform while ensuring Canada's economy benefits from our defence investments.

Despite the challenges of the past few years, we are making progress. In fact, since 2017, 75% of the policy's capital projects, which is 258 projects, are in the implementation phase, near completion or completed. Several high-profile projects kept moving forward even as much of the world shut down.

• (1050)

Just last week, the Minister of Public Service and Procurement and the Minister of National Defence announced that Canada was moving into the finalization phase of the future fighter competition with Lockheed Martin and the U.S. government. If an agreement is successfully reached, Canada could see initial aircraft deliveries as

early as 2025. This is the most significant investment in the Royal Canadian Air Force in over 30 years, so we have been taking the time. We need to get this right and ensure that we are purchasing the right jet with the right value for CAF and Canadians.

We have taken the same careful, considered approach to building our fleet of Arctic and offshore patrol ships for the Royal Canadian Navy. The first of these ships, HMCS *Harry DeWolf*, has already participated in missions like Operation Nanook and Operation Caribe, and has transited through the Panama Canal. It also recently completed a circumnavigation of North America, the first Royal Canadian naval ship to do so since 1954. The second ship, HMCS *Margaret Brooke*, has completed the ship's icebreaking and Arctic environmental trials and will return to Arctic waters to participate in the maritime portion of Operation Nanook this summer. The third, fourth and fifth AOPS are in various stages of construction, with the construction of the sixth AOPS expected to begin later this year.

As we deliver on these critical projects for our navy and air force, we are also delivering on our promise to provide the Canadian army with a fleet of 360 armoured combat support vehicles. These vehicles have been designed to replace our current fleet of LAV II Bison and M113 tracked LAV fleet. They are more mobile with longer operational range, better equipped to conduct operations at night and in bad weather and safer for our people in uniform, offering improved protection against weapons and explosives. The first of these vehicles are expected to be delivered to the Canadian army later this year.

Business of Supply

The investments under Canada's defence policy ensure that we deliver the equipment, infrastructure and innovation to help our military advance our national security objectives and interests. However, they are also critical to our national prosperity, resilience and economic well-being. As the largest federal employer, National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have a significant presence in every province and territory, so investing in defence also means creating more jobs and generating economic benefit for communities from coast to coast to coast. These investments also mean that we are better positioned to support our allies and partners across the globe, including those under threat from Russian aggression.

Through SSE, we are committed to remaining engaged in the world now and into the future. We are supporting Ukraine in its fight for freedom and self-governance, standing shoulder to shoulder with our NATO allies on Operation Reassurance and Operation Impact, both of which we recently extended, and deploying wherever and whenever CAF support can make a difference. In times of global uncertainty, we know that our mutual relationships are even more important, and our SSE investments will help us remain effective and a reliable, stable partner within NORAD and NATO for decades to come.

When we launched Strong, Secure, Engaged back in 2017, we made sure that it was flexible enough to deal with a rapidly evolving defence and security environment. This means that while there are certain challenges that DND and CAF could not have anticipated, chiefly the global pandemic, they have remained ready to respond and had the flexibility to adjust timelines accordingly. As we continue discussing ways to increase defence spending, this policy will remain our government's road map, enabling us to strengthen our defences here at home and help uphold peace and security across the globe.

• (1055)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask again about the Cormorant helicopter fleet. My understanding is that these helicopters are reaching their end of life. We are having to cannibalize parts from other helicopters to keep them in the air. They were essential in the search and rescue operations during the floods in British Columbia last summer, and they are a key factor in our air and sea search and rescue operations. Some 360 jobs would come from the upgrading and refurbishment of these helicopters, yet they were budgeted for in 2017 and nothing has happened. Fixing these helicopters would cost about \$1.4 billion and would go a long way in helping us meet our NATO target of 2%.

Could the member comment on that specific project?

• (1100)

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Speaker, the safety of our personnel is always top of mind and the RCAF has a robust flight safety program. We know that we need to move forward in looking at a procurement project for these. As the member spoke about, cracks were discovered on the tail of the Cyclone helicopter undergoing a recent maintenance inspection. We know that we need to maintain safe equipment for all members of CAF, and we will make sure that all equipment is capable before it is used.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about the importance of securing the supply chain, which has been weakened during the pandemic.

I would like to talk about something that is very important for Quebec. The government is set to spend a huge amount of money on F-35s, but there is no guarantee of any industrial or technological benefits. Quebec accounts for more than 50% of Canada's aerospace industry.

When will the member's government adopt a real aerospace policy that recognizes the importance of this sector, in particular in Quebec? This could help secure our supply chain.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Speaker, I too share this interest. Being the member of Parliament for Cambridge, we have a number of companies in my riding in the aerospace industry, such as Honeywell, formerly COM DEV, among others. This is something that is critically important to our moving forward to ensure that any procurements, whether it be the fighter jets or others, benefit us not just by having the right equipment for members of CAF but also, wherever possible, by helping our local economies here in Canada.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his work on the Standing Committee on National Defence. It has been quite an honour. In terms of the procurement of the new fighter jets, of course, there must be fiscal impact assessments. However, I want to ask and ensure that the government will be performing an environmental impact assessment on this procurement process and also, under our obligations regarding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, be doing an indigenous impact assessment as well.

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the work that she does on the committee. I want to assure all in the House that everything this government does has both an environmental lens attached to it and a first nations lens attached to it. We have ensured and will continue to ensure that we are taking the steps needed to select the right fighter jet at the right price with the right benefits to the Canadian Armed Forces and our economy.

Business of Supply

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very appreciative to the parliamentary secretary for his excellent work representing the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces. We often can forget that families serve with members, and it is very important that the forces support those family members as well. I am proud to represent Halifax, the home of Canada's east coast navy, and recently home to HMCS *Halifax*, which has embarked on Operation Reassurance to support our work with NATO with regard to Ukraine, but it leaves the families at home. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could instruct us on how CAF supports families with the funding we are talking about.

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Speaker, I will keep my comments brief. I want to thank the member for the question and the work that he does to support the members of the Canadian Armed Forces in his riding. I am very proud of our record on the shift that we have seen over the last number of years, since “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, in supporting families and connecting with them on the issues that make life within the military that much more challenging. The nearly billion dollars that we are spending just on health and wellness alone is a clear sign of our commitment on that front.

• (1105)

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by just giving the context in which this debate is happening. It has been more than a month since President Putin chose to unleash war on Ukraine. With every day that passes, the number of civilians, including children, killed and wounded continues to climb.

We have witnessed Russian attacks on apartment buildings, public squares, theatres and maternity hospitals. In addition, recent reports and images of what Russian forces carried out in Bucha are horrifying and they are deeply shameful. Let me be clear: We believe that this amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity, and we are committed to holding President Putin and those supporting him accountable for their actions.

It is in this context that today's debate gives me the opportunity to strongly assert Canada's long-standing commitment to NATO, an organization whose importance has only become greater since Russia's illegal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine. Canada and our NATO allies are responding to Putin's aggression with unprecedented coordination as we continue to support the men and women of Ukraine as they defend themselves and fight for their country, their communities, their families and for their very lives.

It goes without saying that Canada's ties with the Ukrainian people have historical roots that run deep. This is why we were the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence just over 30 years ago. Since then, we have developed a strong, diplomatic relationship fuelled by a passionate, engaged, intelligent and committed Ukrainian diaspora of over 1.4 million people in Canada.

In 2014, thousands of Ukrainians stood up for a democratic future. During the Revolution of Dignity, Canada supported activists, human rights defenders and civil society organizations that fought intensely and tirelessly for a free and democratic future. Today, we continue, in response to President Putin's brutality, to defend, to help, to support and to coordinate.

Canada rejects President Putin's attempts to rob Ukraine of its history, identity, democracy and independence. Putin's war is a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and threatens our shared security. Ukraine is a proud, sovereign country. Its territorial integrity must be respected. Putin has demonstrated little or no interest in resolving this crisis peacefully. Instead, he is putting millions of innocent lives at risk and causing the worst humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War. In response, Canada and the international community have reacted. We are ensuring that President Putin and his neighbours will answer for their horrific and deeply shameful actions.

That is why we referred this issue very early on to the International Criminal Court. That is why we are standing with Ukraine at the International Court of Justice. That is why, with 44 other participating states, we invoked the OSCE Moscow mechanism to establish a fact-finding mission to Ukraine to report on the human rights and humanitarian impacts of Russia's illegal invasion. Importantly, Canada also cosponsored and strongly advocated for the UN General Assembly resolution on Russian aggression against Ukraine.

We are watching, but we are also acting. We are not waiting. We have been approaching our NATO allies, our OSCE allies and those around the world to ensure a coordinated response to this unprecedented aggression. That is why we will not wait until atrocities have been committed. We have been helping Ukraine defend itself. We have been doing that in a variety of ways.

Since February, in close coordination with our allies, Canada has sanctioned over 700 individuals and entities in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. These are senior members of the Russian government, military and business people: oligarchs, including President Putin and his inner circle. We are suffocating the Putin regime to disable its military network to help end this aggression.

At the same time, we are helping Ukraine and Ukrainians defend themselves by supplying military support, lethal and non-lethal weapons. We are doing that with our NATO allies. This is the natural extension of Operation Unifier, which has been one of our proudest moments as Canadians and as the Canadian Armed Forces, ensuring that Ukraine's military has not only the tools but also the techniques and ability to defend itself. The secretary general of NATO has commended Canada repeatedly for being a leader in our engagement with Ukraine and ensuring that it has the capacity to defend itself.

Business of Supply

• (1110)

In addition to Operation Unifier, we have authorized \$160 million in military aid to support the Ukrainian armed forces. More than \$110 million has already been provided. Since 2015, we have operated in Operation Unifier, training over 35,000 Ukrainian military and security personnel in tactical and advanced military skills through this mission, and we are pleased to announce that will be extended and will continue to March 2025.

NATO continues to be an important structure, alliance and engagement for the Canadian military to operate at its best. Canada is unequivocally and totally supportive of NATO, and our commitment to the alliance will continue under article 5 of the Washington Treaty. In the face of evolving threats, we understand the need to invest. We need to continue investing in our military. We continue under our defence policy of Strong, Secure, Engaged to reverse the Conservative spending cuts that happened during their decade in power and bring it back up to a level where Canadians can be proud. That is why we have announced an over 70% increase and are ensuring that the Canadian Armed Forces are prepared for a rapidly changing security environment.

Our allies are also increasing their defence spending and Canada must be ready to meet all the threats we are perceiving at the same time as our NATO allies will be engaged. Our government's policy and budgets generally align with the commitments laid out by the Wales Summit Declaration.

Let us be clear. Conservatives, who for a decade had big rhetoric about defence spending, had the chance to step up, had the chance to invest in NATO, had the chance to invest in our armed forces and instead decided to step back. They decided to cut our contributions and to cut our spending. We will take no lessons from the Conservatives, who allowed military spending to drop below 1% of GDP in 2013. They talk big, but when they had the opportunity to make a difference, to increase capacity, to increase engagement, they backed away. They stepped down.

After that decade, we are rebuilding the Canadian Armed Forces through a procurement strategy that is robust, intelligent and thoughtful, but we will also be engaging in the world diplomatically and through development and humanitarian assistance. Just in Ukraine, for instance, we have already provided \$145 million in humanitarian assistance, which has now been fully allocated to experienced agencies like the Red Cross, the UN and other NGO partners. We are addressing gaps in the relief pipeline by delivering over 375,000 items from our stockpile. Humanitarian assistance and development is one of the building blocks for security. We will not abandon humanitarian assistance and development aid, while at the same time increasing military spending. They do necessarily go hand in hand to build a secure world.

We are also in the 21st century and this is a 21st-century war that requires 21st-century responses. That is why we are attempting to deal with the disinformation, propaganda and lies from Russia in the face of this aggression. That is why we have announced \$13.4 million to the G7 rapid response mechanism to counter Putin's disinformation. We will continue to provide money, over \$10 million per year, for a peace and security program that supports fragile democracies, ensuring that we do this together.

In closing, we want to build our military capacity. We want to be a continued best spender. We are already sixth in our NATO alliance with respect to spending, but we will also continue to provide the necessary humanitarian and development assistance, as well as necessary supports for fragile democracies and necessary supports to counter disinformation campaigns.

We will continue to work. We are proud of our Canadian Armed Forces. We are proud of our NATO alliance.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague across the way say, with respect to the Strong, Secure, Engaged defence plan, that the government is continuing to spend. I know we are in a position right now where the rest of the world is trying to impress upon Canada the need to get to 2% spending. The current government promised it would not lapse spending, but in the three years leading up to the end of the fiscal year of 2021, we have seen a \$10-billion lapse in that spending.

Can he account for that, given that when COVID started we were printing new money at \$5 billion a week? Can he put this into perspective as to where we are today?

• (1115)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, to be really clear, it was the Conservatives who cut billions of dollars. In this government, in a very brief six-year period, we are already finalizing a deal to acquire 88 new fighter jets for the RCAF; we are delivering the first Canadian-built ship in 20 years to the Canadian Navy; we are acquiring six offshore patrol vessels, of which two have already been delivered to the navy; we are beginning construction on a joint support ship that will provide at-sea replenishment as well as 4,000 jobs in Canada; and we are delivering rifles to our Rangers. This is real procurement and real work. We are getting the job done.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will certainly support the idea of increasing defence spending to 2% of GDP. My issue is not with these investments.

We have long been calling for predictability from the government, in this sector and in others. It is pretty disgraceful to see the way the government acts and the fact that the army has to buy its own boots.

Will this money be depoliticized? Can the government guarantee that the money will address the real needs?

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for her comments. However, I want to draw her attention to our very important 2017 report, “Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy”. It shows our plan. It is transparent; it is evolving; it is continuing. We are investing in the Canadian Armed Forces on land, at sea and in the air. We are providing the equipment needed. We are doing it steadily. We are doing it intelligently, however, as well. We do not want to fall into the messes of previous governments. We are continuing to do it in a careful and steady way.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am the person who represents 19 Wing in Comox. I can tell members that I have spent a lot of time at the base there, and I am very impressed by the capacity and the ability of the people who serve our country. I also know that they do not have the things they need. What happened recently in Gander with a Cormorant helicopter was a scary moment. It is very scary to recognize that the people who are serving us and trying to keep us safe do not have the equipment they need to do that work.

I am wondering if the member could talk about when the government will actually make sure the military has the resources it needs to do the jobs Canada asks of it.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, again I commend the member for her work. One of the best weeks I had as an opposition member was a week at Greenwood air force base at the other end of the country. That was an opportunity to spend some time with the men and women of the air force. My father was one of those “gentlemen of the air force”, as he called himself. I had that experience of being in helicopters, being on supply aircraft and even being on a fighter jet to look at the way Canada’s armed forces are equipped.

I would say that it would be absolutely denigrating to say that they are not equipped. What they need is for the equipment to be constantly refurbished and upgraded as we continue. That is why we are getting 88 new fighter jets for our RCAF and acquiring 28 CH-148 Cyclone helicopters, and that is why we will get additional equipment to build on what that capacity already is and do it proudly.

The Deputy Speaker: I have to say, as the representative for 14 Wing Greenwood, that it was great to see that you had a good time in the beautiful riding of West Nova.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

• (1120)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member’s speech and I really reflected on the part about how the Conservatives have been all talk and no action. When he said that, I was immediately reminded of Stephen Harper’s interaction with Vladimir Putin back in 2014, when Stephen Harper said Putin had better get out of Ukraine, or something to that effect. We all know how that turned out. That was basically pointless and did not serve any purpose, while at the same time the Conservative government was spending less than 1% of GDP, as the member indicated.

I am wondering if he can speak to how important it is that we make sure that our spending level is where it needs to be and also, as he noted earlier, make sure that we are doing the proper diplomatic measures so that we are handling our impact on the global stage from both a monetary perspective and a dialogue perspective.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping to get one extra minute for that mention of Greenwood.

As I said, diplomacy, defence and development are three prongs of what we need to be doing. We need to engage diplomatically around the world. We need to make sure that we have intelligence, that we have information and that we have appropriate relationships to build alliances and build allegiances while we are also working on our military alliances and while we are also continuing to develop and provide humanitarian assistance. We will do that.

Ukraine is one example of election monitoring, of Unifier and of diplomatic relationship of which we have been very proud.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I am pleased to rise to speak to a Conservative motion on this opposition day because it will give members of the Bloc Québécois an opportunity to explain our position on defence and especially on defence-related spending. I want to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois intends to support today’s motion.

However, I will be using some of my time to point out that there should be some caveats to this because, if all we do is vote yes or no to increasing the budget, as though this is a black-and-white issue with no real grey area, then we are not really addressing the main issues currently affecting the Canadian military.

If we are talking about increasing spending on national defence to 2% of GDP, which is what Canada promised NATO it would do in 2014, then the issue for the Bloc Québécois is not really “how much”, but “how”.

For the past several weeks, this issue has come up in different ways during the Standing Committee on National Defence’s study of the various threats to Canada’s security. On March 21, I asked a panel the following question with regard to the budget increase: “Should the question mainly be ‘how much’ or shouldn’t it also be ‘how’?”

I would like to quote some excerpts from what three of the witnesses said in answer to that question, because they presented two caveats that I want to talk about.

First, James Fergusson, a professor at the Centre for Defence and Security Studies in the department of political studies at the University of Manitoba, said the following. The quote is a bit long, but I think it is quite relevant.

Business of Supply

It's not really a question of increasing the defence budget per se. The question is, how much, over what period of time and, particularly, dedicated to what acquisitions independent of operations and maintenance, and independent...of the problems of recruitment.

If you want to punch this money into or funnel it into expanding the Canadian Armed Forces, recruitment and retention are a big problem, and you're probably in a real difficulty.

However, unless we know where they're going to invest, that becomes a different problem. It raises the question, which this government doesn't want to do—no governments want to do it once they do defence once—about the need for a defence review.

Mr. Fergusson went on to add the following:

Remember that National Defence, over the past many years—I think in every year I can remember—continues to give back money to the central agency. I might be wrong about the number, but I think last year it was \$1.1 billion that was returned. Well, that's a problem. You can commit money, but the question is, where do you spend it...for what ends? That's an open question to this day in Canada.

Associate professor Robert Huebert of the Department of Political Science at the University of Calgary had this to say:

Let's recognize that the 2% increase, when it was created by NATO, is a political target. Once again, what we're really talking about is, what is the need for the effect of the Canadian Forces going into this new environment? It really comes down to the ability to deter growing aggressor states and fight in a collective security environment should that deterrence break down.

When we went into the immediate post-Cold War period, we of course went through what many democratic countries saw as the ability to save money on defence, because there wasn't a fear that we had to deter anyone and we weren't going to be called upon to fight. That has obviously changed since at least 2014—I would argue 2008.

The question is, okay, 2% sounds good in terms of making a commitment, but it's really getting to that capability...in terms of having the types of forces that you will be able to recruit and bring in to actually give effect to it.

It really gets to the heart of what you're asking, and that is that we need to have an ability to go beyond just simply saying, okay, 2% or 1.9%. Those are numbers.

Professor Stephen Saideman, who holds the Paterson Chair in International Affairs at Carleton University, said, and I quote:

I would just jump in here and say that we also have to think a little more about how we do our procurement, because it's often seen as a jobs program for electoral political benefit, as opposed to what is best for what we need.

For instance, we're seeing in Ukraine a variety of defence systems that are working really well.... Should we build our own anti-tank weapons when there are very good ones out there? Should we build our own anti-aircraft weapons when there are very good ones out there?

We need to be a little more realistic about what our own defence industry can do and what it should do, and this leads to a challenge that we've had in our country. We feel that once we start building up a defence industry, it must be kept busy with a variety of projects: "Well, we need to sell LAVs [light armoured vehicles] to Saudi Arabia."

If we think about our defence industry for a minute, we need to think about whether it makes sense for us to have domestic producers of all the stuff, because it puts us in the difficult position of trying to find ways to keep them busy in between our own major projects. We need to think a little more about buying from other folks.

● (1125)

Essentially, when I asked at the meeting whether we should, or should not, increase the defence budget to 2% of the GDP, the three witnesses made it a point to take into account two important aspects, namely the human resources issue, which includes the pressing problem of personnel recruitment and retention, and the procurement issue, which is currently impacting the Canadian Armed Forces.

With respect to procurement, as James Fergusson mentioned in his testimony, year after year, National Defence generally returns more than \$1 billion of its budget because it has not spent the money. This is symptomatic of a cumbersome, slow, inefficient and extremely politicized procurement system.

Broadly speaking, the Bloc Québécois is not particularly concerned about the Liberal government's ability to spend, or, more aptly, to throw money out the window, and that is precisely what we do not want, spending for the sake of spending.

A recent example of the government's ability to spend for the sake of spending is the dithering over the acquisition of the new fighter jets. After saying "anything but F-35s" seven years ago, the government spent hundreds of millions of dollars to extend the life of our old CF-18s. In the meantime, it paid a premium to purchase Australian F-18s that needed millions of dollars in upgrades. All that to finally go back to square one and announce the purchase of the F-35s.

In addition to spending, there are problems like the naval strategy, obsolete military equipment, the lack of air defence capability and the fact that the army was long unable to provide its members with something as simple as boots, asking soldiers to buy them themselves and then apply for a reimbursement. One of the questions we should ask the government in the future about the various procurement projects is whether the regional benefits have been maximized.

Given that, in the mid-2010s, the government abolished the "regional" aspect of industrial and technological benefit obligations, and that more than 50% of aerospace production comes from Quebec, it is to be expected that the Bloc Québécois would pay close attention to anything relating to the acquisition of military drones, for example, especially since this is a burgeoning industry in Quebec.

With respect to recruitment and retention, the Standing Committee on National Defence is currently examining that issue. This is a study the Bloc Québécois called for. The question that arises is the following: What is the point of increasing the National Defence procurement budget if it does not have the personnel needed to manage it?

For example, the Royal Canadian Air Force is paying a high price for its low personnel retention rate. It has a shortage of experienced pilots and technicians. Because of our old aircraft, each hour of flight requires more than 35 hours of maintenance. In 2018, the Auditor General released a devastating report on the state of the air force, revealing that it has only 64% of the qualified CF-18 pilots it needs and that 22% of technician positions are either vacant or filled by unqualified technicians.

The personnel shortage also impacts the support we can provide our allies, and Canada is becoming less and less of a credible partner in this respect. For example, NATO countries are currently taking part in Operation Cold Response in Norway. Some 30,000 allied soldiers are participating. Canada is sending a grand total of 10 people.

Business of Supply

I asked Major-General Paul Prévost about this on March 9. Not only did he confirm that the fact that we were sending only 10 people had nothing to do with the situation in Ukraine, since the decision was made long before the conflict, but he also added something quite troubling. He said, “Currently in the Canadian Forces, some of the threats to our operational readiness are related to the number of people we have.”

In short, the National Defence budget cannot and should not be increased without a review of the procurement processes. We also need an in-depth review of the recruitment and retention issue. That is unavoidable.

I will make a brief aside here before concluding, because the question of how to finance the increase to the National Defence budget may be raised, since we are talking about an additional \$16 billion per year if we want to reach 2% of the GDP.

My colleagues can decide whether it is fair to see a connection between the two, but I will simply mention that, on average, the federal government finances fossil fuels to the tune of \$14 billion a year.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois is focused far more on the “how” than on the “how much,” and the “how” will inevitably require some serious soul-searching about the army’s procurement methods and short- and medium-term solutions to recruitment and retention problems.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with a warming climate, we are seeing the impacts of climate change: raging forest fires, flooding and other types of natural disasters. In my home province last year, over 350 military personnel had to go to the interior to fight forest fires. We saw what happened to Lytton, B.C.

I really believe it is time for Canada to provide not just the manpower to tackle climate emergencies, but also the proper equipment and technology. In the U.S., it is common practice to use C-130s, CH-47s and Black Hawks to support aerial firefighting capacities and we are not doing that here in Canada. There is a company in my riding, Coulson Aviation, that is supporting the Argentinian, Chilean, Bolivian, American and Australian militaries, yet Canada is not doing that.

Could my colleague speak about this? Does she believe that the Canadian Armed Forces are not well equipped to deal with these natural disasters in Canada and that there is going to be further demand with a warming climate? Does she agree that improvements need to be made so that the Canadian Armed Forces are able to respond to these incidents here in our own country?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting question that we will have to consider. It is likely that we will be seeing an increasing number of extreme climate events in the future. Who will respond?

Will it be systematically up to the regular forces, because they are the best equipped? Maybe not. Perhaps we should consider an-

other model, for example a paramilitary militia dedicated to this type of response. It could be made up of people who are less interested in combat and the more traditional nature of the army and might be more interested in this type of response, like the Rangers. We could train them accordingly.

[*English*]

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned recruitment in her speech and the struggles we have. Does she think this is due to the fact that when our veterans complete their duty of service, the government does not provide them with the health services they need to transition back to regular life?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that is not the only issue with recruitment and retention. There are many others.

One of the problems that comes up the most often but that could be resolved quickly and practically is the issue of housing. Forces members struggle to find housing or run into high housing prices in the places they are relocated to. Some make a bit of money, but others lose a lot. There are fewer and fewer military housing units where families can stay. Forces members are increasingly being asked to transfer when it is not necessarily justified.

That is one of the issues we can address. That being said, the entire veterans file is obviously important. My colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles does a lot of work with francophone veterans on the processing times for their claims, which are much longer than average.

• (1135)

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what a magnificent speech. I am captivated. If I did not know the hon. member for Saint-Jean, I would ask her for her phone number. Fortunately, we know each other well.

She referred several times to a regional distribution of benefits. I am from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, which has the largest military air base, where the aging CF-18s are kept. However, I would like to point out that we did not receive the promised drones, which will probably go to another military base.

I would ask my well-informed colleague if, in her opinion, Quebec is receiving its fair share of military investments.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question that unfortunately I cannot answer, because, around 2014, the federal government abolished the regional aspect of industrial and technological benefits.

Business of Supply

As a result, we no longer know where the money goes. We can guess that it goes where it is more helpful for election purposes.

What we are hearing through the grapevine is that, since then, Quebec has not been doing anywhere near as well, although it accounts for 50% of aerospace production.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to cite a Latin proverb. My Latin is not very good, but long live Astérix. *Si vis pacem para bellum*, which means, “If you want peace, prepare for war.”

I never liked this proverb, but I have to say it is still necessary, even in 2022. I hope that one day we will manage to live in a world where conflicts will be resolved through diplomacy, intellectual skills, open-mindedness, collaboration and consensus building.

National defence is a means of ensuring not only our own security and safety, but also the security and safety of populations under threat, whether those threats are natural or political and human.

Today, we are talking about fulfilling our commitment as a NATO country to devote 2% of our GDP to national defence spending. My colleague eloquently explained that the Bloc Québécois agrees, but we still need to know how to manage our groceries.

I was trained as a teacher, and I like to make things simple, to explain complicated things using simple words. When I say that we have to know how to do our groceries, we must know what we have in stock, see if it is still good, and then determine what we need before we go out shopping.

According to the Auditor General's report 3, released in the spring of 2020, National Defence does not know exactly what it has in its inventory and does not know how to account for it. There is a lot of confusion. As my colleague stated earlier, National Defence returns more than \$1 billion per year to the central budget as a result of underspending. That is problematic.

The commitment was made in 2014, but we have yet to meet it. We must ask ourselves questions. What is military spending? What should it include? Military procurement is fraught with problems. What is going on? There are other problems we must examine as well, because it is all interrelated.

What is considered military spending? Naturally, it includes arms, which my colleagues spoke about at length. That said, we need arms and military means of transportation that are up-to-date and functional. For example, the CF-18s are outdated. They require more than 30 hours of maintenance for every flight hour. How much maintenance do the Australian F/A-18 Hornets need? It is difficult to know. I asked the question several times in committee and did not get an answer, so I do not know how many maintenance hours are required for every flight hour on the F/A Hornets.

It would be nice to have helicopters that do not crash and submarines that do not catch fire. Our submarines spend more time under repair than under water.

Canada ordered six Arctic and offshore patrol ships, but they cannot go to the Arctic in the winter because the ice is too thick, so they patrol the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. If they are called “Arctic” ships, maybe they should be able to patrol the Arctic. We

have “polar” ships instead, except that two polar ships for all of northern Canada is not a lot.

The government bought C6A1 machine guns, first introduced in 1958, for \$28,000 each. We have Browning Hi-Power pistols, first produced in 1935, which was before the Second World War.

Our anti-tank weapons are not much better. Canada has the Carl Gustaf 84 mm and the M72, both of which have an effective range of approximately 300 metres and fire straight, right at where tanks are best protected. That 300-metre range is not much compared to other countries' anti-tank capacity.

• (1140)

Our radar systems are also outdated, and I could go on. All of this falls under procurement. No one is checking and upgrading the equipment.

I remember hearing about how, a long time ago, our soldiers were sent into battle in the desert with green uniforms. That is also something to be considered with respect to procurement.

How about training, which is also part of the 2%? Training needs to be done with new equipment. We need to ensure that our students are training with the same equipment they will be using, not with outdated equipment. Retention also involves ensuring that our soldiers can use the equipment they were trained on.

Young people these days are very tech savvy. They want technology. They cannot get enough. I am sorry, but they will not be interested if they are given technology from 1935 or 1958, no matter how noble the mission may be.

As I said, military procurement is fraught with problems. The military does not know what is in its inventory and is unable to respond to emergencies, even during training and exercises.

The Auditor General of Canada wrote about this in report 3 from the spring of 2020. The military does not always seem to know what it has in stock. The report also mentions requests submitted to a warehouse that turned out not to have the equipment in stock. It was requested from another warehouse but was not available there either. It had to be purchased. Imagine the delays.

There are men and women waiting for training, and they need this in order to be up to date. The request was even marked “urgent”. In one case, the request involved parachutes. How can someone train to jump out of a plane if they have no parachute? Urgent means urgent. The delays are unbelievable. The tracking systems are as outdated as the equipment.

Business of Supply

If defence spending is to be increased to 2%, it must include a major overhaul of both the supply systems and the supply sources. The challenges of knowing where the equipment is and making it available also create other problems, including not being able to use the military's equipment transportation system and being forced to ask private carriers to do the military's job. This adds to costs, and I have not even touched on the mistakes of dithering over the F-35s and the national shipbuilding strategy.

Another problem with procurement and obsolescence is recruitment. I mentioned this briefly. Another recruitment problem has to do with the Canadian Armed Forces' reputation when it comes to its treatment of women and certain minorities and genders. That needs to stop. Let us put ourselves in the shoes of someone who is being harassed and touched against their will. Imagine this is happening to a member of Parliament or one of their children. This cannot be tolerated from members of the Canadian Armed Forces, no matter how much stress they are under.

I want to get back to the obsolete technology, which is something we hear all the time. I am not a fan of the Latin expression *Si vis pacem para bellum*, which makes me uncomfortable. However, we are behind in terms of our technological and industrial defence capabilities. This means that not only are we unable to defend those who need it most, but we also cannot defend ourselves.

This investment will yield returns because it involves training in engineering, welding, shipbuilding, aircraft manufacturing, information technology and more. We have the brains here, and the government needs to stop calling on Silicon Valley. Let us invest for ourselves and for others. Most importantly, let us improve our procurement system, which might as well be from the Middle Ages.

• (1145)

[English]

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it is no secret that Thursday's budget is going to give the Liberal government quite a windfall on the revenue side because of increased oil and gas revenues, corporate taxes and personal taxes, all from the oil and gas sector, which every member of the House outside of the Conservative opposition is trying to phase out.

Because of this windfall the government is going to be receiving, an unexpected windfall, would this be the right time to meet the objective that has been laid out in this particular motion?

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the oil industry will completely disappear. I think that there are some things we will always need.

However, the oil industry must be drastically downsized if we want to maintain our environment for future generations. Yes, the industry brings in money. Part of this money could be used to achieve the 2% target. It is up to us to decide as members of Parliament.

Reducing our oil consumption can only help, maybe not us, but our children and grandchildren. A real statesperson thinks about the future and future generations, not about the next election.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here we have a Conservative motion. I find it very fascinating for the simple reason that, when I was in the opposition back in 2013, the Conservatives' spending as a percentage of GDP was actually less than 1%. That was in 2013. Now, we have advanced considerably further than that, and we will wait and see what takes place in the budget.

Does the member not agree that there is a bit of irony there, with the Conservative Party saying 2%? Back in 2013, when the Conservatives were in government and I sat in the opposition benches, their spending was actually at less than 1% of the GDP.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, I began my speech with proverb. I will now begin my answer with another proverb: Only fools never change their mind.

That being said, when we make a decision, whether it is personal, general, political or governmental, we choose one of the best solutions at the time. It may not be the best decision in hindsight, but, under the circumstances, it was the best choice.

Today we are realizing that we made a mistake that we need to correct. Let us not be fools; let us simply correct it.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when my hon. colleague spoke, she addressed the sexual misconduct crisis in the military. I sat on the status of women committee when we heard testimony from the incredibly brave, strong women who came forward.

Two per cent is a huge increase, but certainly there are increases to military spending that could happen in terms of support for women: for those survivors of sexual misconduct in the military. Where would the member like to see some of those increases to military spending go for supporting those women?

• (1150)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that we need to support victims of harassment and sexual assault.

We talk a lot about women. They are incredibly strong, they get through it, but the impact, the images and the flashbacks are there for life. Let us also consider the other victims of harassment, bullying and sexual assault we rarely talk about: men. Men can also be victims. All of these people need support.

What we really need is a major change in mentality. Assaulting someone is not being manly, and I will keep my insults to myself.

Business of Supply

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the MP for Edmonton Strathcona.

Today, I rise in the House to speak to the opposition day motion proposed by the Conservatives about Canada's future defence spending requirements under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I have much respect for my colleagues, especially the member for South Surrey—White Rock who introduced this motion, with whom I sit on the Standing Committee for National Defence. I have enjoyed working with her thus far; however, I cannot agree with her today.

I want to be very clear and ensure that New Democrats are on the record for being in favour of adequate federal government spending for the Canadian Armed Forces. New Democrats have long pushed for the government to make sure that our troops have the equipment, training and support they need to do the difficult and dangerous work we ask them to undertake. We support upgrading outdated equipment and providing a clear mandate, while also providing a realistic and responsible spending plan to deliver on these goals. We need to make sure funding is adequate to support our national and international roles, but should not adopt an arbitrary target for spending.

Therefore, we cannot support a call for the federal government to increase its defence spending to hit NATO's target of 2% of GDP, as we believe this request from the international military alliance is just that: arbitrary. Members do not have to believe me on this. I will quote Dr. Robert Huebert, associate professor of political science at the University of Calgary, who said:

“Let's recognize that the 2% increase, when it was created by NATO, is a political target. We need to have the ability to go beyond just simply saying, okay, 2% or 1.9%. Those are numbers. They don't mean anything.”

I could also quote Dr. Kimball, associate professor of political science from the University of Laval, who said:

One thing that is clear is that 2% is clearly a political target. Two per cent does not come from any sort of quantitative analysis. It doesn't come from any sort of strategic analysis or anything like that, and I can say that relatively confidently because, in doing my NATO research, I've looked at over 200 pieces of research published on NATO burden sharing—policy papers, books, articles and all of that. The first thing I can say is that 2% is something that politicians created, which defence budgets had to very much react to and try to attain afterwards.

If 2% is arbitrary, why specifically demand that it be spent? The Conservatives are demanding a huge increase in military spending based on an arbitrary political target. Currently, Canada spends \$24.29 billion on the Department of National Defence. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, hitting NATO's 2% target would mean spending \$54 billion to \$56 billion a year on defence.

The PBO recently reported that the Department of Defence struggles with actually spending the current allocation of \$24 billion, and it delays planned expenditures until later years. Former Liberal MP and retired general Andrew Leslie commented clearly

on this inability for the Department of Defence to spend its full allocation, saying:

The department has a chronic problem with actually using the funds. You can promise the moon and the stars. If you can't get the money out the door, then it's of no value.

The department cannot spend what it has now, so how can the Conservatives expect it to spend double? I do not believe that we should be spending double our current budget, but there are reasons why we should increase defence spending.

We in the House know that the Canadian Armed Forces have a significant recruitment and retention problem, and it is absolutely something the federal government needs to address. Each year, the Canadian Armed Forces must select and train thousands of recruits, and retain a substantial number of its trained personnel to maintain operational readiness.

The CAF comprises approximately 65,800 regular force members, 27,000 reserve force members, 5,200 Canadian rangers and more than 27,000 civilian employees, who support the CAF. At the end of February 2022, we were almost 4,000 people short of the 69,750 funded positions that would make up the CAF's authorized strength. At approximately 37%, the largest portion of DND's budget is allocated for personnel, but of course if it does not have the personnel to pay, it is unable to spend that money that is allocated.

A lack of inclusion is also a major barrier to both retention and recruitment. The CAF must attract, recruit and retain talent that is representative of Canadian society.

New Democrats have called on the government to create and fund a special program within the Canadian Armed Forces aimed at the recruitment of women and under-represented groups, as recommended by the Auditor General in 2016.

● (1155)

In the last Parliament, I was a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We studied the horrific problem of sexual misconduct in the armed forces. This has, of course, impacted the CAF's ability to attract and retain individuals. Articles in *Maclean's* and *l'Actualité* in 2014 estimated that 1,780 sexual assaults per year occurred in the CAF.

New Democrats continue to call on the Canadian government to fully implement all recommendations of Justice Deschamps's 2015 report. Despite having the Deschamps report, the Justice Fish report and two other reports from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, this Liberal government has delayed action and stated that it will wait yet again for another report from Justice Arbour. It continues to wait. It continues to make women in the CAF wait, and the solutions are already known.

Business of Supply

All women, including women who serve, deserve much better from this government. We need to ensure that women who serve can do so equally. We need to adequately fund the supports for women who serve, and adequately fund the educational programs needed to change the toxic culture within the forces.

I would add that the Canadian Armed Forces must do a better job of responding to mental health issues among its members. This plays a huge role in retention as well, and it is something that the federal government must invest in for its members. On average, the Canadian Armed Forces still lose one serving member per month to death by suicide.

My colleague for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has a bill, Bill C-206, that would remove self-harm from the military code of conduct as a disciplinary offence. By making this change, the government could show leadership and mark a major shift in attitude and policy on mental health. In addition, it could provide more funds for mental health supports to all forces members. It needs to start by recognizing that although not all injuries are visible, those invisible injuries are injuries all the same.

Again, I say yes to responsible spending for the Canadian Armed Forces, but I return to the question of the arbitrary 2%. If spending was increased to 2%, this would make military spending the largest expenditure of the Government of Canada, even compared with the Canada Health Transfer of \$45 billion per year.

I find this a bit strange for a party that touts fiscal responsibility. Why would the Conservatives push so much for such an incredible increase? When the NDP calls for a national pharmacare program, a national child care program or a national dental care program, they scream bloody murder. When we call for the federal government to put money back into the pockets of taxpayers in the form of services and programs, they say that we are being unrealistic, irresponsible and, dare I say, socialists. This increase in spending that the Conservatives are calling for in today's motion is equivalent to a national pharmacare program and a national dental care program combined.

New Democrats certainly agree that Canada needs to spend more on defence to make sure we can meet our international obligations and to make sure the Canadian Forces have the support, training and equipment they need. The war in Ukraine, and the growing tensions around the world, demand that we take a serious approach to upgrading and equipping our military. Our armed forces stationed in Latvia and protecting us at home certainly deserve it. Canada needs to be a force for stability in this increasingly unstable international climate, but I do not think we get there by choosing an arbitrary figure. We must plan efficiently, effectively and reasonably.

Canada can be a stabilizing force by increasing our funding to international humanitarian aid and increasing resources to our diplomatic efforts. We could take a leadership role in fulfilling NATO's goals of creating the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons. Canada could support the agenda of the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security with a commitment of additional resources to that agenda, including measures to promote increased recruitment of women in peace-keeping.

We can increase military spending wisely by streamlining our defence procurement system and ensuring that we get better value for our money by ensuring that money is spent domestically. We can invest intelligently by stopping the outsourcing and privatization of Canadian Forces maintenance and repair work: This is work that has traditionally been done by either DND employees or regular serving members. We can provide those stable, public jobs as part of that domestic economic health. We can invest in the programs and services needed by members of the armed forces, such as supports the department used to provide for members to secure affordable housing, family and medical services.

All of this is necessary and is a valid argument for responsible defence spending, but to double the budget based on an arbitrary political figure to simply appear as though we are contributing to the international defence community is unsound, and New Democrats will not support such fiscal folly.

• (1200)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Russia has a population of about 145 million people and a GDP of \$1.7 trillion. Canada's population is 38 million with a GDP of \$2 trillion. Russia spends 4% of its GDP on its military, or about \$68 billion. In that context, and in the context about the brutal assault of Russia on Ukraine, does the member not agree that a 2% target is a reasonable target, given the state of the world in which we currently live?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, throughout my entire speech, I talked about the increase in funding. I talked about smart procurement. I talked about ensuring we have the equipment to fulfill our international role, but 2% is a political and arbitrary figure. I said that repeatedly. It has been said by experts repeatedly. I say yes to planning long term and yes to ensuring that we have what we need to fulfill that international role, but I say no to a political and arbitrary figure.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned a reasonable spending plan. I think that it is reasonable to devote 2% of the GDP to the army so that it can fill in the gaps in the procurement system, which is slow, and with respect to recruitment, where it is not meeting any of its targets, and personnel retention, which is a major problem.

Can she explain to me why she opposes the 2% of GDP target?

Business of Supply

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, again, this is a political and arbitrary figure that has been pulled out of the air. In order to meet what we need to fulfill those international obligations, ensure we are keeping people safe around the world and fill those gaps, we have to spend it in a smart, reasonable and responsible way. We need to absolutely invest in terms of recruitment and retention. We need to ensure that the Armed Forces are moving ahead to provide the educational support, training and equipment. Again, 2% is arbitrary, and that would be up to \$56 billion. That is a huge amount of money, and that needs to be done in a very smart, responsible way.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member has indirectly, if not directly at times, referenced, Canada does have an obligation to continue to play a strong leadership role. When we think of NATO as an organization and the role it is playing today in Europe, we can quickly understand why it is so critically important to have faith and to support NATO countries, our allies.

I am wondering if my friend could provide her thoughts on leadership. It is about more than us just speaking. It is also about materializing, and that means supporting our military the best way we can, rather than comparing Canada to other nations. Yes, the member does not want to talk about the hard 2%, but there is an obligation to increase from the low of 1% that it was in 2013. Would she not agree?

• (1205)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, yes, and through my speech I talked about increasing spending, doing it smartly and doing it in a way that will have significant impacts for the people in the Armed Forces. I also talked about other ways that Canada can play a huge leadership role. In terms of the ending of nuclear weapons, Canada could sign on to the treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons or increase nuclear disarmament. I do not have the exact terminology for that treaty, but these are key ways that we can show leadership. Canada has not signed on yet, and it should.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe for her excellent contribution to this debate. She has been a staunch supporter of our women and men in military for many years. I have learned a great deal from her on this topic.

I would also like to thank the member of Parliament for South Surrey—White Rock for moving this motion, giving us the opportunity to discuss how to support our military and highlight the deplorable state of Canada's military. I am the daughter of a veteran, and the opportunity to stand in this place today and speak about this is vitally important to me.

As my colleague from London—Fanshawe mentioned, New Democrats have always pushed for the government to make sure that our troops have the equipment, training and support they need to do the very difficult and dangerous work we ask them to undertake. New Democrats have always strongly believed that the federal government must play a larger role in supporting the Canadian Armed Forces. We know that we need a military that can work safely, can get the support that they need when they need it and can

count on their policies from our government. What we have seen instead is years of cuts from both Conservative and Liberal federal governments.

I have to say that I am somewhat amazed at the audacity, I guess, of the Conservatives standing in the House and talking about support for the military, when we saw very clearly the decimation of spending on the military and the abandonment of our peacekeeping efforts under Stephen Harper's Conservative government. I will speak to that a little bit later on, but I do think it is important to note that we are in a place where our military has not been supported by multiple governments.

Part of the reason that New Democrats believe so strongly in the support of our men and women in the military is because we are the party of working people. We are a party that has always believed that workers have a right and they are entitled to all the tools they need to do their work safely and effectively.

With regard to the Canadian Armed Forces, that becomes more important, as their job is to protect us, to look after Canadians, to hold Canada's place in the world, to protect Canadians during climate emergencies and to protect Canadians during the COVID pandemic. What we saw the armed forces do in Quebec during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, what we asked them to do, was incredible. If we do not give them the tools to do those jobs, it is a stain on their reputation, on the federal government and on parliamentarians.

One of my colleagues from the NDP caucus has brought forward the argument that she represents many men and women in the military, in the armed forces, who do not have the tools to do some of the things in Canada that we require them to do, so they do not have the tools to do the search and rescue that we ask them to do. She raised the issue in the House earlier today of helicopters and equipment that we are asking the men and women in uniform to repair by creating their own parts because these supplies are so old and so dated that they can no longer get parts. The military is being asked to patch together things so they can do the incredibly difficult work we are asking them to do, which is unsustainable. It is impossible to sustain.

Canada, right now, is looking at the world, the world that changed on February 24. I think we all should be looking at Arctic sovereignty. It is very clear that global climate change is making more of Canada's Arctic accessible and that global powers have their eyes on the Arctic as a place to exploit natural resources.

Business of Supply

We have seen what Russian aggression has meant to stability in eastern Europe and the sovereignty of Ukraine. We must be prepared to protect Canada's Arctic from Russia and from other powers that may threaten our sovereignty and our environment. We have to have a plan in place to protect the north, and our armed forces must be that plan. They must be supported to undertake that work.

• (1210)

What do New Democrats want? New Democrats want a military where armed forces members can work safely, can get the support they need when they need it and can count on their government to produce policies that will work for them. We want our military to be able to work within NATO. New Democrats have regularly called for the government to take a leadership role within NATO in beginning the work necessary for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

I have called many times for the government to sign onto the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We have not done that. At the very least, and I have asked this of the government, ministers, parliamentary secretaries and chairs at the foreign affairs committee, we could send an observation mission to Vienna this June for the first member meeting of the TPNW. I have pushed as hard as I can on this.

New Democrats want more commitment to peacekeeping. We have pledged 860 members to go into the field as peacekeepers. Canada used to play a vital role in peacekeeping in the world. We have 58 members in the field currently. Before the election in 2015, Trudeau criticized Stephen Harper's government for the decline in the number of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could I remind the hon. member that we do not use member's names?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, my apologies.

The Prime Minister criticized the Conservative government of Stephen Harper for his decline in the number of uniformed personnel. We were, at that time, 66th in our ranking, but since then, it has gone lower and we are now at the 81st—

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Immediately after you asked the member not to use the name of the former prime minister, she used it again.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We can use the names of former prime ministers and people who are no longer members of the House.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I would point out to my colleague that the Speaker has outlined why I am allowed to use the name of Stephen Harper.

We would like to see an improvement in government procurement. As my colleague from London—Fanshawe pointed out, we have not been able to spend the money we have allocated to the armed forces. In fact, we heard Andrew Leslie, a former Liberal MP and retired general, say, “You can promise the moon and the

stars. If you can't get the money out the door [and if that is the reality] then it's of no value”.

I also want to highlight something else that my colleague from London—Fanshawe said. She spoke about what 2% means. The PBO has said meeting that 2% budget would mean \$54 billion to \$56 billion a year being spent on defence. It would be a doubling of our military spending, which would be over our current \$24.29 billion per year. This would make military spending the largest expenditure of the Government of Canada. It would be more than we spend on the health care transfer, which is \$45 billion a year.

We all need to think about that. We all need to think about where Canadians would like to see those investments. I hope I have an opportunity during questions to ask my colleagues within the Conservative Party how they would pay for this. As party members who constantly stand in this place and say taxes and revenue is not something they are interested in, what things would they cut? What things are they interested in cutting away from Canadians for this?

I would like to talk about humanitarian spending. When we look at defence spending, we must tie it to humanitarian spending. We must look at the fact that in Canada right now, we are spending approximately 0.3% of our gross national income on humanitarian support. We all know that war is a failure. No one wants to go to war. Nobody wants to see what is happening in Ukraine. We need to commit to that humanitarian support, the diplomatic and multilateralism, and the efforts we can do so that we are not required to go to war.

Yesterday, David Beasley from the World Food Programme came to the international human rights subcommittee. He said that, if we do not invest in food security, humanitarian aid, diplomacy, multilateralism and all of these things, then we will pay 1000 fold in conflict and impacts on populations.

I will end by thanking every woman and man in our military. I am so proud of all of our people in the Canadian Armed Forces. They punch above their weight. They defend the world's longest coastline covering three oceans. They are experts in all of the work they do, and they are world-renowned. I want to say thank—

• (1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would echo the appreciation and care that the member just expressed to members of our Canadian Forces for the fantastic job they do in Canada's best interests all the time, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day.

Business of Supply

I want to pick up on what I emphasized earlier. If there were no NATO forces or organization, there would be that much more pressure on Canada to spend even that much more of our resources on a military. Because we have a NATO organization, countries around the world come together to protect the common interests of those countries.

I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts in regard to why, from her perspective, it is important that Canada meet its NATO obligations in whatever way it can.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I think that Canada has to find its way back to playing an important role on the world stage. Not only has our role within NATO diminished, but our role within the United Nations has diminished, our role in peacekeeping has diminished, our role in diplomacy has diminished and our ability to move things forward has diminished. As a country that used to be a leader in diplomacy and multilateralism and all of these things, including Canadian peacekeeping, which Canadians saw their identity in, we are those things no longer. We spend all of our time investing solely in trade and forget to look at these other areas.

Yes, I agree with the member that we do need to live up to our obligations within NATO. February 24 changed the world, and we need to also live up to our obligations to the world and other countries.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my one question for the member for Edmonton Strathcona is that I thank her for changing her opinion. On January 31, in an exchange with the member for Calgary Shepard, she said, “Mr. Speaker, I have to disagree with my colleague across the way. Hitting a bully is not the best way to deal with bullying.” We were talking with about Vladimir Putin and Russia. On January 31, this member was against any aggression toward Russia and then, just yesterday, she had an excellent unanimous consent motion passed to provide Ukraine all military assistance possible to defend themselves against Russian aggression.

One thing I will say about the NDP member is that she does always have the ability to change positions and listen to reason. I want to ask her what made her change her mind, as she is now supporting Ukraine and supporting Canada sending military assistance there after she was so against it.

• (1220)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. I would like to point out that when the member quoted me, we were in a very different world than we are now. Of course, in January, Ukraine had not been invaded to date.

In fact, in January, we were still trying to find ways to avoid a war. Yesterday, when I stood in the house, I was responding to the crimes against humanity and war crimes perpetrated by Putin. That had not happened on January 31. I certainly hope every member of the House is able to adapt their opinion to the changing realities that we see on the ground. If we are not able to change our opinion when the world changes, what is the point of us being here?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about another aspect she only touched upon, namely the difficulty in recruiting.

Does she agree that the Liberals, by filibustering at the Standing Committee on National Defence and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women when they were reviewing the cases of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, only made it more difficult to recruit women? Their objective is 25% by 2026. They are far from that number. Moreover, given the new allegations made public recently, they are not getting any closer.

Does she agree that they should apply the recommendations in the Deschamps report, which the Liberals still have not implemented?

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, of course, I agree 100% with my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. Of course, we should be implementing those so that we can help recruit women. We also need to bring forth the feminist foreign policy. The government has promised this for some time and has not brought forward our feminist foreign policy. We need to do everything we can to make sure that our military is a welcoming space for women who want to contribute and who want to represent Canada. I thank her for her advocacy on this issue.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for me to speak to this motion, seeing that I moved the motion but did not speak to it when it was initially moved in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent.

President Putin and the Russian Federation are committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine.

Reports from Bucha last weekend of dead Ukrainian civilians with their hands bound behind their backs and others buried in makeshift pits have shocked the world, and these war crimes in Bucha are not all of it. We have seen numerous credible reports of Russia deliberately attacking civilians in other parts of Ukraine. The UN has officially confirmed thousands of civilian casualties, and no doubt the unofficial number is much higher.

There are other atrocities as well. The Russian military has deliberately destroyed hospitals, schools and apartment buildings. It targeted a Mariupol theatre full of civilians that was clearly marked, and visible from the air, with the Russian word for children. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded that Russia deliberately attacked the Mariupol maternity hospital.

Business of Supply

Beyond these war crimes, day after day and week after week for the last five weeks, we have been barraged by countless photographs, videos and reports detailing Russia's indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas. Major Ukrainian cities are being levelled. Mariupol, once home to some half a million people, is now 90% destroyed. In Kharkiv, a city once home to 1.4 million Ukrainians, some 600 buildings have been destroyed. The list goes on. The data and images have come so fast and furious in the last five weeks it is hard to process all of it, but one thing is abundantly clear: The world has changed, and Canada must change with it.

The attack on Ukraine by President Putin and the Russian Federation is the first European war between states since 1945. This attack threatens not only Ukraine but Canada. Our security has always been inextricably linked to that of Europe's. Since Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec City in 1608, the outbreak of major wars in Europe has always affected Canada.

The Seven Years' War, which some call the first major global conflict, a war in Europe between Great Britain and France, led to the conquest of Quebec in 1759. What we call the War of 1812 was part of a broader European war: the Napoleonic Wars. Canadians know full well the high price paid in the First World War and the Second World War in Europe. Some 100,000 Canadian war dead can attest to that. Most of them are buried in northern France and the Italian peninsula.

It is clear President Putin and the Russian Federation's unprovoked and illegal attack on Ukraine is a challenge to our peace and security here at home in Canada.

This attack also threatens Canada in a second way, because it comes on the heels of an autocratic pact between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, which threatens the rules-based order that has existed since 1945. This is an order that Canada was instrumental in establishing, an order that has ensured the longest period of relative peace and prosperity in modern times and an order that, if successfully challenged by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, threatens the peace and security of 38 million Canadians here at home.

President Putin and President Xi's autocratic pact was signed just ahead of the invasion of Ukraine, on February 4 of this year. It declared each other's support for their respective positions on Ukraine and Taiwan, and it stated that there are "no forbidden areas" and "no limits" between China and Russia. It is the most detailed and assertive alliance between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China ever. It is a challenge to the international order that has existed since 1945, and it threatens our peace and security here at home. The world has changed and Canada must change with it.

• (1225)

The events of the last decade make clear something else. We can no longer live in splendid isolation on the north half of this vast continent, assuming that we are protected on three coasts, by three oceans and on our southern border by a superpower. It is true that, since the founding of Quebec in 1608, we have lived under the protection of one empire or another for over 400 years. For much of our history, we have lived under the protection of the French and British empires. When the French empire fell in North America on

the north half of this continent in 1759, the Royal Navy and the British empire provided protection until August 1940. In that month, during the early dark days of another war, a Canada-U.S. defence pact was signed in upstate New York, in Ogdensburg, that set in place the protection that we have enjoyed since 1940.

Since then, we have lived under Pax Americana, but no longer. It is clear that the United States is no longer willing to shoulder the burden of Canada's defence and security and that of the NATO alliance. That was made clear by President Obama in 2014 during the NATO Wales Summit, which resulted in the Wales Summit Declaration that called on Canada and other NATO members to increase their defence spending to at least 2% of GDP by 2024. It was reiterated by President Obama in this very chamber in 2016 when he called on Parliament to meet the Wales Summit Declaration goal. It was reiterated by President Trump loudly on numerous occasions during his administration, and it has been reiterated by the current Biden administration.

The world has changed and Canada must change with it. We can no longer count on another country to take care of our defence and security here at home. It is time for us to get serious about our defence and security and our contribution to the defence and security of the NATO alliance. That is why we have introduced this motion in the House today. The government needs to increase defence spending in the budget. There is no priority more important to any Government of Canada than the safety and security of some 38 million Canadians living here at home.

The government needs to fully uphold the obligations Canada made in the Wales Summit Declaration of 2014 to increase defence spending to 2% of gross domestic product in two years. While the government has been decreasing defence spending in recent years, there remains only two short years to fulfill the Wales Summit Declaration.

Let me close by saying that in fulfilling our obligation to the NATO alliance, we can contribute not only to the defence of Europe but to our own defence and security here at home. Canada, like Ukraine, shares a border region with Russia: the Arctic Ocean. Russia considers the Arctic region its most important theatre. It has spent considerable resources to strengthen its capabilities in the Arctic, and it is time that we took Canada's Arctic defence and security seriously.

Business of Supply

We need to modernize NORAD's early warning system. We need to fix our broken military procurement system and acquire new equipment for the Canadian military, as well as additional equipment for Ukraine's military. We need to accelerate the national ship-building program. We need to purchase the F-35 jets. We need to join ballistic missile defence in the face of Russian hypersonic missile technology. We need to work in closer co-operation with Scandinavian allies and the United States in Arctic peace and security. If we do these things, we can provide Ukraine with lethal weapons and ensure a future Bucha, a future Kharkiv and a future Mariupol will not happen. If we do not do these things, we are weakening the democratic alliance and potentially losing our sovereignty in our own north.

The world has changed and Canada must change with it. If we rise to the task like previous generations of Canadians, we can strengthen both our democracy here at home and abroad and ensure that our children can continue to live in peace and security.

• (1230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to President Obama's visit when he put the 2% challenge to all members of Parliament. That was back in 2016. We acquired governance in late 2015. I would like to highlight to the member that in 2013, Canada's percentage of GDP going toward the military was less than 1%. I suspect that is one of the reasons Obama made reference to it.

Upon reflection and using hindsight today, does the member recognize that the former Harper administration did us no service by underfunding our Canadian Forces?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I think the world before February 2014 was a very different one. We had the peace dividend as a result of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and many NATO members significantly reduced their defence budgets in the view that Russia no longer presented a threat to the safety and security of Europe. That changed after the Sochi winter Olympics, when Russia invaded Ukraine. Prime Minister Harper understood the world had changed, which is why Canada agreed to the Wales Summit Declaration of 2014.

We need to understand that the world has changed since then and since the invasion of February 24 of this year, and that Russia now presents a direct threat to the safety and security of this country, as does the People's Republic of China. We need to respond accordingly with an increase in the defence budget.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, not only do the Canadian Armed Forces need equipment, but they also need to do a better job of recruiting and retaining members. One of the reasons members quit and leave the army is that reservists are being sexually assaulted and cannot take their cases to the court martial.

Maybe it is time to change that and support our reservists. When necessary, they can serve Canada just as well as regular forces.

• (1235)

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. She is right. The Canadian Armed Forces has problem with recruitment and needs to recruit more people.

That said, according to the NATO report, we also need to increase our military equipment budgets to make sure our military has the tools it needs to do its work here and in Europe.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things I have not heard a lot about in the discussion today is cybersecurity. I would like to ask my colleague, who has been here for a while in previous administrations, about this.

We have known well the issues of cybersecurity in Ukraine, with Russia in particular being very belligerent in attacks on social society and on other targets not only in Ukraine but across the globe. What are his thoughts about cybersecurity and where Canada is right now? I feel this is one thing we are missing in our country's response. I have been raising it at committee and other places because we can also help build back Ukraine differently from ever before with the type of technology and innovation we have and by being a leader. I would like to hear his response to that.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague raises a very good point. When one reads the Secretary General's annual report of 2021 from NATO, one sees that Canada has underspent in equipment for the Canadian Armed Forces. I think part of what Canada needs to do is ensure that our men and women in uniform have the latest and most encrypted and secure military communications available to them, because as Russia has found out in Ukraine, when encrypted communications break down, it can lead to disaster. It is apparent that Russia is using unencrypted cellular networks, which make available to all its movements in the field. We have to ensure that the Canadian Forces are never subject to that lack of cybersecurity in the field when it comes to protecting Canadians here at home or in Europe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, as we gather here in the House of Commons, in Ottawa, to debate funding for national defence, our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine, who, for the past 41 days, have been suffering, although very courageously, the agonizing pain inflicted by the terrible aggression of Putin's Russia. I want to emphasize that I said "Putin's Russia" because it is not the same thing as the people of Russia. We will talk about that a little later.

We are here to talk about funding for national defence and how to meet the target of 2% of gross domestic product, or GDP, set by NATO in 2014. As we debate this, we are just a few days away from commemorating the 105th anniversary of Canada's capture of Vimy Ridge. The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs and the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo will be in attendance to commemorate the event.

Business of Supply

On April 9, 1917, at 5:30 in the morning, 15,000 Canadian soldiers attacked the German enemy to take Vimy Ridge, something our allies had failed to do during the many years of war. According to Brigadier-General Alexander Ross, a nation was born as a result of that battle.

In 1917, Canada engaged in direct, co-ordinated combat on a military battlefield with troops from across the nation for the first time. The four divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force deployed to Europe, to France, during the First World War included people from all across Canada, including British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec.

In all, 15,000 Canadian soldiers participated in this terrible battle, including Cree soldier Henry Norwest, a sniper who received the Military Medal, and Jeremiah Jones, a Black Canadian soldier who singlehandedly captured a unit of German machine gunners. For many historians, Canada was born on the Vimy battlefield.

During the Second World War, Canada once again played a major role in liberating the world from tyranny. A few years later, in 1949, NATO was created to bring together European countries, Canada and the United States to monitor, but not fight, the Soviet empire, whose intentions were becoming worrisome, to put it mildly.

In 2014, at the Wales Summit, a very important and historic conference and the reason behind today's debate, NATO's 30 members committed to allocating 2% of their GDP to national defence by 2024. The objective was to support the military and to ensure that it would be ready if something went wrong and war was to break out again.

Unfortunately, war did break out. A war is currently being waged, and we did not meet this NATO target. It is embarrassing for Canadians to see that we are lagging behind. Of the 30 NATO countries, Canada ranks 25th in terms of defence spending as a share of GDP.

That brings us to the crimes currently being committed by Putin's Russia in Ukraine. Just a few days ago, the entire world was shaken; men and women of goodwill were sick to discover the tragedy of mass graves and civilians killed in Bucha. We saw, in all of its ugliness and horror, the extent to which Putin's Russia went there crassly to exterminate this very strong people who are very proud and very protective of their sovereignty.

● (1240)

Unfortunately, war criminals will always want to conquer countries in the worst way, whether by attacking schools and hospitals or by literally sending civilians to slaughter—I am deeply sorry to use that word.

It has been 41 straight days, but fortunately, we are all moved by the extraordinary resilience of this people who are standing up for themselves. We were very proud to welcome, here in the House, President Zelenskyy, who delivered a speech that will remain etched in my memory and in the memory of all those who attended. Obviously Putin wants to recreate the power of the Soviet empire. That is where we as member countries of NATO have a responsibility.

I would remind the House that NATO had its equivalent, the Warsaw Pact.

Where do things stand in Canada? Currently 1.36% of Canada's GDP is invested in national defence. That is not enough. As I mentioned earlier, we rank 25th out of 30 countries. We are seeing a decline and delays in funding but also in equipment and military force, which we should honour. We will always be indebted to these men and women who dedicate themselves to the Canadian army and put their lives at risk every day for our freedom here at home and abroad.

The government has really dropped the ball on the aviation file in recent years. Last week it announced that discussions would finally be held, over seven months, to determine whether it would buy the F-35. Need I remind members that this is the same government that made a huge fuss in 2015 about never buying the F-35? After seven years of dithering, it has finally made the right decision. However, after all this time, it wants another seven months of discussions, even though this is what we need to do. Unfortunately, it is Canada that ends up paying for the Liberals' inaction.

The exact same thing happened with the Chinooks. The Jean Chrétien Liberals swore up and down that they would not buy that helicopter only to end up purchasing it anyway. History is repeating itself, and not in positive ways, unfortunately.

As Canadians, we have a fundamental responsibility regarding equipment for NORAD, and our facilities in Canada are outdated. They were built before the Internet even existed. Updates are needed, but the government has done nothing. The same goes for establishing Arctic sovereignty, since we are still in need of icebreakers. We have gotten to this point because the Liberals have done nothing for seven years.

We cannot talk about equipment without talking about procurement. The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently released a scathing report regarding procurement, the purchase of military equipment and defence spending under this government. He found that the government, which announced investments that never materialized, was responsible for a shortfall of \$10 billion between 2017 and 2021. It kept putting things off and saying it would do something later, but ultimately nothing got done. This does not come from us, it comes from the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Today's debate is crucial. It is about the responsibility that we, as Canadians, have to the world. Our country made a commitment in 2014, along with all of our NATO allies, to make investments over the next 10 years with a goal of hitting 2% of GDP. Eight years later, we are at 1.36%. This government has failed, but it is never too late to do the right thing. We need spending, hiring, and careful, intelligent management—not to make us happy, but to fully ensure our soldiers' legacy. They have been serving for more than a century and have always been on the right side of history. We need to preserve their legacy and ensure that this great Canadian military tradition continues.

Business of Supply

• (1245)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his eloquent and clear speech.

I was reading the summary of the bill this morning and I was ashamed. It is embarrassing to read that billions of dollars are being poured into four old, leaky submarines and used planes, especially since the government first cancelled the purchase of these planes only to turn around and decide to buy them anyway. I would like to hear my colleague's opinion, which is usually interesting. Let us rise above partisanship. I know that the Liberals will say that the Conservatives are the ones who made budget cuts, but that is not what we are talking about.

How can we depoliticize this procurement system and finally show a modicum of respect to the men and women who agree to risk their lives for our security and safety?

This is not trivial. When I read that, I feel it is very disrespectful to the members of our armed forces. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, whom I also find to be very interesting. I do not always fully agree with him. Actually, to be honest, I rarely agree with him, but he is still a member who deserves and commands respect. I hold him in high regard.

I think the member's approach is the right approach. When it comes to national defence, and similarly when it comes to a national health crisis like the one we have been experiencing for the past two years, we must put aside political partisanship. There are a thousand and one appropriate ways to fight good political battles. I rather enjoy that, as everyone knows. I am sure my colleague also likes a good political squabble. However, there are some issues that should not be politicized, but we understand that too. We must bear that in mind.

We, Quebeckers, Canadians, the citizens of planet Earth, are unfortunately being forced to deal with Mr. Putin's Russia and its aggression. Indeed, the experts knew this was coming. Some sounded the alarm at the time, during the events in Crimea. It happened in the Donbass as well, but did we really think we would ever see this in our lifetime, that is, the return of a traditional war like 73 years ago? The answer is no.

That is why we must always bear in mind, as the hon. member so rightly said, that the men and women who wear the uniform risk their lives doing so, and we must think of them and of all humanity. Let us leave the political bickering to other issues.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think Canada as a nation has demonstrated in many ways the importance of NATO as an organization. In fact, I believe we have participated in every mission NATO has brought forward to our allied countries, and I am wondering if my friend could provide his thoughts in regard to Canada being one of the 12 founding members of NATO. I think that is one of the reasons we stand pret-

ty high, based on our population and resources, in terms of showing strong leadership on the file.

Could the member provide his thoughts on why it is so critically important that Canada be there to support NATO, as it has in the past and no doubt will continue to do in the future?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, at the famous Battle of Vimy Ridge, Canada became a nation, according to Brigadier-General Ross, who said that in speaking about 1917. In the Second World War our country was again there at the right time with the right people on the right side. This is why we play an important role in history. This is why we were part of NORAD in 1949. This is why, more than ever, what we are asking of the Canadian government is to be sure that we will continue that great tradition of being on the right side.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, in Canadian procurement, what I have seen during my tenure here is that if something moves, we have a hard time buying it and there is always a problem. It does not matter if it is trucks, submarines or planes; it has been one thing after another.

I know that a lot of countries use procurement for defence and also for reindustrialization. I have a quick question for my colleague about that. Most recently we turned down an aircraft that would have resulted in more procurement in Canada than the F-35, which involves less domestic procurement. If the government is asking for a budgetary increase, should we not have a connection to actually buy Canadian?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, we have to be very careful on that, because the government's money is not the government's money. It is the taxpayers' money, and we have to be very responsible with it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to split my time with the member for Mount Royal.

I would like to start by commenting in regard to what is happening in Ukraine today. What we see on the nightly news and throughout the day are the horrific pictures and the horrors of war clearly demonstrated in what is happening in Europe today. Reflecting on that, we get a better understanding and appreciation of why NATO as an organization is so incredibly important to world peace. Would it not be wonderful if we did not have to spend any dollars, whether here in Canada or any other country in the world, to have to deal with military buildups and equipment and machinery? However, we need to be realistic. There is an obligation to provide citizens around the world and us here in Canada with a sense of security, and more than just a sense. It has to be tangible.

Business of Supply

Canada is a nation of 38 million people. If there were no allied countries or organization such as NATO, I would argue we would have to spend a great deal more money than 2% of GDP to protect our sovereignty. However, because our forefathers brought NATO forward as an organization, we are now in alliance with 29 other nations. Including Canada, there are 30 nations in total. As I pointed out for my friend across the way, it is important to recognize that Canada has been there from the very beginning of NATO. We are one of the 12 founding countries of NATO. The makeup of NATO is in essence 28 countries in Europe, and Canada and the United States. NATO was formed because of World War I and World War II, when we saw the need for allied countries.

One of the members opposite made reference to President Obama coming to Canada. I remember well that he presented to all of us, including you, Madam Speaker. He talked about that special friendship between Canada and U.S.A., but in that speech he also made reference to the need for Canada to do more in terms of its contribution to NATO from a financial point of view and a budgetary perspective.

I raised the question in the manner in which I did because I understand why President Obama raised the issue. Just three years earlier, Stephen Harper actually had military expenditure per capita at less than 1%. In the dying days of the Conservative government, less than 1% of GDP was going toward the Canadian Forces. There were, in fact, cuts under the Conservative government, and that was at great cost.

I had the honour of serving in the Canadian Forces for just over three years. I was posted to Edmonton. I was associated with 435 Squadron, which was search and rescue, and I assisted at times. If I was not in the tower, I was in the hangar assisting 435 Squadron pilots to file their flight plans. At that time, we were flying the C-130 Hercules aircraft, a beautiful aircraft still in use today. I am talking about the early 1980s. I am a little older than I look, perhaps.

About four years ago, I had the privilege to be with 435 Squadron again. It was in the city of Winnipeg, because it had relocated from Edmonton to Winnipeg. There was an announcement, which I had the privilege of making, that we were replacing our Hercules aircraft with the new Kingfisher aircraft.

• (1255)

From the C-130, we went to the C-295. It is an amazing aircraft. I had the opportunity to tour it. I had been in many C-130s, and this was the first time I had been in the Kingfisher. It is an incredible aircraft. If we want to talk about modernization, there are computers not only in the cockpit but also in the fuselage. Aircrew could actually see very minute details of the ground from thousands of feet in the air.

I say that because as a government, whether through our current minister or the minister before her, we have recognized how important it was to invest, in real terms, in the Canadian Armed Forces. We often hear members of this House on all sides talking, and justifiably so, about how wonderful our armed forces members are. We have to make sure that when they go on NATO missions or search and rescue missions, they have the right equipment, whether it is through reconstructing or building a ship, purchasing search and rescue aircraft, providing the armaments that are necessary for our

men and women in the field or, in the most recent announcement, procuring and purchasing the F-35s.

Again, when I was in the tower, I saw those beautiful F-18s, and they are a first-class aircraft, but they do need to be replaced. The F-35 is our future fighter plane. It went through a process that will ultimately deliver a world-class fighter jet to the members of our forces. I listened to the comments, and just before I stood up there was reference to our military industries here in Canada. Magellan Aerospace, which is based in Winnipeg, manufactures wings for the F-35 today, at least in good part. They have been doing that for years under an international agreement that allows for that industry to continue to grow here in Canada.

Some members here might remember the Avro Arrow, an aircraft that never materialized because the then-Conservative government killed the program. We had incredible leading science and technology in that aircraft, and it was all lost because the plane was cancelled. The technology went to the United States.

When I talk about the F-35 and the procurement process, I know we value our aerospace industry, whether it is in the province of Quebec, Manitoba, Ontario, B.C. or other jurisdictions. We understand the relation between building up our military and supporting the development of that technology here in Canada, and there are ample examples. The best sniper weapons in the world are manufactured, arguably, right here in Canada. All sorts of armaments actually come from Canada.

In terms of expenditures, we have consistently been investing more in our forces and we have substantial commitments going forward, and in a couple of days we will hear even more tangible numbers coming from the Minister of Finance. I assure Canadians that the Government of Canada understands the importance of NATO and the leadership role we need to play, and we understand the industry here in Canada.

• (1300)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague on the other side for his interjection. For the most part it was really good, other than the partisan aspects of it, and I will not get into the personal side in the House.

Based on the member's speech, I think he fully recognizes the capacity and requirement needed by our Canadian Armed Forces and by Canada, considering how volatile the world is and how the global situation is so complicated. Based on his speech, my question is very simple. I think he should be supporting this motion today. Will he support this motion to invest and meet our NATO obligation if he truly believes it is important for Canada to meet our obligations on the world stage?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that I will not disappoint the member opposite when it comes to recognizing the importance of NATO as an organization.

Business of Supply

One of the member's colleagues made reference to Russia earlier this morning and talked about the military contribution from its treasury, which is immense if we take a look at the equipment it has, its population base and so forth. As a democratic, free country and a part of the alliance, one of the reasons that we are not prepared to commit to that is because it would have a huge social cost. Collectively, as a group of 30 nations, we are able to protect, through solidarity, that group of people against the greatest potential threats in the world, which could be from a country such as China or definitely from a country such as Russia. It is one of the ways in which we can have a loud voice in ensuring world security.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, with regard to the F-35 fighter jets and recruiting, we are told that there is no recruitment problem, but there is a retention problem.

When I look at the entirely deficient military procurement program, I cannot help but wonder if we will ever get any pilots in planes.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I sure hope we will. I believe we will. In fact, in my home province of Manitoba, a lot of pilots are actually trained who will ultimately fly our future F-35s.

One of the nice things about Canada is that, around the world, we are often recognized for our expertise in training jet pilots. In fact, we can take a look at some of our incredible bases, whether in Bagotville, Quebec, where the Voodoo was the supreme aircraft at one point, or in Cold Lake with the F-18s. If we take a look at the war games that are played, it is Canadian pilots who often get the recognition as world-class pilots. We would have seen that even during the world wars.

In Canada, because of our air space and training, we train the very best. Not only will we be training Canadian pilots, we will be training pilots to serve in NATO-allied countries around the world; at least, I hope we would continue to do so.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am really glad that today we are talking about making sure that the men and women in the Canadian military are actually getting support so that they have the equipment they need to do the jobs they need to do. What we are not talking enough about today is the most important piece of equipment we have: That is the men and women in the Canadian military. I want to thank every one of them for their service and sacrifice to this country.

We saw the Conservatives cut a third of Veterans Affairs. They closed veterans offices, which led to a major backlog. Over 40,000 veterans are still waiting for their disability management applications to be opened. Now, the Liberals have promised to fix it, but they have been partially doing it through casework managers who are on temporary contracts.

My question is this. When are the Liberals actually going to re-hire all of those employees who were cut from Veterans Affairs and end the backlog, so that veterans who have put their lives on the

line to serve our country and do the hard work are getting the support that they deserve and need?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, during the early eighties on parade, I would often march with World War II and even World War I veterans. After the parades, we would go to the Legion where we would hear the stories of World War II. Grown men, seniors, were in tears explaining the types of things that they had to go through.

I believe the impressions that I have been given over the years, and from what I understand of my caucus colleagues, we will continue to be there for vets, because we understand the sacrifices they have made.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak in today's debate and I want to thank my colleague for South Surrey—White Rock for having put forward this very important motion. It is a very timely motion that I will support.

I have been calling for quite a long time for defence spending to be increased. I believe that it is something we owe to the men and women of our Armed Forces, to make sure that those brave men and women who fight for Canada, who devote and sacrifice their time and their family lives so that our country is well defended here and abroad, have all of the equipment, services, support and training they need to flourish.

I do not believe that Canada's military should be anything less than a great military organization. We have the 10th-biggest GDP in the world. We should have a fighting force that is equipped and ready to fit that representation of a country that has the 10th-biggest GDP in the world. For me, this is a very important motion to recognize that while it is true that we have increased the spending on the military, we still need to do more to meet our NATO target of 2%. In 2013, our spending was about 1%, compared with about 1.37% today.

To remind us of that, I appreciate that. I also appreciate it being done at this time. Canadians, for the first time in my political career, are actually beginning to recognize the importance of spending on our Armed Forces with this conflict in Ukraine, and the Russians' horrible aggression under the very, very bad Vladimir Putin. He is definitely a war criminal. What he and his henchmen and his military have done in Ukraine by starting a war in Europe, the first major war since the Second World War, is something that Canadians have looked at by seeing the images on TV. It is different from the Second World War, when people received news from newspaper reports days later. They saw things on film, but they did not see things instantaneously on television. Canadians are rightly horrified by what is happening. They are saying that Canada really needs to be part of defending Ukraine.

Business of Supply

I have been proud of what we and our NATO allies have done. Our NATO allies and Canada have really stepped up to the plate, whether by sending humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, sending military assistance to Ukraine, or providing training over the years for over 33,000 troops in Ukraine who have helped Ukrainians on the ground to counter Russian aggression. With respect to the assistance we are going to be providing to those Ukrainians who want to come to Canada, whether temporarily or permanently, I think Canada has really stepped up. The fact that we are sending the HMCS *Halifax*, a second frigate, to Europe to join NATO military forces is really important.

What we are doing in Latvia is also really important. The Aurora maritime patrol that has been transferred to NATO command is important. The fact that we are commencing our next rotation of NATO-enhanced air policing in Romania is important. The extension of our commitment is important, and 3,400 Canadian Armed Forces are on high readiness in case they need to go to Europe. That is important. I want to again thank those men and women of our armed forces for all of the incredible work they do.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank our veterans. I met veterans for the first time when I was elected to be a councillor. I was very young, just 23 years old. We had a legion full of Second World War veterans. When they came back, they built communities in my riding such as the city of Côte Saint-Luc, where I served as mayor; the town of Hampstead; and the town of Mount Royal, the part of Montreal that I represent. They were very brave veterans who left Canada, Montreal and Quebec when they were 18 years old to go fight in the Second World War. They came back, they did not complain, they volunteered, they created our communities. Every year, crowds of people came out to parades. Nowadays, there are very few people from the Second World War left in the parades. They cannot do it anymore. We have to remember what they went through.

I also want to take this opportunity to talk about how important it is to provide substantively equal services to veterans in both official languages. What I mean is that processing time for complaints and documents submitted in French should be the same as for those submitted in English.

That is one thing I will continue fighting for.

[*English*]

I appreciate the way the House has treated this topic in a non-partisan way, because there are a lot of things we can argue about. I heard the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent say that before. There are a lot of things we can argue about, but defending our country is not one of them. The support for our armed forces is not one of them. The support for our veterans is not one of them. I have been so heartened to see this House's unanimous support for Ukraine, and the fact that there were no dissenting voices in imposing sanctions on Russia or on all of the actions we have taken to support Ukrainians in this terrible battle that Russia and Vladimir Putin have started.

This motion also importantly reflects the new geopolitical realities in the world. Although it has been a threat for a long time, we

are now at a time where Russia is finally seen to be the true threat that it is, whether it is in cybersecurity or our Arctic. We are a neighbour of Russia. We need to be prepared for that Russian threat. Russia is pushing China, as well, in this regard. China is watching carefully, in terms of Taiwan, what Russia is doing in Ukraine to see if it can get away with something. We need to be prepared, as NATO allies and as Canadians, to stand true.

The final thing on that point is that, when it comes time to look at our geopolitical realities, we also have to look at whether we can always depend on the United States and NORAD to defend us. I want to particularly thank President Biden, because the United States is the world's strongest democracy. It has the strongest armed forces in the world. We rely, as do our NATO allies, on U.S. leadership when it comes to taking on a worldwide nuclear power such as Russia. The United States' Secretary Blinken and President Biden have consulted with us and with NATO allies. They have done all kinds of things to show the leadership that was missing in the previous Trump administration.

What I saw during the Trump administration was that we could not necessarily rely on the United States, under a president like Donald Trump, to step up and defend Canada in every single way. Canada needs to be prepared more than we have been to defend ourselves. We hope we will always have our best friend and ally, the United States, in our corner, but we need to make sure that we not only step up to the plate to share the responsibility to defend our continent with the United States, but that we are prepared even if they are not there for us.

This motion says we should increase the percentage of defence spending to meet those NATO targets. Although we are on track to improve, I want to say that it is so important to get to that 2% and make sure that we are properly equipped and properly trained, and it is important that all the men and women who have given so much to Canada, whether in the past or today, get exactly what they deserve: the best support possible from all parties in the Canadian Parliament.

• (1315)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary being up front in his support of our Canadian Armed Forces and this motion.

My specific question for him is around his role as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. If we are going to get that 2% spending, a large proportion of it is going to be through procuring the right equipment in a timely fashion. I would argue that historically, regardless of the stripe of government over the past number of decades, part of the reason we failed to expend all our defence money was because of political interference in our procurement process.

What is the member specifically going to do in his role as the parliamentary secretary to speed up and facilitate our procurement process for the Canadian Armed Forces?

Business of Supply

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, let us be very clear that there should be no politicization of the procurement process. We have heard that from every side, and there should not be. No party should take credit for procurements. We should all be working together as best as possible across party lines to make sure procurement happens with all of the different trade-offs that we agree on. There are things that we could buy faster if we did not buy them here in Canada, or if we did not insist on Canadian industrial participation. There are things we might be able to buy off the shelf that we would otherwise customize. We all need to work together to make sure we get procurement right.

We have a minister, who, I have to say, is a pleasure to work with every day. I know her biggest priority is to make sure that the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces get the equipment that they need as quickly as they can, according to the process set by the House, and to work with everyone to do that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement for his excellent speech, which made it clear that he cares about workers. That is what I want to talk about.

When we talk about the national defence budget and the need to achieve the percentage of the GDP set by NATO, of course we have to think about procurement, but we also have to think about the people on the front lines using the new equipment. That is my major concern.

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities is currently conducting a study on the labour shortage. Yesterday, to my great surprise, the committee welcomed Canada's national police, the RCMP, who came to talk to us about the labour shortage. It is the same thing for the Canadian Forces. People need to enlist.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I thank one of my favourite members on that side of the House for raising this issue. I completely agree with her.

The labour shortage is a problem not only in Quebec, but across Canada. We need to find ways to get employees. We have to make the immigration process easier since that seems to be an excellent solution to this problem. Training people is another excellent solution.

Part of this budget should certainly be devoted to hiring so that we can ensure that we have the necessary number of employees to carry out all the possible roles. I will give the example of veterans to process veterans' files more quickly.

• (1320)

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way discussed procurement difficulties and streamlining the process, and one thing has been put forward on that. The Prime Minister has mandate letters to the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Procurement and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans directing them to establish a centralized pro-

urement process under a new department called “defence procurement Canada”. This has yet to be fulfilled.

Can the hon. parliamentary secretary indicate to us when this might be expected?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I believe that was in the 2019 mandate letters. I do not believe it was in the 2021 mandate letters, so I cannot speak to that issue.

What I can speak to is that everybody needs to work across departments as best as possible to make sure that procurement happens in a timely way. I know that all of these departments are committed to doing that.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Mount Royal, particularly for the passion and heart he gave in his speech, as opposed to talking points.

Other members have called out that this motion speaks to an increase of \$28 billion. Some, including the member for London—Fanshawe, have shared that this seems like a fairly arbitrary amount.

Can the member share why that amount specifically is necessary?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I will refer to the Wales Summit Declaration, which does not exactly give 2% but targets 2%. I think the Wales Summit Declaration is self-explanatory and I encourage the member to read it.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a true honour to enter debate in this place. I will start by saying that the circumstances under which we are debating this motion are so relevant. We see each day, on television, social media and through reports from Ukraine, the despicable images and consequences of Putin and Russia's aggression against the state of Ukraine. I am here to stand up, once again, in this place to say that unequivocally we need to stand with the people of Ukraine and do everything we can to ensure that the people of Ukraine and the state of Ukraine are victorious against Russian aggression.

As I enter into debate, I note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

We are debating a very important motion that simply says Canada needs to uphold its obligation as a member of NATO, and a founding member at that, a defence organization that, for the last 70 years, has had a significant role in ensuring that global peace has been preserved. We see today a significant threat to that peace that we have enjoyed for so many decades, and I agree with the perception that we are at a time when we may be seeing, since World War II, the greatest threat to the peace we have enjoyed over the last seven decades. It is absolutely essential that we look at our approach to organizations like NATO and make sure that we follow through on the commitments that have been made.

Business of Supply

As referenced by a number of speakers, both from the official opposition and other parties, there is a reason and explanation for the 2%-of-GDP expectation. The target that a nation spends 2% of its GDP on its military is to ensure that we are equipped to defend ourselves, our allies and NATO partners against the instability that can exist in our world. This is very present.

I would like to take a brief step back. What I have found interesting is that over the last number of months, there have been a host of issues, defence being paramount as we discuss the motion put forward by the Conservative shadow minister of defence, the member for South Surrey—White Rock. In this whole host of other issues, we are seeing issues the Conservatives have prioritized over the last number of years, like energy security. That is incredibly relevant today and is not that disconnected from the reality that our nation faces in terms of Ukraine and where we are in the world.

I find it fascinating that even today there was an announcement from the White House in the United States that it is going to ask Canada for more energy. It is tragically ironic, I would suggest, that we are at a place where, had the Liberals listened to what the Conservatives have been supporting the entire way along, we would have the capacity to simply provide the United States the energy it needs to reduce or eliminate its dependence on Russia oil, in addition to being able to displace Russian oil and gas from Europe.

On COVID, we see the Conservatives have been advocating for a common-sense approach to policies that we see being adopted not just by provincial governments across Canada, but by others around the world. It is a more pragmatic, realistic and longer-term approach to the pandemic.

On foreign policy and the need for strength in our foreign policy, the Conservatives have been calling for that, not to simply position Canada as convener, nor to simply have a movie-star-type leadership that positions itself with the “all things woke culture” type narrative when travelling on the international stage. We need to be a leader when it comes to global affairs and to be respected for the principles that Canada has, for so long, stood up and been proud to defend.

● (1325)

When it comes to budgets and fiscal policy, it is a bit like *déjà vu*. The Conservatives have been talking over the last seven years or so about how we need to ensure there is fiscal restraint. Even in the week prior to the pandemic breaking out and it being official positioned as a global pandemic, the Conservatives were debating that in this place. I remember that two years ago, the Liberals were laughing at the Conservatives for saying that we needed to have a fiscal and monetary policy that reflected the reality we face so that when we faced a crisis we would be well positioned.

I cannot help but think, whether it is the very important issue we are debating today or the host of issues that our nation is facing, that had the Liberals listened to what the Conservatives have been saying over the last six or seven years, we might be in a very different position. I suggest that the clearest examples of this today, which specifically relate to the motion regarding NATO, are two very closely connected issues.

Number one is the fact that we need to have a modern, equipped military. I am pleased that the Liberals finally, albeit seven years too late, have committed to ensuring that Canada's air force is equipped with the best modern technology. I am not sure if the Liberals remember this, but they actually promised they would not do that. It is unfortunate that they are flip-flopping and flip-flopping again. The misleading rhetoric that has existed over the last six or so years has led to Canada being six or seven years behind when it comes to Canada's air force having the equipment required to do its job.

Closely related to that, it is important for me to acknowledge to the House that although the government made an announcement saying they were going to acquire the F-35s, which was in a great press conference where they were boasting about having come to this decision and whatnot, they refused to acknowledge that we have actually invested hundreds of millions of dollars over the last couple of decades in the joint fighter task force. These are all things that both the Liberals and Conservatives had supported, but they, of course, did not want to give Stephen Harper any credit for that. When it comes to the reality we are facing, they have not even committed to purchasing the F-35s. I would love to hear in this place today not just a commitment to negotiate, but a commitment to actually see these aircraft purchased.

When it comes to our northern sovereignty, it is a sad state of affairs that we have, over the last six or seven years, seen a significant diminishment in our national efforts to see that our north is strong and secure and that there is economic development to ensure that our military installations have everything they need. I come from a resource-rich area of our country. I hear often from constituents who say that, when talking about resources and the potential that exists in our country, they look at east central Alberta, which is, I would suggest, one of the most, if not the most, beautiful regions in not just our country but the world. They also look across north, east, south and west. They look across our country and see the potential that exists.

I find that through what seems like systematic efforts, the government has reduced the ability of our north to develop and has limited our military's ability to defend. The fact is that we do not have the equipped fighting force that would be required to defend our north, if that were to ever happen.

I am proud to stand today in this place, as I mentioned at the beginning, not just to support the people of Ukraine and ensure that Canada, as a proud founding member of NATO, has the tools that it needs to be a strong partner in defence, but also to ensure that Canada is the world leader that it should be. I find it absolutely tragic that over the last number of years we have seen our position on the world stage diminished.

With that, I look forward to answering questions.

Business of Supply

• (1330)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the Conservatives really do not want us to keep bringing up the Harper years, perhaps members of the House should not stand here and ask us to pay credit to Stephen Harper, as this member just did. Since he did that, allow me to ask him what Stephen Harper's objective was. The member complained about the last seven years. How about the time before that when Stephen Harper was spending less than 1% of GDP on our military? How does he justify his need for Stephen Harper to be praised when Stephen Harper was not even spending 1% of GDP?

Please do not respond to this question by somehow suggesting I should not be bringing up Stephen Harper because so much time has passed, when the member himself brought it up. I ask him to just answer my question. How does Stephen Harper somehow get the opportunity to be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot has the floor.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I suppose his indignation is justified with how the Liberals have failed so miserably on the defence file.

Let me list a few of the successful procurement projects that existed under the Harper government. There was the purchase of five C-17 Globemaster transport planes, the 17 CC-130J Hercules transport planes, the 15 Chinook helicopters, the Leopard 2 tanks, the modernized CP-140 Aurora surveillance planes, the modernization of the *Halifax*-class frigates and the acquisition of the *Asterix* auxiliary oil replenishment vessel, which is a contract the Liberals tried to cancel despite Admiral Norman's objections.

I could go on, but let me look back a little further. The amount of work Stephen Harper did to rebuild our military after the decade of darkness that I hear about every single time I—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to give me a ray of hope. I understand all the factors underlying his positions. I understand that the member represents an oil-producing riding. I understand that people are asking him to get the oil out and sell it.

However, does he also realize that the time has come to start the climate transition? Does he also realize that the Bloc's position does not go against his constituents, but supports the entire planet?

We are prepared to leave the \$14 billion my colleague mentioned earlier that is invested every year in the oil sands, but it must be used to start a transition. Can my colleague give me a glimmer of hope by acknowledging that we must start thinking about making the transition?

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, with respect to the member, I will say two things. One, the reality is that resource develop-

ment is provincial jurisdiction. As I respect Quebec, I ask that he simply respects Alberta. Two, if he is concerned about the \$14 billion being invested in our oil sands, maybe Quebec could give back the \$13 billion in net transfer it received because of the prosperity the province of Alberta has seen.

When it comes to ensuring my province and all of Canada are secure in the midst of the challenges we face in the world, we need to be a country that simply says yes again. We need to say yes to resource projects, yes to green technologies and yes to manufacturing and development. We need to finally say yes again.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, as I listen to the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot, I am trying to wrap my head around the fact that just yesterday he was part of a group of parliamentarians who put forward a motion talking about fiscal responsibility and no new taxes, and today he is speaking about one that would propose an additional \$28 billion in spending.

Can the member share more about how he would want to go about this additional new \$28-billion investment?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, when it comes to the full re-evaluation of what needs to be accomplished in terms of how the government spends its money, I agree entirely. I believe we need to fulfill our international obligations when it comes to NATO's 2%. I believe that is required to ensure our military is well equipped and that we can play the rightful role Canada has when it comes to our place in the world.

When it comes to ensuring Canada is well positioned and well funded, let us be a country that prospers again. As we have seen in Alberta, when Canada prospers, when Alberta prospers, we can in fact increase the spending on the needed things to ensure that our country is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, especially on such an important issue as this one.

I am going to be speaking in favour of this motion. This is an important issue not just generally, but because we are in a different world. The world changed in 2014. The world also changed again a couple of months ago. We are debating here today an issue that should cross party lines.

Business of Supply

I would like to thank the member for Mount Royal for his speech, and I see him speaking with the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, a veteran, and I would like to thank him for his service. I learned in the speech from the member for Winnipeg North that he is also a veteran. I thank him for his service, as I thank also the member for Cumberland—Colchester. I thank them all for their service.

Before I really get into the speech, I also want to recognize a member of my riding. That is Master Corporal Erin Doyle, with whom I went to high school. I have fond memories of him shouting my last name as we walked down the hallways. He was a veteran who was killed in Afghanistan, and I am going to take a moment of silence to remember his life.

I want to point out as well the excellent work done by the Rocky Mountain Rangers, which I consider to be one of the crown jewels of my riding. They are led by Lieutenant-Colonel Amadeo Vecchio. He is quite a leader, somebody who has given himself to this country both as a police officer and in his lifelong service to the armed forces. I also want to recognize my friend, Corporal Michael Bosa.

I am, admittedly, fairly new to the House of Commons. I may not have the institutional knowledge that some of the people here have. That being said, despite still learning, I have tremendous pride as a Canadian, just as most people in the House have a lot of pride. I have pride in the military. One of the first places I visited as a parliamentarian was the Room of Remembrance. It is one of my favourite places to go when I am in West Block.

Where I would like to see improvements is in our military spending. Canada has a proud history. We have a history of intervening, of peacekeeping, of making a difference and of more than just convening. When I think about our achievements and our interventions as a military, I think about Juno Beach, where right now it is being contemplated that condominiums will be built on what should otherwise be a sacrosanct space, and I think about Vimy Ridge, which in just a few days will be celebrating its 105th anniversary. I am going to be proud to be present there to commemorate that with the Minister of Veterans Affairs and other parliamentarians. The Battle of Vimy Ridge stands out in this nation's history. That is a time when we were obviously proud of our military and proud of our history, and I want to restore that pride. That is one reason I am in favour of this motion.

Simply put, we need greater political leadership and a will when it comes to the military and when it comes to meeting our NATO commitments, but we should not be seeking to meet the NATO commitments for the sake of meeting them. Yes, it is important that we meet our international commitments; that is an obvious no-brainer. When we commit to something, we should do it, and too frequently we slough our commitments aside once they fade from the public eye. However, we need to honour that commitment, because it is good for Canada, it is good for our brave soldiers and it is good for the security and sovereignty of this brave nation.

● (1340)

That is why I am so pleased that we are buying the F-35 jets. Our F-18s are an aging fleet that should have been replaced many years ago. Therefore, while I am pleased that we are buying F-35 jets, I am disheartened that we took seven years to do so. Those seven

years involved years of lost training, years of waiting for procurement, paying for outdated Australian jets and, once we got those Australian jets, paying for the necessary upgrades in our own military and for the new jets that we got. We need to give our soldiers the best equipment. Let us not forget that these people who don our uniform are prepared, each and every day they put on that uniform, to make the ultimate sacrifice. The least we could do is to give them the best equipment possible, regardless of the cost.

I know that Canada ranks 25 out of 30 when it comes to NATO countries' spending. This may have been acceptable in the past, but, as I said at the outset, the world has changed. We are in a different world and with a different world comes different military spending.

We have Arctic sovereignty that worries me and that worries, and should worry, other people in the House. The Russia that has invaded Ukraine and has committed war crimes against Ukraine is perilously close to the Canadian Arctic and that is something we often forget. My understanding is that Russia has over 40 armed ice-breakers. Canada has one. That is a statistic that should alarm all Canadians. Our Arctic is not that far. Our Arctic is also an area where Russia has asserted its sovereignty.

The international community is not *ad idem* when it comes to Canada's land boundaries. While it may be very clear to us as Canadians that our land extends well into the Arctic, into what has always been recognized as Canadian land, that may not be recognized by our allies and certainly will not be recognized by the Russia that seeks the natural resources in that area, that invaded Ukraine and that is currently perpetuating war crimes against innocent civilians and children in Ukraine. I do not presume that Putin will be rational, and we have him essentially on our doorstep in the Arctic.

Let us not make any mistake. There could come a time when somebody wants Canadian land. I hope it never comes to be. I am sure Ukrainians hoped it would never come to be. I would love for the Minister of National Defence to come to the House and tell us what we would do in the event of an Arctic invasion and what we would do in the event of a Canadian invasion. While that may have been something we said years ago would never happen, as I said at the outset, we are in a different world. Gone are the days when we said our allies will handle it. We have no guarantees at this point as to the recognition of our international borders.

I wish to highlight, in closing, that a number of the points that I am making today were made in a Senate report in April 2017, titled "Military Underfunded: The Walk Must Match the Talk". In that report, the Senate made a number of recommendations including at that time increasing spending to 1.5% of GDP and to 2% by 2028. The time has come to speed that up. We are not at 1.5%. I implore the finance minister in our upcoming budget to increase military spending to 2%.

• (1345)

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 purchase of the F-35 was seven years too late, and the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is clapping to that.

I am curious if the member could explain to the House how he came to that determination. Stephen Harper upgraded the CF-18s between 2007 and 2010, so when he says it is seven years too late, what was magic about seven years ago? Did these planes not just get upgraded between 2007 and 2010 by Stephen Harper? What happened in 2015, seven years ago? Was it just an election, and therefore, when it should have happened?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, what happened is that the member's party said it would not buy the jets, rather than entertaining buying the jets. It is a decision that should have been made. It was an election promise that was followed through on. In my view, that was an election promise that should not have been made. Now we have a reckoning in 2022 that it was the wrong decision. That is why 2015 is the magic number.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.*

I would like to ask the member about investments in the Arctic. What importance would he place in engaging the Inuit in the Arctic and ensuring it is the Inuit who are able to invest in protecting their own lands? As we know, Arctic sovereignty has been the greatest initiative in Canada. What would he do to make improvements so that our Arctic sovereignty includes the Inuit in the Arctic?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, it has been a pleasure getting to know my hon. colleague over the past few months, and I look forward to hearing more.

Reconciliation applies here too. Part of what we have to do is involve our stakeholders and rights holders in the Arctic. When it comes to maintaining Arctic sovereignty with the Inuit, they should have not just a seat at the table, but the primary seat at the table, because let us face it, they have a key voice, likely the most key voice, and it should be present. I would love to hear from them on that.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention.

He spoke a lot about the importance of being properly equipped to protect the Arctic. However, having equipment without personnel is of no use. The retention and recruitment of personnel for the Canadian Armed Forces is a challenge, and it is important to change the image of the armed forces.

In the last Parliament, I studied the issue of sexual assault at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. My colleague said that he is new to politics, but I would like him to state his position because we will have to intervene. His party did appoint General Vance. This file on the allegations has existed for a long time. Now it is important to take action. There are solutions in Justice Deschamps' report.

Business of Supply

What are my colleague's views on the importance of taking action and no longer appointing people who believe they are above everyone else and who continued to perpetuate a culture of toxic masculinity in the Canadian Armed Forces, which hindered the recruitment of women?

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for raising a very important point. I too was disheartened not only when I learned about the allegations but also when I saw that General Vance received a conditional discharge in relation to a finding of obstruction of justice.

I will not disparage the brave women and men who put on the uniform each and every day. I agree with the hon. member that we need a culture in the military that embraces vitality, diversity and safety. Whatever can be done to achieve that culture, so all people in the armed forces feel comfortable coming forward to serve their country, I will give my full support to.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, does the member not see the hypocrisy that could be perceived? President Obama is saying that the Conservative Party, back in 2013, spent less than 1% of the GDP on defence. Now the Conservative Party is advocating for 2%, yet when they were in government, they actually had less than 1%.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, in 2009 we had 1.37%. Let us talk about 2022, not 2014 or 2013. For one moment, can we please just park the partisan sanctimony?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I rise in the House today, on behalf of the residents in my riding of Davenport, as a proud Ukrainian Canadian and as the chair of the Canada NATO Parliamentary Association. At the outset, let me condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's unjustifiable and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and the enormous human suffering and destruction it has caused. Thousands of Ukrainians have died and entire cities have been destroyed.

Together with many partners, Canada referred Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine to the International Criminal Court in early March as a result of numerous allegations of serious international crimes by Russian forces, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. Reports of atrocities carried out by Russian forces have become more numerous and serious since that referral. Just these past few days, we have seen images of hundreds of innocent civilians brutally murdered in cold blood in Bucha. These are horrifying acts. Russia needs to be held accountable and brought to justice.

Putin's actions are an assault on the rules-based international order. They have shattered Euro-Atlantic security. Canada and our NATO allies and partners are responding to Putin's aggression with unprecedented sanctions as we continue to arm Ukrainians and provide them with the support they need to defend themselves.

Statements by Members

The Minister of Foreign Affairs will attend the upcoming NATO foreign ministerial meetings to coordinate Canada's support to Ukraine with our NATO allies. Foreign ministers will also look to collectively respond to global challenges with global partners while supporting regional ones in countering malign Russia influence and interference.

The ministerial meeting follows the extraordinary NATO leaders summit of March 24, which was attended by our Prime Minister. At that summit, NATO leaders agreed to provide further support to Ukraine, and they agreed on the need to reset NATO's deterrence and defence policies for the longer term to face a new security environment.

NATO is a defensive alliance founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. Its primary task is to guarantee the security of the Euro-Atlantic area and the one billion citizens of its 30 members. NATO has been a cornerstone of Canada's defence and security policies for the last 73 years, and we remain committed to the foundational principles that underpin European and global security. As such, we have contributed to nearly every major NATO military operation since 1949. We continue to provide a significant number of personnel to various organizations within the alliance, and we are the sixth largest financial contributor among our allies to NATO's common budget.

For years, NATO allies and our partners have provided extensive bilateral support to Ukraine to strengthen its military capabilities and capacity and to enhance its resilience. In the immediate lead-up and since Russia's invasion, NATO allies and partners significantly expanded that assistance, and they continue to provide Ukraine with the lethal and other critical military assistance it needs to defend itself. NATO allies have stepped up in other ways as well by also providing financial and humanitarian aid, which includes hosting millions of Ukrainian refugees.

Let me also recall the fact that Canada was the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence 30 years ago. Since then we have been resolute in our support for Ukraine and a strong advocate for its Euro-Atlantic integration. Canada has invested significantly in bilateral defence relations with Ukraine. We strongly supported granting Ukraine NATO-enhanced opportunity partner status in 2020 in order to deepen NATO-Ukraine relations.

In addition, Canada has also provided multifaceted assistance to support Ukraine's security, prosperity and reform objectives, including through the authorization of \$160 million in military aid. Canada's Operation Unifier has trained nearly 35,000 members of the Ukrainian military and security forces to date. The operation was recently extended and expanded. However, as a result of the current situation, the Canadian Armed Forces has temporarily moved its mission.

• (1355)

In response to Canada's action against Ukraine, NATO has deployed troops from both sides of the Atlantic and has increased its readiness to protect allied territory and guard against any spillover of the conflict. For the first time, the alliance has deployed the NATO response force for collective defence and deterrence. There are now hundreds of thousands of forces at heightened alert, as well as

around 40,000 troops under direct NATO command, mostly in the eastern part of the alliance.

This is backed up by major air and naval power, as well as air defence. NATO is establishing four multinational battle groups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, as well as strengthening battle groups already in the Baltic states and in Poland. Further steps are being taken to ensure the security and defence of allies across all domains with a 360° approach.

While these measures are preventative, proportionate and non-escalatory, there must be no doubt that our commitment to article 5 of the Washington treaty is ironclad. We will protect and defend every inch of NATO territory.

Following the deployment of an additional 460 soldiers to Operation Reassurance, Canada currently contributes approximately 1,375 troops to deterrence and assurance measures on NATO's eastern flank. These additional forces include ground troops for the Canada-led enhanced forward presence battle group in Latvia, and an additional frigate and patrol aircraft. As well, approximately 3,400 Canadian Armed Forces personnel across all branches of the service are authorized to deploy to the NATO response force, if they are required.

On March 8, the Prime Minister announced that Canada would renew its commitment to Operation Reassurance—

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member as it is time for Statements by Members. The hon. member will resume her speech after Oral Questions, and have time for questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, April marks national Sikh Heritage Month in Canada. During this month, we learn about the rich history, culture and religion of Sikhs in Canada and around the world. It is also a time to celebrate the journey of Canadian Sikhs in building a diverse Canada with their everyday contributions.

In April, the Sikh community celebrates Vaisakhi and Khalsa Day. This joyful day marks the start of a vibrant harvest season and signifies the founding of Khalsa in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, including his teachings of the oneness of humanity, equality, social justice, compassion and *seva* or selfless service. These are the core values of Sikhs and values that Canadians embrace.

I also want to commend Sikh organizations who are helping those in need during the pandemic and providing humanitarian aid to countries such as Haiti, Ukraine and many others.

On behalf of the residents of Brampton South, I wish everyone a happy Sikh Heritage Month and a happy Vaisakhi.

* * *

AUTISM MONTH

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, Lea-Anne and Sherri recently opened a respite program in my riding. It is called LIFE Day Respite Program Essex.

The program is designed to enhance the development of adults 19 years and older. It provides daily life experiences that guide people to their best ability. Their aim is to assist families by knowing that their loved ones are safe and cared for. They focus on activities such as going to the library, grocery shopping, physical and mental growth, therapeutic skills and social skills. Their program has open communication with each member and their support individuals.

This being World Autism Month, please join me in celebrating Lea-Anne and Sherri and thank them for such an important service to our community. I congratulate them on LIFE Day Respite Program Essex, and we thank them for helping to leave the world a better place.

* * *

PORT COQUITLAM HERITAGE SOCIETY

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the important work that the Port Coquitlam Heritage Society has done in documenting and uncovering our shared Canadian history.

Thanks to funds received through the Canada summer jobs program, the PoCo Heritage Society was able to catalogue and digitize its collection of well over 2,000 objects, including Second World War uniforms and antique traditional Chinese medicine bottles from the 1880s.

Through the diligent work of its staff and volunteers, including grade 10 student Queena Li, it translated the Mandarin inscriptions into English and learned more about the lives of the thousands of Chinese workers who came to Canada searching for opportunities and a better life. The railway would not have been built without their significant contributions, and B.C. would not be part of Canada.

I thank all the staff and volunteers at the Port Coquitlam Heritage Society. Their work ties us to our shared past and allows us to reflect and build upon the work of those who came before us to create a better future.

* * *

[Translation]

UNIVERSITY HOCKEY TEAM IN TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 3, the Patriotes of the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

Statements by Members

won the U Sports men's hockey championship for the fifth time in their history.

The victory did not come easy, however, as the Patriotes faced some never-before-seen adversity. They had to deal with a cancelled season, classes, practice, social activities on Zoom, a shortened season, a pandemic break and player departures. Nothing would stop these student athletes and their chants of “we want to play”.

United as never before, the team zeroed in on its destiny, going undefeated in the playoffs. They had to show resiliency one last time in the grand final, coming back from a two-goal deficit to win the game in double overtime. Alexis Gravel stopped 66 shots and Simon Lafrance scored the winning goal. Coach Marc-Étienne Hubert came in with an assist by kissing the blade of Simon's stick right before he scored the game-winning goal.

I am so proud to congratulate the entire Patriotes family. Go, Pats, go!

* * *

MOCK CABINET AT BOURASSA SCHOOL

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the honour, for the sixth consecutive year, of swearing in the mock cabinet of class 321 at École Jean-Nicolet in Bourassa.

This exercise started in 2009 as a way to teach kids aged 11 and 12 about good governance and democracy.

I marked the occasion by presenting a certificate to each cabinet member as their parents looked on. The cabinet is made up of the following members: Zachary Amécia, prime minister; Laettia George Désir, deputy prime minister; Ahmed Nabat, minister of justice; Lolanne Chapman, minister of the environment; Woody-Emmanuel Phileus, minister of sports and recreation; Ann-Clara François, minister of communications and technology; and Caner-William Bayram Lelièvre, minister of the public service.

I want to take this opportunity to commend their teacher, Kerline François, the vice-principal and all of the staff at École Jean-Nicolet.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

4-H IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian farmers and producers grow our food and literally keep our land. My riding of Tobique—Mactaquac is home to a wide variety of producers.

Statements by Members

A strong agricultural sector is so vital to our country and her future. Organizations like 4-H play an important role in training up the next generation of farmers and responsible citizens. Through programs like public speaking, animal care and farm experience, 4-H provides a valuable service and many amazing opportunities for its participants.

The 4-H community in western New Brunswick has suffered the devastating loss of two of its members over the past couple of years: Evan Graham and Cole Hunter. Those two outstanding young men were very involved with 4-H. I know their loss still weighs heavily on their families and our region.

Next week, at the 69th annual Carleton County Spring Show and Sale in Florenceville-Bristol, I look forward to seeing all the participants and volunteers. I have a feeling that there will be a couple of smiling faces watching over it all.

* * *

COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is Sikh Heritage Month. The Sikh community continues to enrich and strengthen Canada since the first gurdwara opened its doors more than 100 years ago in British Columbia. I would like to wish the Sikh community in my riding a very happy Sikh Heritage Month.

I would like to also extend my well wishes to the Muslim community in Cloverdale—Langley City. Saturday was the beginning of Ramadan, celebrated by thousands in the riding of Cloverdale—Langley City. Muslims of all different backgrounds will come together for Iftars and congregational prayers in-person for the first time in two years.

Ramadan Mubarak.

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PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on Premier Ford to reinstate funding for the Confederation GO station in my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. Not less than a year into his mandate, Premier Ford and his government cut the \$150-million planned investment for the Stoney Creek station. What was supposed to be a bustling GO station is today nothing more than a glorified bus stop and surface parking lot.

Everyone in the House knows the benefits that come with inter-regional transit investments. It helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions by taking thousands of vehicles off of our congested highways. It spurs residential and commercial investments, creating new jobs and new tax revenues for municipalities and other levels of government. It facilitates sustainable growth by encouraging development in our established urban boundaries.

Everly similar to the investment strategy adopted by the former Harper government, Premier Ford has created a system of haves and have-nots. It is time for Ontario's premier to realize the importance of the Confederation GO station and reinstate the investment he and his government cut in 2019.

VANCOUVER ROGUES RUGBY CLUB

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Vancouver Rogues are Canada's first gay and inclusive rugby club, originally active from 2001 to 2009. The club has been revived for the 2021-22 B.C. Rugby Union season, sponsored by the Meraloma Rugby Club.

The Rogues plan on being a permanent team with a mission to support under-represented communities in sport and to fight homophobic and transphobic behaviours both in sport and society. Last weekend's 52:10 win against Abbotsford rugby football club is the Rogues' first victory of the season and first win ever in club history. As a member of the opposing team, I offer a huge congratulations to the Rogues on their victory.

This August, the Rogues will represent B.C. at the Bingham Cup in Ottawa, the largest biannual amateur rugby tournament in the world. It brings together over 2,500 like-minded players from 60 countries to celebrate diversity and inclusivity and to show the world that rugby truly is a sport for everyone.

I look forward to seeing the Rogues kicking drop goals, rucking hard and tackling barriers in the years to come.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

AUTISM MONTH

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that Autism Month has begun. Yesterday, in my riding of Vimy, I had the honour of attending an event alongside people who are dedicated to the cause. I would like to thank and congratulate the Société de l'autisme et des TED de Laval for all of its work.

As the ambassador for the month, I would like to raise awareness about the challenges that people with autism face. The conference at the autism centre put the spotlight on facilities that are a critical part of caring for and supporting this community. I strongly encourage this model, which could serve as a reference for municipalities across the country.

[*English*]

Every person with autism is an individual, and people with autism have a lot to offer and teach us. They see the world from a different perspective and this brings many strengths that make the world a better place.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

ELIOT GRONDIN AND MARIE-PHILIP POULIN

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two athletes from my riding truly shone at the Beijing Olympics this winter: Eliot Grondin, from Sainte-Marie, and Marie-Philip Poulin, from Beauceville.

Having earned his ticket to Pyeongchang in 2018 at only 16 years old, Eliot has since honed his snowboard cross skills and literally rocketed through the course to stand on the podium twice, showing us his bright smile. He was already an inspiration to many young people in Beauce, and he has now become a legend.

What can I say about Marie-Philip, the “Captain Clutch” of the Canadian women's hockey team? In addition to being the flag bearer, she led her team to victory in the gold medal game. With the Olympics barely over, she is already dreaming of Italy 2026. She is the best hockey player in the world. She has four Olympic medals and has won many other championships, and she is always looking ahead. That is what I call determination.

I cannot help but think of their respective families and the sacrifices that have been made over the years so that they can shine. To Marie-Philip and Eliot, I want to say that Beauce is very proud of you.

* * *

[English]

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal vaccine mandates are hurting real people.

In my riding, an aspiring young astronomer, Chloe, cannot go to the NASA space camp. She is not vaccinated, but the camp has a no-vaccine requirement.

Another is Patrick, who followed public advice and got the very first vaccine available in Kazakhstan, the Russian Sputnik vaccine. He has confirmed he has antibodies and the best medical advice he has obtained is not to get another two rounds of the Pfizer vaccine. Now he cannot return to Kazakhstan to get back to work.

Several constituents have come to me with heartbreaking stories of being unable to fly to funerals for family members in Canada. Some were forced to drive thousands of kilometres in order to attend this end-of-life celebration.

Conservatives have been asking the NDP-Liberals for a plan on when these unjust federal mandates will end. They voted against it. We have asked for the data used to justify these measures. The transport minister has not provided it. The health minister promised to give us the documents he based his decisions on, and we are still waiting for them.

All the provinces have either ended the mandates or given the public the path to end these restrictions. To end the confusion, hurt and frustration, the answer is easy: end these punitive federal mandates.

[Translation]

FRENCH IN THE YUKON

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Yukon has Canada's third-largest per capita population of francophones, and the community is vibrant, engaged, diverse and growing.

The francophone renaissance in Yukon started in the 1970s after the passage of Canada's Official Languages Act. Strengthened by the federal government's engagement, Yukon's francophone community has grown in every way ever since.

Yukon will soon be opening a bilingual health care centre. Our third French first-language school is opening in Dawson City this fall, and enrolment in French immersion has skyrocketed.

People can now hear French all over Yukon. As a francophile, I am proud to see how much progress has been made since the adoption of Canada's Official Languages Act. Bill C-13 can take us even further by supporting our minority language communities and enhancing all of our lives.

* * *

[English]

RISE TOGETHER

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight the amazing work of an organization in my riding. Rise Together was started in January 2021 by Holly Smith and Trishna Gill. They are best friends and students at Oak Bay High. They help connect the community to support local organizations doing vital work.

Rise Together partners with local businesses to place donation jars at storefronts, creating an easy and accessible way for community members to donate. Each month, they bring attention to a new local initiative in need of support. Past organizations featured include the Rainbow Kitchen Society, 1Up Single Parent Resource Centre and the Victoria Women's Transition House.

They also bring the community together for charitable events. Rise Together's most recent collaboration is an art exhibit and silent auction in support of Ukraine. It is at Fortune Gallery from May 11 to May 13, and 100% of the proceeds will be donated to the Canada-Ukraine Foundation.

I thank Holly and Trishna for exemplifying the drive, passion and contributions of today's youth.

Oral Questions

● (1415)

[Translation]

INVISIBLE WORK DAY

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this date, April 5, let us recognize everything that gets done behind the scenes in our households. A disproportionate amount of the work done by caregivers and volunteers, often called invisible work, is done by women.

That is why, for the past 22 years, the AFEAS has been strongly encouraging us to take a day to reflect on what our society would be without invisible work, without all the often unacknowledged hours spent taking care of others. We are all invited to think about how best to ensure a fairer distribution of invisible work.

The pandemic amplified problems related to invisible work and its mental load. The public health crisis is not yet over, and women are still on the front lines. Today, let us acknowledge that by officially designating the second Tuesday in April as national invisible work day, an opportunity to think about all of the invisible work that is done on the other 364 days of the year.

Invisible work counts.

* * *

[English]

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the first NDP-Liberal budget in history coming in a few days, it is important to take stock of the world the millennial generation is inheriting.

Half of us will never be able to buy a home, despite Canada being the second-largest land mass on earth. There is plenty of land to build houses. Why is it getting less and less affordable to do so?

Around \$300 might buy someone four small bags of groceries, despite Canada having an abundance of arable farmland that is perfect for growing food. Why is it getting more and more expensive?

Today \$100 barely fills the tank of a small car, despite Canada having some of the largest carbon energy reserves in the world. Gas and transportation should be cheap, yet it has never been more costly.

This is the everyday life Canadian millennials are inheriting after six years of Liberal governance and its inflationary policies. Canadians cannot afford any more of this and certainly cannot afford the upcoming Liberal-NDP budget.

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CANADIAN MIDDLEWEIGHT BOXING CHAMPION

Mr. Iqwinder Gaheer (Mississauga—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many people have made the trek from the villages of Punjab to Canada to build a life. Baldev Singh Sidhu went back to Punjab so that he could build the lives of others. With a passion for fighting, he started a boxing academy in his native village of Chakar.

One day a young boy, a village-born child, showed up at his door, wanting to fight to prove himself after being at odds with a fighter from the academy. Mr. Sidhu saw something in that boy, trained him and eventually adopted him as his own.

Today that boy stands in our midst, now a grown man and a champion. Sukhdeep Singh Chakria, whose last name bears witness to the village from where he hails, reigns 10-0 as the Canadian middleweight champion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Thursday is fast approaching and with it we will see our first ever NDP-Liberal budget, a budget that promises a hard veer to the left with big spending and fiscal irresponsibility. Gone are the days when these Liberals followed the advice of their moderate colleagues like John Manley and Anne McLellan. Instead, their inspiration for the budget will come from the fringes of the NDP movement.

Is it not true that this budget will ignore the need to address inflation and the cost of living and instead give in to the extreme demands of the NDP?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, our government put in place an economic response plan to meet the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19. We positioned our economy to come roaring back faster and recover stronger. As of February 2022, we have recovered 112% of the jobs lost at the peak of the pandemic and we must continue now to focus on our work and create jobs and continue building a Canada where nobody gets left behind.

I look forward to the tabling of the 2022 budget and presenting our plan for moving forward for all Canadians.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that out-of-control spending leads to out-of-control prices. Over the last six years and with increasingly irresponsible budgets that the government delivers, more Canadians are suffering and being left behind. Canadians are much worse off today than they were six years ago. They cannot afford a house, gas or groceries. This continued irresponsible and out-of-control spending will result in more and more Canadians being unable to pay their bills. Still, the Prime Minister is doing it.

Why?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past six years we saw the economy grow. We saw hundreds of thousands of Canadians, including kids, lifted out of poverty. We have seen investments that demonstrate that at every step of the way, including through this pandemic, we had people's backs. We entered this pandemic with a strong fiscal position and we are using that fiscal firepower to support Canadians through and beyond COVID-19.

Our choice, contrary to the Conservatives, was to make sure families did not have to choose between putting food on the table and keeping a roof over their heads. We will always have Canadians' backs. We will always do it responsibly in a fiscal way.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that this Prime Minister continues to wedge, divide and stigmatize Canadians. On this side of the House, we believe the greatest thing we can do to unify Canadians is to make their life more affordable. We believe we should empower people so they can buy a home, fill their gas tank and put food on their table.

Will the Prime Minister admit that with every budget he delivers, Canadians have become worse off?

Will he listen not just to Conservatives but to moderate Liberals in his own party, say no to the NDP's extreme demands and deliver a responsible budget?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are grateful we do not listen to Conservatives on matters of supporting Canadians.

The first thing we did was lower taxes for the middle class and raise them for the wealthiest 1%. Conservatives were opposed. We increased the Canada child benefit to match the cost of living. Conservatives were opposed. We moved forward with \$10-a-day child care for families across the country. Federal Conservatives opposed. We boosted the GIS for vulnerable seniors, provided more support to students and made investments in affordable housing. The Conservatives opposed each one.

We will be there for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are two days away from the first NDP budget, sponsored by the Minister of Finance. It is the most left-leaning budget the Liberals have ever seen.

I find it hard to believe that old-stock Liberal members are pleased to see this move toward financial irresponsibility. These big spending budgets drive up inflation, lead to higher interest rates and leave less money in taxpayers' pockets.

Is it accurate to say that the Prime Minister has already chosen his camp, the NDP and its astronomical spending, at the expense of Canadians who are finding it increasingly difficult to pay their bills?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have always been there for Canadians, and we will continue to be there.

During this pandemic, we made investments to ensure that families did not have to go further into debt and that they could continue to put food on the table and support their loved ones. We will continue to be there.

It is thanks to the investments we made that the Canadian economy has become so strong again and that there has been impressive job creation over the past few months. We will continue to be there in a responsible way, and I can assure the House that all the various Liberal members will support this budget.

• (1425)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about that.

The Prime Minister systematically refuses to listen to the Conservatives, who are calling for more fiscal restraint. For the good of Canada, perhaps he will listen to advice from his own party. Former finance minister Paul Martin said that, "the time to reduce deficits is when the economy is growing".

The time to act is now. The economy has generated huge revenues for the government because of inflation. Will the Prime Minister continue to take this money from the pockets of Canadians? Will he continue to spend lavishly until those pockets are empty, as he has done since 2015?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, we made a commitment to always be there for Canadians. We understand that the cost of living has gone up and that the pressures on households are real. That is why we continue to support Canadians through investments in housing and support for seniors and workers.

The Conservatives want to return to austerity, which will hurt Canadians. We, on the other hand, will continue to invest responsibly and prudently, while continuing to be there for Canadians, because that is what Canadians need.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no one believes in the Liberal government's emissions reduction plan. In fact, everyone is united in their dislike of the plan.

It is not as though the minister did not try. I sincerely think he did, but his own government got in the way. What we need, though, are results. The IPCC has been clear that it is impossible to meet the targets by increasing production.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his plan is doomed for failure?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we presented a responsible plan that is one of the most ambitious of its kind. The Bloc Québécois should understand the importance of working with Quebecers to create new economic opportunities and sustainable jobs.

Oral Questions

That is why we encourage our friends in the Bloc to talk to people like Bruno Marchand, the mayor of Quebec City, Valérie Plante, the mayor of Montreal, and the Union des municipalités, all of whom have commended our plan.

Our priority is to work with Quebeckers, not to stir up quarrels, in order to provide them with clean air and a stronger economy.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not need to applaud his plan, because I am not asking him for a cheque. Not only is the plan scientifically unacceptable, but the government is not even trying to meet the targets.

The proof is that he is subsidizing the oil industry, which, with its increased production, will ensure that levels of greenhouse gas emissions remain the same. Could he at least commit to saying no to the Bay du Nord project once and for all?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we often point out that the Bloc Québécois stirs up trouble, but today it is insulting the integrity of the mayor of Montreal and the mayor of Quebec City, who are very sincere in their desire to ensure that their citizens and the entire country have a cleaner environment and a more prosperous future.

We are here to work with all Quebeckers, including the Bloc, on the files that are important to all Quebeckers and Canadians. We will continue to be a constructive and ambitious government in the area of climate change as we help families across the country.

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[English]

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cost of everything is going up. Canadians are hurting. They are having a hard time putting food on the table and finding a home they can afford. That is why we want clear steps and clear actions taken in this budget to make sure Canadians get the help they need in this difficult time.

Will the government commit to making sure Canadians have supports so they can find a home to call their own? Will the government commit to movement on dental care, starting with children under 12? Will the government commit to these priorities in this budget?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past six years, we have been there to support Canadians, to support families, to support elders and to support students. During these two years of the pandemic, we made an explicit promise to have Canadians' backs. We did that not just because supporting Canadians is a value we believe in but also because we know it is the best way to ensure that our economy comes roaring back, that we have small businesses flourishing, that we have job creation and that we create and share prosperity across this country. That is why we are investing to support Canadians. That is why we are investing to grow the economy. That is why we are continuing to have Canadians' backs.

• (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are going through tough times, with a pandemic that is hitting them hard and costs of living on the rise.

While people are suffering, big businesses continue to earn record profits. Is the government ready to make big businesses, starting with the big banks, pay their fair share so money can be invested in social programs to help families through these tough times?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning of the pandemic, we have made a promise to have Canadians' backs, to support them with whatever is needed for as long as it is needed. This has helped support Canadians during the pandemic as well as ensure a faster economic recovery than in many other countries.

We will continue to be there to reinvest and make sure that vulnerable Canadians get the support they need while also growing the economy, creating jobs and ensuring a good future for families across this country.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are trying to balance their budgets, they are trying to feed their families and they are trying to put a roof over their heads, yet at every step the Prime Minister has abandoned them as the skyrocketing cost of living leaves millions of Canadians behind. This is a Prime Minister who promised to help the middle class and those wanting to join it, yet under this left-leaning NDP-Liberal government, that dream is now dead for millions of Canadians.

Will the upcoming budget finally include help for Canadians who are no longer part of the middle class?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the other side continues to undersell what Canadians have accomplished, there is genuine good news to share across the land. Our GDP grew for eight consecutive months. We have recovered 3.4 million jobs lost in the pandemic. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

The Canadian economy is resilient. Canadians are resilient. The economy is getting back on track. The other side might not like economic growth, but the government certainly does, and so do Canadians.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the NDP-Liberal government lurches further to the left, millions of Canadians have been left behind. The skyrocketing cost of living means families cannot pay for groceries or for gas to get their kids to school. The housing affordability crisis means countless Canadians have lost their dream of home ownership. It was the current Prime Minister who promised to stand up for the middle class. "I have got your back", he said. Instead, millions of Canadians are falling behind and out of the middle class.

Will the Prime Minister's upcoming budget help those who have been left behind by this affordability crisis?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in contrast to what the member opposite said, it was actually this government that helped millions of Canadians. In fact, when we brought in the Canada child benefit, it helped nine out of 10 Canadian families. They have seen hundreds or thousands of dollars each year to support putting food on the table. That is real money for real Canadians, and they know this government, whether before the pandemic, during the pandemic or after we recover, will be there for them every single step of the way.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, too many millennials make good money but are stuck in their parents' basements. They lose all hope when they see home prices up 36% in Toronto. At committee, a GTA Liberal member of Parliament said that Canada has a “healthy housing market”, yet witness after witness said the opposite. The Minister of Housing has access to the best housing information in the country.

Does the minister disagree with his colleague that Canada has a “healthy housing market”, or will he too plant his head in the sand?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola had a conversation on housing and a united approach with his colleagues for Calgary Centre, Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and Simcoe North. They have all trashed the national housing strategy. They said that we should pull back from measures to help first-time homebuyers. They are against housing supply. They are against housing affordability investments. Those members of Parliament should get their stories straight.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing dropping in this housing market is the Liberals' credibility on affordability. At committee, Statistics Canada representatives said, “We have not seen gains this large in 30 years. The price increases are broad-based, with the biggest drivers being gasoline, food, supply chains and a heated housing market.”

Will the minister admit to his failures, or will he continue to blame Conservatives for his mistakes?

● (1435)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really difficult to take Conservatives seriously on the issue of housing affordability. They say one thing in this august chamber and then outside, in committee—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know who that was. We should be able to hear what is going on in the House. Are we ready to move on? I would like to hear the minister.

The hon. Minister of Housing.

Oral Questions

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I think it is really difficult for them to hear the inconsistencies on housing affordability. That is why we are hearing a lot of noise on the other side.

Let me set the record straight. On first-time homebuyers, on housing affordability and on making sure that Canadians have access to their dream of home ownership, Conservatives are nowhere to be found. They say one thing in this august chamber, but when they are in committee they talk down the national housing strategy, they talk down the first-time homebuyer incentive and they talk down the rapid housing initiative. Conservatives have absolutely no credibility, and Canadians know that.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all young Canadian families dream of owning a home.

Unfortunately, home ownership remains out of reach for these families because this government is doing absolutely nothing to curb inflation. The cost of housing is increasing by over 30% a year here in Canada. That is completely unacceptable. Since the beginning of question period, this government has been bragging that its plan is working. The problem is that it is not working.

Why do the Liberals seem to think this plan is working, when it is actually not working at all?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians deserve a safe and affordable place to call home.

[English]

If the Conservatives will not listen to me, perhaps they will listen to the former Conservative minister and current Mayor of London, Ed Holder. With regard to our investments through the rapid housing initiative, he said:

This funding...will save lives and ultimately improve the lives of those who come to occupy these desperately needed units.... We are exceptionally grateful that our commitment to this vital work is shared with equal enthusiasm by the Government of Canada.

The Conservatives voted against that, and they voted against every other affordable housing measure that we introduced.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister and congratulate him on his first French sentence, which I very much appreciate, but I must nevertheless remind him about the facts.

Oral Questions

The fact is, housing costs are up nearly 30% in Canada. That pushed inflation to 5.7%, which is why food costs more, gas costs more, and Canadians are paying more tax. Last week, this government had a chance to give Canadians a break by not raising the tax, but no, on Friday, the federal tax went up.

Can the government at least commit to not raising taxes in the budget it will be tabling two days from now?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the state of the economy and why it is good news for Canadians. We have had eight consecutive months of growth. Our GDP grew by 6.7% in the fourth quarter. Our trade surplus, now \$6.6 billion, is at its highest point since 2008. This fall, S&P and Moody's gave us a AAA credit rating.

That is what leadership means. That is what it means to focus on affordability. The other side does not like a growing economy, but we like it a lot.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Greenpeace, Équiterre, the David Suzuki Foundation and the Sierra Club are unanimous: We have to say no to the Bay du Nord project. It is not complicated. It is no.

Yesterday's IPCC report came to exactly the same conclusion. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that "the truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels".

That is exactly what the minister would do with Bay du Nord: increase oil production by one billion barrels.

Will the minister say no to Bay du Nord?

● (1440)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and her advocacy.

Our government recognizes the importance of the decision on Equinor's Bay du Nord development project. We are following a legislated process based on the available scientific evidence. That is why we extended the legislated timeline in order to take the time to properly review the considerable amount of complex information and make an informed decision.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is jeopardizing his credibility. He cannot introduce an emissions reduction plan and then, one week later, consider approving a project to produce one billion barrels of oil. This would negate all his efforts and put him on par with all the other environment ministers in Canada, which has introduced 11 plans since 1988 and has never even come close to reaching its targets.

The Bay du Nord decision is the first major test for the minister. For the sake of the plan that he himself just introduced, will he say no to Bay du Nord?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I would like to quote what some people had to say when we presented our plan last week. Équiterre's Marc-André Viau stated, "We welcome the emissions reduction plan because this is the first time that we have such a detailed strategy to reach a target".

I would like to remind my colleague that our plan is based on, among other things, data from the Canada Energy Regulator, which has forecast an increase in oil production in Canada. Despite everything, our plan sets out, in black and white, how we are going to tackle pollution and achieve our emissions reduction targets by 2030.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, many people are unsure whether the plan to extract another 1.1 billion barrels of oil with Bay du Nord will reduce emissions from the oil sector. Many do not think this makes sense, although some do, from what I gather.

That brings us to the UN. Yesterday, in response to the IPCC report, Secretary General Antonio Guterres said "Some government...leaders are saying one thing - but doing another." He added, "Simply put, they are lying".

Those are harsh but necessary words. Will the minister say no to Bay du Nord?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right that there are some people, like the Conservatives, who talk about climate change. Others, like those on this side of the House, are taking action by putting a price on pollution, which is already one of the highest in the world.

We are on our way to cutting methane emissions by 40% to 45% by 2025. We have an objective of 75%, which is the most ambitious objective in the world. It is clear that Canada's federal government can tackle pollution. My colleague knows very well that production is a provincial jurisdiction.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "crushing", "stunning" and "frenzy" are words the Royal Bank is using to describe the housing crisis in Canada. The Bank of Montreal is calling it a full-scale attack. Housing experts are calling the minister's programs absolute failures.

When will the minister listen to the experts and stop blaming others for his failures?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would urge the hon. member to look at what the national housing strategy is doing in his home province of Alberta. In Alberta, we are investing \$444 million to support 35,000 households and pay rent. What does he have to say about that?

It is not only that. He should have a conversation with his colleagues from various parts of the country who continue to talk down federal investments in housing through the national housing strategy, and who have dismissed efforts we are making to enable more Canadians to have access to home ownership. They want us to pull back from the national housing strategy, and they want no federal leadership in this place.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has to keep reusing the same recycled talking points and twisting people's words because he is embarrassed, and rightfully so, of his record as minister.

He claims to have a plan that would help make housing more affordable, but under his watch, we have seen housing prices double and rent become more unaffordable than ever before. More and more people are looking at the situation and saying that they are giving up on ever buying a home. He should finally admit that his plan for first-time homebuyers is not working. It is only actually driving prices up.

Will the minister acknowledge his record of failure, change course and actually make housing more affordable for Canadians, and not just use the same talking points?

• (1445)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member would look at the federal housing investments through just one program in the national housing strategy in his home province of Ontario. Through the Canada housing benefit, we are investing \$1.46 billion to support over 50,000 households to pay the rent. That is a record—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. This is the fourth time I have to stand to allow the minister to answer so that I can hear what he is saying.

I will ask the minister to answer. He has the floor.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I guess the record of supporting 50,000 households to pay their rent through an investment of \$1.46 billion is making the other side heckle.

Let me tell members what the hon. member who asked the question said about the national housing strategy. He said that we should “pull back” from federal leadership and investments in affordable housing. Do members know what he said about the first-time homebuyer incentive, a program to enable more young people to access their dream of home ownership? He said that we should get out of the business of helping Canadians buy their own home, and that is a shame.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we really do not appreciate the arrogant tone coming from the housing minister day after day, especially since after six years of

Oral Questions

this government, housing prices have effectively doubled. Half of my generation will never be able to afford a home as a result of its failed policies. A little humility would be welcomed from the Minister of Housing.

When will the government abandon its failed housing strategy?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is what the mayor of Winnipeg, Brian Bowman, said about the rapid housing initiative: This program has been a huge success for Winnipeg. I would invite members on the other side to look at their record. They voted against the first-time homebuyer incentive. They voted against the rapid housing initiative. They voted against the Canada housing benefit. They voted against every single program we have brought to the House. They failed in government when it comes to housing and they are now failing in opposition.

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SENIORS

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week's budget will prove to be a pivotal point in the lives of financially struggling seniors. They need relief from the record inflation, the record increase in the price of gas, the record increase in the price of food and the record increase in the price of medications that the government has overseen.

Will the government commit to measures for lowering the cost of living, to help all seniors in my riding and Canadians, in this week's budget?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, excuse me, but I will not take any lessons from a party whose plan was to prolong the age of retirement to 67. On this side of the House, one of the very first things we did was restore that. We enhanced the CPP. We increased the GIS, which has helped over 900,000 single seniors. We provided direct payments to seniors during the pandemic, and we are making high-speed Internet more affordable for seniors. On this side of the House, we are going to continue to ensure we support seniors now and into the future.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, in Nunavut, people are feeling the impacts of the housing crisis every day. We need 3,000 more housing units so that people are not living in overcrowded housing that is in desperate need of repair. The government has only committed to building 100 units. The Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy shows a current housing gap requiring \$22.7 billion for first nations.

Will the government deliver the affordable housing indigenous people need?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree. In all my travels, virtual and real, housing has been the number one issue that comes up time and again. That is why we have signed 10-year housing agreements with all three national indigenous organizations, the Métis National Council, the ITK and Inuit rights holders. We invested \$513 million in infrastructure, which includes housing, last August. We know this is a priority and we are going to get it done.

● (1450)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week marks two years since 16-year-old Eishia Hudson was killed by a Winnipeg police officer. Eishia's family is mourning and waiting for answers, like thousands of families across this country that have lost loved ones to this ongoing genocide against indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

The Liberals must act now. Will the minister commit that the budget will include immediate, targeted and adequate funding to implement the 231 calls for justice?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is right. We are failing as a society as long as every woman, child and LGBTQ person is not safe in this country. The investments that we put in through prior budgets, like the \$2 billion we invested in budget 2021, are designed specifically to address this ongoing tragedy.

Just last week, I had the honour and pleasure of announcing investments that respond directly to call for justice 2.3 on providing safe cultural spaces for indigenous communities across the country. That has to continue. It has to continue on a systematic basis until everyone is safe in this country.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian veterans have served our country with courage and sacrifice. They deserve our respect, our support and our gratitude. Accessing mental health services is absolutely vital to the well-being of many veterans.

Could the minister please update the House on our recent \$140-million investment to ensure that veterans get the treatment they need and deserve as quickly as possible?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Charlottetown for his work on behalf of veterans and Veterans Affairs.

Last week, we launched our new \$140-million mental health benefit, which will make sure that veterans get coverage for mental health treatments as soon as possible. This is a significant step, and I can assure my hon. colleagues that we will continue to supply the support and services that our veterans need and deserve.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Prime Minister promised not to buy F-35s, even though he knew that the Canadian industry had invested hundreds of millions of dollars in order to fulfill its commitments to Lockheed Martin.

Even with his announcement last week that he would begin negotiations for purchasing the F-35s, the Prime Minister is keeping the industry in limbo. He has not committed to choosing the F-35; he has merely committed to opening a dialogue.

My question is simple. How many more billions of dollars must be wasted before the government decides to buy the F-35s, and when will we get the first jet?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: We have made a decision to do this in the responsible way. We are moving forward with the purchase of 88 fighter jets and we are doing that with an open, fair and transparent process. This is a significant investment and this is what Canadians expect of us. We have a rigorous process that is going to deliver the best plane for the best price with the greatest economic benefit to Canadians.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the notes are a few months old, but I have another question.

If military spending is to continue, the leader of the NDP must agree to it, but he has already vowed to oppose increased defence spending related to Canada's NATO commitment, while the Liberals have said they will increase spending. The new confidence and supply agreement with the NDP, the third opposition party, guarantees support for the Liberal minority government in exchange for new investments in other areas. With this deal, the tail is wagging the dog.

Will the Prime Minister insist that the leader of the NDP ask his troops to vote for an increase in military spending, yes or no?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

[English]

The Conservatives want to question our commitment to the Canadian Armed Forces. Let us be clear. The Conservatives, for a decade, had a chance to step up and invest in NATO and our armed forces. Instead, they decided to actively step back and allow military spending to drop below 1% of our GDP in 2013, but not us. We will continue to invest in our armed forces. We will continue to support NATO, NORAD and our Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1455)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been ill-prepared and found wanting too many times on the national security front. It has embarrassed Canadians by its response to Ukraine and by the state of the Canadian Forces. The NATO spending goal is 2% of GDP. We are at 1.38% and number 25 overall.

Will the defence minister commit here and now to increasing defence spending in this budget by buying F-35s and moving forward with NORAD modernization?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it unfortunate that the member opposite is characterizing the views of our Canadian Armed Forces as being ashamed. On the contrary, at the top of my mandate letter is making sure that the Canadian Armed Forces have the equipment they need to defend our country.

I am focused on delivering results for the Canadian Armed Forces. We are increasing defence spending by 70% over a nine-year period beginning in 2017, including for NORAD modernization and our commitments to NATO.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in government, we bought Leopard 2 main battle tanks, C-17s, C-130Js, Chinook helicopters and LAV armoured fighting vehicles. After six and a half years in power and almost \$2 billion wasted on obsolete F-18s and upgrades, Canadians and the CAF need certainty. Our national sovereignty must be defended.

How many more billions will the NDP-Liberals waste before Canada gets F-35s and announces the contract date and the delivery schedule?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, who cut billions from defence, we are providing our Canadian Armed Forces members with the equipment they need to keep Canadians safe. This means we are moving to finalize contracts for 88 new fighter jets. This means we are delivering the first Canadian-built ship in 20 years. This means we are delivering six Arctic offshore patrol vessels, two of which have been built and are in the water and one of which has circumnavigated the North American continent.

We are continuing to deliver for the Canadian Armed Forces. Why? It is because they are a priority for our country. We will continue to ensure that they are well resourced and well equipped.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

SENIORS

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, seniors are worried. They are well aware that the Liberal-NDP pact leaves them out.

That is why the FADOQ network announced its priorities today, ahead of Thursday's budget. FADOQ wants higher income for everyone aged 65 and up, a tax credit for seniors who keep working, a refundable tax credit for caregivers, and a long-term, no-strings-attached health care funding increase.

Will Thursday's budget meet seniors' needs or will they be passed over just like in the NDP deal?

[English]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, our government has been there to support seniors, especially the most vulnerable. One of the very first things we did as a government was restore the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS to 65. We enhanced the GIS for the most vulnerable seniors. That has actually helped 900,000 single seniors. We of course are moving forward this year with increasing the OAS by 10% for those 75 and over. We are also making high-speed Internet more affordable for the most vulnerable seniors. On this side of the House, we are going to make sure we continue to deliver for seniors.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not enough. Seniors have been hardest hit by inflation, especially those aged 74 and under because the federal government abandoned them.

The cost of living is going through the roof, but old age pensions are stagnating. Despite record-breaking food and rent costs, all the federal government can tell people aged 74 and under is to go back to work, as if they were just being lazy.

That is shameful. Seniors should work because they want to, not because the federal government abandoned them and they have no other choice. When will the government increase the pension for those up to age 74?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning since 2015, we have been working extremely hard to support seniors. Ensuring a safe and secure retirement is a priority for this government. We restored the OAS and GIS from age 67 to 65. We have enhanced the CPP, and Quebec followed with QPP. We have raised the GIS for 900,000 single seniors. We are investing billions in home care. We are investing billions in the connecting families initiative and in 7,000 new affordable housing units. On this side of the House we are going to continue to deliver for seniors.

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, I met with former Afghan interpreters on the Hill who held a hunger strike to protest the Liberals' failures in Afghanistan. They served and sacrificed for our country, but the NDP-Liberal government abandoned their families and other interpreters. They told me they feel ignored by the minister and he is being insensitive by implying that their families are security threats, even though they were screened to serve alongside our soldiers.

Will the minister apologize to the thousands of Afghan interpreters and their families for implying that they are security threats?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me state on the record that I have done no such thing. Those who worked alongside the Canadian Forces are heroes every bit as much as members of the Canadian Armed Forces who had a presence in Afghanistan.

With respect to this specific group, we actually created a stream to resettle the extended families of previously resettled interpreters. Last week, I was on hand as we welcomed the 10,000th Afghan refugee, who has now landed in Canada. We are going to continue to do more. No matter the scale of the challenges, we are going to make good on our commitment to the individuals who want to reunite with their families here in Canada.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another job well-filled as the minister brags about the low number of interpreters arriving. Only about 2,300 Afghan nationals who assisted our Canadian Armed Forces during the Afghan mission have actually arrived in Canada. The Afghan interpreters I spoke to have met with the minister's office 28 times. They were told over 1,000 of their family members and fellow interpreters would be in Canada by March 2022. So far, none have arrived. They are tired of the minister's politics.

Will the minister do the right thing and apologize to the thousands of Afghan interpreters he has abandoned and admit to his failures?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find this question ironic coming from a member of the Conservative Party, which previously tried to design a program that specifically excluded these same individuals from coming to Canada as refugees.

I would remind the member again that if his electoral campaign platform is reviewed, there was no commitment to welcome Afghan refugees to Canada. We will continue to do whatever we can to get as many Afghan refugees here as quickly as possible, until we make good on our electoral commitment to welcome 40,000 Afghan refugees to Canada. This is one of the most substantial commitments of any country in the world, and we will not rest until the job is done.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I truly want to take the minister at his word.

On November 10, 2021, I sent a letter to the Prime Minister pleading with him on behalf of two of my constituents. Both of them served as interpreters for NATO in Afghanistan. They came to

me. They are now in Canada. They are safe, but their families have been left behind. They are asking for help.

Despite the danger that is upon their families, the letter that I wrote to the Prime Minister was not returned. In fact, four months later, all I received simply a reply that he had forwarded my letter to the ministers. To this day, I have heard nothing. There is silence.

I am asking the minister. I am pleading. I am not playing politics. When does he intend to help these interpreters bring their families to Canada?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do take the hon. member at her word, but with respect, I would like to point out that the challenges facing the refugee resettlement in Afghanistan are like nothing we have ever seen. I would remind all members of this House that the Taliban, a listed terrorist entity in Canadian law, has seized control of the territory. Many of the specific individuals who we made a commitment to are still in the country. Others who made it to a third country have challenges beyond the imaginations of most people, who have never had to deal in this sphere, which we simply do not see in other refugee resettlement streams.

With respect to the specific group that she is speaking to, we launched on December 9 a process to specifically bring the families of previously resettled interpreters here because we believe it is the right thing. We will not rest until we have succeeded in our mission.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been clear about what they want: good jobs, a healthy environment, a strong economy and a future for their children.

Last week, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change released a reduction plan that outlines the next steps to continue delivering on those priorities.

Can the minister tell the House about the very specific targets in his plan?

● (1505)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Pontiac for the question.

Our plan allocates \$9.2 billion in additional investments. The plan also includes an ambitious and achievable sector-by-sector approach for Canada to reach its climate target by 2030. The plan has been in development for months and reflects submissions from more than 30,000 Canadians.

I want everyone to know that we have received a lot of support for this plan from various sectors across the country. The mayor of Quebec City, the mayor of Montreal, and a number of environmental groups and businesses have commended this plan.

Our government is there to respond ambitiously to the climate crisis, to stimulate a clean economy, and to create sustainable jobs. We are there for Canadians.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, raising taxes on Canadians should be a test of government confidence, but the Liberal government ignored 800 years of parliamentary tradition by giving itself and future governments an automatic tax increase when it passed the excise escalator on beer, wine and spirits. Governments should have to ask Parliament every time they raise taxes.

Will the government repeal the automatic tax increase and give the power to raise taxes back to Parliament where it belongs?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this particular case, like other taxes and benefits, the alcohol excise duty rate is automatically adjusted every year to inflation, as requested by the industry, for predictability and stability. It allows the industry to predict the prices in future years.

This increase is less than one-fifth of a penny per can of beer. There are specific measures that we take into account for other alcohol substances. These industries are important for tourism, and the tax that is part of it is important for the treasury.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents and folks throughout Newfoundland and Labrador are dealing with a health care disaster. Emergency rooms in remote areas are being forced to close. Patients face long wait times just for routine surgeries and procedures. Doctors and health care professionals are at an all-time low. Twenty per cent of the population is without a family doctor. This is not the medicare system that Tommy Douglas dreamed of.

Will the NDP-Liberal minister commit to predictable and stable transfer payments in Thursday's budget to fix medicare in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad to get this question because it points to our great collaboration with the Government of Newfoundland and the great minister of health in Newfoundland. We have worked extremely well together over the last few months.

I want to congratulate Newfoundlanders, in particular, for having some of the highest vaccination rates in Canada for children and adults, including boosters. They are doing an extremely good job. We are going to keep working with them.

Oral Questions

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, effective April 1, retroactive salary increases for the national police force collective agreement kicked in. This will financially affect municipalities across the country. Municipalities in my riding, such as the town of Edson, agree that increases for police officers are necessary, but the retroactive salaries will increase the town of Edson's budget by about half a million dollars.

Municipalities such as the town of Edson were not part of the negotiations, so why are the NDP-Liberals sticking them with the bill?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his advocacy on behalf of his community.

As he well knows, we have an arrangement through a collective bargaining process, which does address a number of issues, including retroactive pay. I want to assure my colleague that we will continue to engage his community so the RCMP can assure there is public safety in his community and right across the country.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the global auto industry is undergoing a seismic shift toward zero-emission vehicles. Canada can and should be a world leader in this transformation. Canada's automotive sector plays a crucial role in our economy. It supports hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs, including hundreds in my riding of Whitby and thousands across the Durham region. This industry is driving the development and adoption of clean technologies, which will help us rapidly decarbonize on the path to net zero.

Yesterday, I was honoured to join the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry as he announced a landmark investment in General Motors. Could the minister update the House on this investment and what it means for building a sustainable economy across Canada?

● (1510)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Whitby for his advocacy for the auto sector. He did a fabulous job yesterday.

Business of Supply

Yesterday we secured a \$2-billion investment by GM in its facility in Ingersoll and Oshawa, creating 2,600 new jobs in the very first full-scale commercial EV plant in Canada. It is good news for workers, good news for Ontario and good news for the Canadian auto sector.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been six years since the start of the debacle with Phoenix, and one in three public service workers are still having problems getting paid. These are workers who have done critical work during COVID and are now facing the rising cost of living.

Under the Liberals, the use of consultants has increased a staggering 41%. Today media is reporting that the Liberals are spending even more public money on highly paid consultants to fix the problems created by other highly paid consultants. They are paying the wrong people. Will the minister stop throwing money at consultants and properly compensate public service workers for the work they do?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for drawing attention to this issue, which is a priority for our government.

Canada's public servants deserve to be paid accurately and on time. We recognize that pay issues are creating stress and hardship for employees and their families, and we are committed to making this right. That is why we are doing all we can to stabilize the Phoenix pay system, which can include outsourcing to help eliminate the backlog faster. We are making progress, but we know that there is more work to do.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis is hitting people hard all across the country, and the Liberals' national housing strategy is not working at all. People are being forced to live in motels, in their cars or even on the street.

The Liberals are saying that they have built more affordable rental housing, but their definition of affordable is still above market prices. It is ridiculous. These are crazy prices that families simply cannot afford.

Are the Liberals going to include financial supports in the budget to ensure that people can find truly affordable housing?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian deserves safe and affordable housing. Since 2015, we have invested more than \$30 billion in affordable housing and introduced Canada's very first national housing strategy.

Our plan, worth more than \$72 billion, has already helped more than two million Canadian families get the housing they need. We

know that there is still work to be done and that is why, within this mandate, we will move forward to implement—

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

There have been discussions among the parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion: That this House designate the first Tuesday in April as Invisible Work Day and encourage all UN member states to do the same.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SPENDING ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: We left off with the hon. member for Davenport, who had three minutes left, and I want to make sure that everybody takes their conversations outside.

The hon. member for Davenport.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, NATO allies' response to Russia's aggression has also accelerated NATO's transformation as it adjusts to a more dangerous strategic reality, including through the adoption of the next strategic concept at the NATO leaders summit in June. Canada is unwavering in its commitment to the NATO alliance, to the defence of Euro-Atlantic security and to the rules-based international order.

I would also say that as Canada, we understand the need to invest in defence to be agile and adaptable in the space of evolving threats. In 2017, Canada released its current defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", which considerably increased defence spending and put in place—

● (1515)

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order. I am sorry to interrupt.

Folks, if we could take our conversations outside, that would be wonderful.

Is that the hon. member's point of order?

We have a point of order from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I was the one who shouted that out.

It is almost impossible to hear the member speak. She is trying to conclude her speech. Perhaps you can ask members to leave the chamber if they want to have conversations so that we can hear what the member is saying.

The Deputy Speaker: Thanks for that.

Also, I did forget to do one thing after question period, which was to remind members not to introduce people in the gallery when they are asking their questions or what have you. It is against the rules of the House of Commons.

We are going to go back to the member for Davenport, and I am going to give her the three minutes because it is hard to get started again.

The hon. member for Davenport.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, NATO allies' response to Russia's aggression has also accelerated NATO's transformation as it adjusts to a more dangerous strategic reality, including through the adoption of the next strategic concept at the NATO leaders summit in June. NATO will further develop the full range of ready forces and capabilities necessary to maintain credible deterrence and defence. These steps will be supported by enhanced exercises with an increased focus on collective defence and interoperability.

Canada is unwavering in its commitment to the NATO alliance, to the defence of Euro-Atlantic security and to the rules-based international order. We also understand the need to invest in defence to be agile and adaptable in the space of evolving threats. In 2017, Canada released its current defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", which considerably increased defence spending and put in place a plan to equip the Canadian Armed Forces for the rapidly changing security environment.

Canada will exceed the aspirational guideline of spending 20% of defence budgets on major equipment. This does not include expenditures associated with NORAD modernization and continental defence or the planned purchase of 88 next-generation fighter aircraft.

The steps we are taking to ensure the security of our alliance and of the Euro-Atlantic area will require adequate resources. Canada is substantially increasing our defence expenditures, and we continue our efforts to fulfill commitments to the defence investment pledge.

Canada is also clear-eyed about the potential threats in the Arctic and has committed to enhancing situational awareness in this domain. We will increase training and joint exercises with our Arctic allies and partners while promoting intelligence sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO.

Our contributions to NATO demonstrate Canada's unwavering commitment to the alliance and to strengthened allied capacity to respond to the evolving security environment. Our contributions maintain and strengthen the transatlantic bond.

Business of Supply

In conclusion, Canada, Europe and NATO—the entire transatlantic community—is speaking with one voice. We will continue to engage the broader international community to maintain strong condemnation and pressure on Putin. The Russian leadership will answer for Russia's horrifying attacks on Ukraine. We will continue to work with our allies and partners in NATO, the G7, the OECD, the UN, the EU and the international community to support Ukraine as it fights for its country, democracy and freedom.

We call on Russia to withdraw all of its troops from Ukraine and its illegal invasion and turn to fact-based diplomacy and dialogue. Ukraine has the right to be free and secure, and every Ukrainian deserves the right to dignity and peace.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague's speech with great interest. If I heard her correctly, I think she said that the government is committed to meeting the NATO commitment of spending at least 20% of defence expenditures on equipment, and that would not include NATO modernization or the acquisition of F-35 jets.

Could the member tell the House where she thinks the additional equipment spending should be allocated and what types of equipment the Canadian Armed Forces are in need of, in addition to the F-35 jets and the modernization of NATO that she already outlined?

● (1520)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, the member is right in terms of what I had said in my speech. I will say that I am not sure if I have the full list available of what it is that we are planning to do.

I will just remind everyone in this House that we have already started moving on purchasing some of that equipment. We have delivered the first Canadian ship built in 20 years. We have acquired six Arctic offshore patrol boats, and two have already been delivered to the navy. We have begun construction on a joint support ship that will provide sea replenishment as well as 4,000 jobs in Canada, and we have already delivered rifles for our Rangers, so I know we have already gotten started. I think the list will become clearer in the coming weeks and months.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, meeting the 2% of GDP target called for in this motion would mean increasing our military spending from about \$24 billion a year now to over \$54 billion. That is an extra \$30 billion per year.

While I think all Canadians want to make sure that our military is well equipped and properly funded, I want to get my hon. colleague's take on this quote from President Eisenhower. He said:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

Business of Supply

Would the member agree that this is the best use of \$30 billion, or would she like to see that money instead put into dental care for seniors and children and into expanded health care and housing for Canadians who cannot find it in this country?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, what I would say is that we are facing the greatest threat to international peace and stability in decades. As such, NATO is again looking at its strategy. It is about deterrence and it is about defence; it is not about war.

We also have to step up as a NATO country to also look at how we are going to continue to increase our investment in NATO, because in the end that will protect us. We also have to step up and make sure that we are able to properly defend Canada, including our Arctic boundary.

That is not to say that we, in any way, should not continue to move forward aggressively on our commitment around implementing national pharmacare as well as dental care.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question will be brief. After seven years of bungling, we are back at square one, even though millions of dollars have been spent. Can the member explain these seven years of bungling, job losses and wasted money?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure I understand the mix-up the member is talking about, but I will say once again that we are living through unprecedented times with the pandemic the world has had to grapple with for almost three years now and with the unprovoked and illegal invasion of Russia into Ukraine. We are now facing the greatest threat to international peace and stability in decades.

We have to step up. We have to look forward, not backwards. We have to look forward, put together a plan and work with our allies, not only to protect Canada but also to play our role in NATO.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his enthusiasm about listening to me for the next 10 minutes. I want to thank the member for Davenport for sharing that time with me today and for the opportunity to provide some input into this opposition day motion.

I am very pleased to see that the Conservative Party is eager to spend 2% of our gross domestic product on our military. It certainly is not in keeping with what it was doing during the last Conservative government, but perhaps its members have turned a new leaf and have decided this is in fact the way we should be moving forward.

First I would like to address where the 2% of GDP comes from and perhaps some of the challenges that are associated with it. In 2014, at the Wales summit, NATO leaders came together and made a decision collectively. It was a formal pledge to spend 2% of their nations' GDP on military expenditures specifically. This was done in order to ensure there would be fairness throughout countries in their participation and what they were putting toward NATO and

the protection it offers NATO countries. It was therefore decided this would be a fair and equitable way of moving forward.

One of the problems with that 2% figure is that different countries, at least in the beginning, were calculating their 2% differently. For example, some countries were including pensions being paid to veterans, whereas others were not. Also, in the way the program is set up, or the way it is supposed to be measured, is that any armed service a country has would be included. One of the problems Canada would face in that scenario is that our Coast Guard is considered a civilian service, whereas in the U.S., the coast guard is considered an armed service. As a result, the U.S. would include in its 2% calculation its coast guard, whereas Canada would not necessarily do that.

After my time on the Standing Committee on National Defence and after we had an opportunity to study this 2% issue and the NATO contributions of Canada specifically, I was pleased to see in 2018 that at least NATO did update some of the ways it recommended to countries to calculate that 2%. Particularly, it did indicate that pensions, for example, would be included. It is important to establish a baseline and to be consistent across different countries.

Canada was of course one of the founding partners of NATO, as we have heard in the House throughout the day. Canada has been in every NATO mission as a partner with our allied countries, because we see the value in making sure that NATO has the proper resources to keep its member countries safe.

As I indicated earlier, I am very pleased to see the Conservatives supporting this. However, the problem is that—

Mr. James Bezan: Well, you're supporting us now.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman just heckled me and said that we are supporting them. I am happy to tell the member that I support his motion today, so if the member is looking for me to say that, I thought he could read between the lines in what I said so far. He heckled me a few moments ago and said that we are supporting them.

That member was part of the former government. I believe he was the parliamentary secretary to defence in the former Harper government, when we saw a decrease year after year in the percentage of GDP spent on the military.

I know I cannot use a prop in the House, but I am looking at my notes right now and I have an actual graph of the percentage of GDP—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Table it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan wants me to table it. Now he is saying he does not. I was willing to do that.

This graph is very interesting to look at, because if we go back over the last 10 years, we see a continual decrease in the percentage of GDP until it bottoms out in 2013 at less than 1%. That was the climax, so to speak, of Stephen Harper's contribution to ensuring he was properly living up to the commitment we made in the Wales summit.

• (1525)

After bottoming out at less than 1% of GDP, what did the graph do? It did the exact opposite. Since this Liberal government came into power in 2015, every year the amount has gone up, and the trend line is pushing up and toward that 2%.

I am a big supporter of making sure we hit that 2% mark. The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman earlier on heckled and was surprised that I would support that. I have no idea why he was surprised by that. He and I sat on the defence committee together for four years, and we unanimously approved a report from the defence committee calling on the government to spend 2%. I think it should have been very clear to the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman exactly where I stood on it. I hope I was memorable enough for him to remember me being on the committee with him when we both spoke in favour of that. We travelled together to Ukraine and Latvia to study the work that NATO was doing abroad, in terms of Operations Reassurance and Unifier.

He would know that I very much support this, and that is why I plan to vote in favour of this motion. However, for the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman to try to project himself from the position of being a strong advocate for spending 2% of GDP on our military, he certainly did not do that when he was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Defence during his time in government, albeit quite a while ago. If there is any indication from what is happening within the Conservative Party right now, it will probably be quite a while until that happens again.

Nonetheless, I think this motion and what it is calling for are the right things to do. I think that it is important that we spend. I even remember going a step further, when I was on the committee, and suggesting that Canada should actually be part of the ballistic missile defence program in North America within NORAD. The member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and I both visited the NORAD facility in Cheyenne Mountain, and we both saw the awkward situation in which Americans and Canadians worked incredibly well together in 95% of the room, but then there was 5% of the room where the Canadians basically were not allowed to go, and that was the part of the room that specifically looked over ballistic missile defence.

I am on the record as having said that, in my opinion, this is something we should be doing. I can understand that prime ministers of the past have not been interested in that and have shied away from doing that, and I respect that. It is not my position, but nonetheless I can appreciate the fact that positions have been taken over the years.

I see that my time is running out, but I want to say that I plan to support this motion and I will vote in favour of it, because I think it is the right thing to do. More importantly, if we just look at the trajectory since this government came into power, we will see that we

Business of Supply

are on our way to getting us to a point where we are spending 2% of our GDP on national defence.

• (1530)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I did not realize the member for Kingston and the Islands had such an obsession with me. He referred to me so often in his speech that I am not sure if I should be flattered or concerned.

I want to just point out that we are the ones who brought forward the motion, and when I heckled him it was because he had said it was his motion. This is the Conservative Party of Canada's motion to make sure the government is committed to spending 2% in the upcoming federal budget.

The Liberals talk the game, but they do not play it, and the only thing they have delivered on time and on budget is 17 used F-18 fighter jets. The member talks about going into ballistic missile defence. Will he commit that the Liberal government will actually sign to ballistic missile defence as part of NORAD modernization? Will he also admit that, by adding in the Coast Guard and veterans' pensions, the Liberals have padded the numbers they have today versus the numbers we had when we were in government, when we were spending to meet our commitments at NATO and in Afghanistan?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I was very clear in my speech that my position on ballistic missile defence was my own position. Does the member want me to commit the government on behalf of something? I am certainly not going to do that, nor am I in the position to do that, and he knows that. More importantly, to the rhetoric we just heard there, he said the Conservatives would actually do what they said they were going to do and that they walk the walk as well as talk the talk. They should explain how, at the same time as Stephen Harper went up to Vladimir Putin and told him to get out of Ukraine like a big tough guy, he was spending less than 1% of GDP on national defence. Does that sound like a government that is walking the talk and doing exactly what it says it is going to be doing?

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday evening, at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development's Subcommittee on International Human Rights, we heard from three women who are advocates for human rights in Ukraine.

They were in Ukraine and it was the middle of the night. It was a rather unique meeting because we could sense that they were practically in bunkers. They talked about the situation, which is very tragic.

Business of Supply

Oleksandra Matviichuk, of the Center for Civil Liberties, has been advocating for human rights in Ukraine for many years. She has made many demands, but one of them is extremely unusual. As a lawyer, she finds it unusual. The situation was so terrible that, as an advocate for human rights, she had no other choice but to ask western countries to send more weapons.

Can my colleague comment on that?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, Canada will continue to do everything within our power to support those who are in Ukraine right now.

More importantly, what is happening on the other side of the world is giving us a perfect illustration as to why it is so incredibly important that we live up to our 2% commitment that we established in the 2014 Wales Summit. By doing that, we will have the proper deterrents in place to prevent countries from acting as we have seen them act lately, in particular Russia. More importantly, we will have the resources all ready to go because we will have built up the resources and assets that we need so we can utilize them in a time of need.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, in light of our talking about increasing spending to National Defence, I wonder if the member could speak to the Liberals and their continued expensive trend of contracting out the work to repair Canadian ships and planes, which results in greater expense to the military and to Canadians.

In light of this motion, does the member believe that his government is doing enough to fully understand the impacts of contracting out work?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, when it comes to contracting out work, there are certainly going to be different opinions and different things to weigh when making those decisions. I can understand. I certainly feel as though, from time to time, we need to focus on making sure that Canadian service providers can do work on behalf of Canadians. It makes the most sense. I can also appreciate that, at times, that might not be the case. I do not think any responsible government could ever commit to 100% never contracting out, but I also think that any government needs to focus as much as it can on making sure it keeps doing things within our country.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand today to discuss increasing NATO spending to 2% of GDP here in Canada as part of our national defence. I will be splitting my time with the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. He is someone who has served our country with valour and integrity. He is someone I incredibly respect, and I know his comments later on will be something we should all be paying attention to.

This is also the first chance I have had to get on my feet since we have witnessed the atrocities being committed in Ukraine: the war crimes that are being uncovered north of Kyiv as the Russian forces have retreated back to Belarus. When we look at the images from Bucha, Irpin and Motyzhin, we know that what we are witnessing are some very sickening war crimes that have been committed by Russian forces in Ukraine.

We do not even know the extent of the atrocities that have already been carried out in Kharkiv or Mariupol. We witnessed, in Kharkiv, the bombing of a maternity hospital where women, children and infant babies were killed and maimed. In Mariupol, Russians dropped a large bomb on a theatre where so many were seeking refuge. They had clearly marked in the parking lot that there were children there. The Russians still bombed that theatre, killing hundreds of people by some accounts.

We all have to be concerned with what Russia's intent is in Ukraine. There was an article that came out of one of the newspapers, RIA Novosti in Moscow, that said that Russia had to de-Ukrainianize Ukraine, and tried to associate that with de-nazification. That sends a clear message of where the Kremlin is sitting, where Putin is taking this war and what his entire intent is, which would result in a genocide.

As the person who sponsored the Holodomor memorial bill in the House, along with Raynell Andreychuk, a former senator who sponsored it in the Senate back in 2008 to recognize it as a genocide, I would never have thought that we would be talking about genocide in Ukraine not in historical terms, regarding the famine that happened in 1932-33 and that was created by Joseph Stalin and his communist thugs, but in modern times: right now, in Ukraine in the year 2022.

This clearly demonstrates that our world has changed, and that the security threat that is facing western democracies is in flux and in peril. We had the Cold War peace dividends we were able to collect on after the fall of the Berlin wall, and the move of former soviet states to turn into free, liberated, democratic and independent countries such as Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Moldova and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, among others.

We thought we were onto a new world peace and only had to worry about small state actors, terrorist organizations and transnational criminal organizations from a standpoint of national security. However, with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin and his Russian thugs in the army, we know the world has changed. NATO is now more important than ever since the end of the Second World War.

Essentially, the collective security in Europe and the transatlantic sphere has gone on high alert. We have to deal with this Russian threat right away. NATO members are trying to help Ukraine in every way possible so that it can win this war. The only way this war ends in Ukraine is when Ukraine beats Vladimir Putin and his Russian military back across the border.

● (1540)

Ukraine has been asking NATO and asking Canada for more weapons. We could be sending them more things for their coastal defence purposes, like the Harpoons that we have here in Canada and the launch systems. I know there have been proposals made to the Minister of National Defence on how we can take some of our batteries and move those over there with Harpoon missiles so that we can protect Odessa from falling and protect that coastline so Russia does not get in there and take control of the entire Black Sea coastline from Moldova all the way across to Donbass.

They have also been calling for armoured personnel carriers. We know that here in Canada we have some light armoured vehicles that are in the process of either being retired or very soon will be retired with their replacements already in production or completed production. We could be sending our Coyote LAV IIs right now. Our Bisons and our M113 LAVs could also be going over there. We are talking about armoured personnel carriers and fighting machines that have proven themselves in Afghanistan and that can be very well used by the Ukrainian military and self-defence forces.

They have been asking for help. As the Conservative Party leader said after the President Zelenskyy speech, we have to put into place the protection of humanitarian corridors so that those who can flee from harm's way can get out and so that humanitarian supplies can get into those cities that are being besieged.

Just last week, we had five Ukrainian members of parliament here, and when we met with them and when they did their press conference, they were very clear that they needed all these tools, plus they needed to get fighter jets and anti-air defence weapon systems. We know that, even though Canada does not have any of those systems to give, we can go and buy them and give them to Ukraine, so that they can protect their own airspace and secure those corridors so that people can leave.

It is important that Canada spends its 2% of its GDP on national defence in the light of the new security threat, not just to NATO but here at home, as well as in the Indo-Pacific region. We have to be spending and contributing at that level if we are going to be taken seriously when we are sitting at the table. Because we have not been serious about investing in our military and our national defence, we are not a serious consideration when we are talking about how to better serve and protect NATO and NATO allies. We are not getting invited to new tables such as the recent Australia-U.S.-U.K. treaty, where they are doing more security and national defence together in the South Pacific and throughout the Pacific region, for that matter. That is because they know that we have not been there to step up with our own investments in national security, so why would we be investing in things like the South Pacific?

Security starts right here at home and that means we have to invest heavily in our NORAD systems as well. NORAD modernization is important. We do hear that the government has finally made a decision to buy the F-35s. That is the fighter jet that is best to serve our NORAD and NATO missions. It is also the fighter jet that the Royal Canadian Air Force has been asking for over the last 12 years. It is one that Canada has invested in heavily since the Paul Martin government when we originally signed on to the Joint Strike Fighter task force. We have been making annual commitments and payments into that program, so this is the right plane for our air force. It is the right plane for our allies, and it is the right plane for Canada's aerospace industry.

We have to invest in that, as well as the North Warning System and low earth orbit RADARSAT. The Nanisivik naval base is still not open after six years. The icebreakers have to continue to come, as well as the submarines that have under-ice capabilities. As the member for Kingston and the Islands said, ballistic missile defence was part of that NORAD mission and that is why that also plays into investing in our military so we can do more at home, as well as do that NATO mission with new surface combatants, as well as new

Business of Supply

recruiting and investing in more heavy-lift capabilities so that we can do what is right for those who serve us.

It is our troops, the best of the best that Canada has to offer, that deserve to have fighter jets in the air, warships on the water and submarines under the ice, so that they can serve us not just here at home but protect the world around the entire globe.

• (1545)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is very knowledgeable and I will not engage him in the “who loves 2% more” game that has been going on for a while, because it is kind of a useless exercise.

I too want to pick up on the member's comments about the peace dividend during the Cold War, which is critical to our understanding of the Canadian government's casualness toward defence spending. We have enjoyed the peace dividend that is provided primarily by the American umbrella and we need to change our attitude toward defence spending.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, it is inherent upon all of us to start talking about this publicly so that Canadians realize it is a necessary expense of their tax dollars to make this investment, a huge investment. It is going to take billions of dollars and, in some estimates, upward of \$60 billion to make the investments on an annual basis in the equipment, the bases that we need, as well as the wings that need to be modernized to deal with the new threats that we have.

The Soviet Union came to a sudden halt because it went bankrupt and with great diplomacy by a number of world leaders. That has been turned on its head, and not just by what we are witnessing right now with the full invasion of Ukraine. This war started in Ukraine back in 2014 with the annexation and illegal occupation of Crimea by Russia and the war in Donbass. It has been eight years of war and all allies have been slow to rise to this occasion to prevent what we are dealing with right now.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, for many years, when I have heard the Conservatives asking questions in the House, I have noticed that they are always concerned about the Liberal government's spending sprees. Knowing its past and how it manages money, we can agree that these concerns are sometimes justified.

Does my colleague believe that if we increased the Canadian Forces' budget, for example, since everyone agrees that it is under-equipped, we would also run the risk of the Liberal government spending the money haphazardly as usual and of ending up with very little for a hefty price?

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, the world changed in 2014. As for the investments in the Canadian Armed Forces, without continuing to rely upon the peace dividend after the end of the Cold War, it was time to start making those major investments. That is why Prime Minister Harper signed on to the Wales Summit pledge that we would hit that 2% of GDP. It took the full-scale invasion of Ukraine to get there now.

We have to fix the procurement system. That is the only way we can ensure we get equipment delivered faster, and we can get the kit that is required. We need to use the Defence Production Act as much as possible and ensure that there is not a misappropriation of dollars in things like defence procurement. A lot of the things that we are talking about, including NORAD modernization, are going to require us to buy off the shelf. A lot of companies around the world make it and that is the way we are going to get the best kit for our troops.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is the massacre of civilians in Bucha and the allegations of mass rape that have shocked the world, but it really is just an escalation of the war of terror that the Putin regime has been running against the people of Ukraine. It really is a line in the sand for us in Canada and for the world.

I have enormous respect for my colleague's expertise on this. The number one obligation is getting international war crime investigators in there so it can be documented because we are dealing with a disinformation terror regime, and second is getting the materials on the ground to help the people of Ukraine defend their skies, defend their communities and stop the killings and torture of their people by the Putin gang.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, we need to continue to isolate Putin and the Russian regime on the world stage, including taking them off the UN Human Rights Council. We need to make sure Putin and everyone who is responsible for using rape as a weapon and committing the atrocities against civilians in Ukraine, which are being documented, are all pulled in front of the Hague and face the International Criminal Court for committing these atrocities.

Who would have thought that we would be talking about the definition of "human rights" and about war crimes in our modern age, but here it is in our generation. It is sickening.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise here in the House, not only on behalf of my constituents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound but on an issue of such fundamental importance to all Canadians, that of supporting our Canadian Armed Forces and the need to meet our NATO commitment of 2% of our GDP.

I plan on taking a slightly different tack in my speech than likely many of the previous speeches that we have heard so far today in order to provide a more fulsome perspective from someone with over 25 years in the Canadian Armed Forces.

First, I want to thank every single sailor, soldier, aviator and special forces operator that has served, is still serving and will serve our great country.

Why do we need to invest this 2%? As has been clearly laid out in a number of the speeches, the world has changed. I would argue it has actually been very volatile for a number of years now, at least in my military career and in my lifetime, and it will continue to be that volatile and an ever-changing situation. Right now we are facing the absolutely existential threat of Russia to Ukraine and to our NATO allies, but China and terrorism are things that continue to be on the forefront of the frontier that we need to be able to address.

My colleague who spoke just prior to me clearly laid out the situation in Ukraine and how Russia was posing an immediate threat not only to Ukraine but to our NATO allies. I would like to provide some additional context to just how important supporting our Canadian Armed Forces is, and how we need to be adaptable and how we need to be resourced to do that.

When I first joined, one of my first operations was a domestic operation here in Canada during the ice storm in 1998. It was not something we prepared and trained for in a traditional sense, but due to the phenomenal training that our Canadian Armed Forces and our Canadian Army delivers, it was something our soldiers were well prepared for. My overseas missions were all under the NATO umbrella, with the exception of my final mission in Iraq, but I will get to that because there was a NATO connection there as well.

Regarding the complete complexity of what we need to do within the Canadian Armed Forces, we are over there keeping the peace, but we are also monitoring elections and working non-stop with international NGOs and supporting other nations on the ground, including, in some cases, when riots and other situations occur, being that support network to get them out of harm's way.

During my second tour in Bosnia, 9/11 happened, and I believe that fundamentally changed the globe as I am sure we could all acknowledge. It changed the dynamic and the ideas of what we were going to be able to do. It then ultimately led to the coalition of the willing to engage in Afghanistan, which then morphed into a NATO mission. I was there in combat in 2007, but ultimately it was our training mission in 2012 that was of much more importance. Unfortunately, we failed. We did not fail completely, but I do believe we failed in delivering on that, as we see now with the Taliban having taken over the reins.

However, when we look at Ukraine and the training mission that has been ongoing there over the last number of years, I would argue Canada has played a critical role in supporting Ukraine in that opposition to Russia.

When I was Iraq, again, although it was a U.S.-led coalition, I was part of the team that actually stood up the NATO training mission and went in and briefed the Canadian general and his team that was leading that NATO training mission into Iraq.

My whole point is that NATO fills this critical role in dealing with threats from around the globe. It is our obligation. We signed up for this at the Wales Summit, and as the Liberal member for Winnipeg North clearly stated in his speech, the strength of NATO and our collective ability to stand up and defend our respective sovereignty and, frankly, even to be able to afford a properly resourced military or defence is by doing it together. Canada made this commitment in 2014, and we need to abide by that international commitment in order to contribute to our part of international peace and security.

What does this 2% mean? It essentially means, as some of the other members have said here in the House, that it is pretty much doubling our current expenditures.

• (1555)

It is important for everybody to understand just how complicated that is going to be and the impact it will have on the force structure of our Canadian Armed Forces from both capabilities and capacity perspectives. As much as Strong, Secure, Engaged, or SSE, the current defence policy, has some strengths, it alone is insufficient to provide the necessary policy top cover.

I don't profess to have all the answers, but I know that if CAF is properly supported, and this needed investment is made into our military, Canada and CAF will then be much more capable of responding, both domestically and internationally, to anything Canada and NATO requires us to do. As such, I am pushing and will push that, and I will explain a bit more on this later, we need to do a non-partisan, or at least bipartisan, foreign policy review we can agree on, which will then drive a future update to our defence review.

How will we do this? First, in order to spend this money and properly resource our Canadian Armed Forces and meet this commitment, the military's biggest challenge half the time is not having that predictable, stable funding. If we do not have this programmed and understand it, it is hard to expend the money. There has been a lot of commentary about where defence spending has lapsed. Part of the challenge with that is that when it lapses we will not be getting that same bang for our buck going forward. Right now the normal inflation is approximately 5.7%, but in some sectors of the defence industry, defence inflation is at 20% in one year. Therefore, if we were planning to buy 10 ships one year, but delayed that by one year, we would then only get eight. I am not professing this is simple.

When we are trying to balance a budget and make it so that we are not creating future challenges for the next generation, this needs to be done by working together. So many MPs have already stated the need for fixing our procurement system. This needs to be streamlined. We need one dog to kick, in my opinion, and I am not professing any violence to dogs, as I do like dogs, but my point is that there needs to be one person in charge of our procurement system in order to fix it.

As well, we need to invest in our people because they are the most critical resource within our Canadian Armed Forces. I already mentioned the importance of why we need that bipartisan or non-partisan foreign policy and defence review. It is important because

Business of Supply

it is the key to preventing political interference and delays within our procurement process.

I do not want to get into the capabilities or specific platforms because nothing drives me nuts more than hear politicians speaking about plane X or tank Y. We should be talking about capabilities in general, telling our Canadian Armed Forces and military experts what they need to deliver in Canada's interest on the international stage and then letting them come back to us with the best options available and specifically where we can properly spend this increase in our defence budgets.

We have already talked about NORAD modernization. I am confident, based on what I have heard so far today, that the Liberal government will include needed funding for NORAD modernization in the budget on Thursday. However, we have to focus on filling in those key gaps within NORAD versus just nibbling around the edges. One comment was made that we have to relook at ballistic missile defence. We have to put more money into our Arctic. We can look at surveillance, UAV capacities and better engineering capabilities. We can put more money into our people, our sailors, soldiers, aircrew and special forces. Special forces is another area we could spend more money. Cyber and strategic lift are also great ideas we can spend money on.

In summary, I think I have addressed the why of the motion, which are the threats and our obligation to get to 2%. The how is that it needs to be done through providing predictable funding, fixing the procurement system, investing in our people, investing in key capabilities, and ultimately having a non-partisan or bipartisan foreign policy and defence review.

The world needs a Canada that maintains its position as a trusted global security partner and a reliable member of NATO. Without increasing our military spending, the government puts this at risk. Meeting our NATO commitment of spending 2% of GDP today and into the future is essential.

Although in military planning hope is not an option, I hope all members of the House will support this motion.

• (1600)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I thank the hon. member for his service. Both of my grandfathers served in the First World War and my father served in the North Atlantic in the Second World War, but over the last 20 years, the lapsed funding for the military has been a constant.

Business of Supply

Yes, we can throw political stuff around, but I am wondering if, and perhaps the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman could also chime in on this, it is more about having the infrastructure in the military to actually take this lapsed funding, most of which is carried forward, and treat it as though it were a consistent revenue source that could be used and properly managed by the military to get the things we need.

• (1605)

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I have a brief response. I cannot even pretend to get into all the nuances and complexity of what the member is asking. I spent a year on an army defence procurement project. In my experience throughout my military career, the biggest challenge we had, and I think this probably exists in a lot of departments, was that we felt that if we did not spend it, we would lose it. The member's idea of carrying forward does not truly work, definitely not within DND.

When it comes to these defence procurement projects, the real challenge is the political interference. I believe this so much, and I do not mean they do it on purpose. It is because we can get into this idea of why this project is what we need. We can look at previous parties during different elections, with different campaigns and how they ran on certain things, but ultimately they need to get out of that. That is why I believe in non-partisan or bipartisan defence policy and foreign policy.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. This member has first-hand experience in this area, compared to most of us. We have not experienced what he has, so when he speaks to an issue like this one, we should listen to what he has to say.

One thing that stood out to me in his speech was how he talked about the need to invest in the members of the Canadian Armed Forces. As members already know, the Bloc Québécois will support this motion. However, we do not know what that will mean for the budget, in light of the NDP-Liberal alliance.

What does the member mean when he says that we need to invest in people, in the members of our forces? Is he referring to recruiting or retaining military personnel?

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, again, it is not an easy answer, but it is all of the above. We need to invest in our recruiting. Almost a decade ago, I tried to write a master's paper, and I failed miserably at that too, specifically about why we need to invest our best people within the Canadian Armed Forces into the recruiting system so we have that flexibility to recruit the best. As we all know, the huge labour shortages the country is facing, it is a shortage across most of the western world, so we have to get those right people.

The other key aspect the government could do to help fix this is on the procurement side. One of the things that we are actually lacking within the government, in my opinion, is enough expertise within defence procurement alone. If we can invest more to get those quality people into that, it would allow the procurement cycle

to improve. By investing in training, investing in support for families and investing in our members, we can never go wrong.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his service and for his speech today. According to the Parliamentary Budget Office, for Canada to meet the 2% NATO target, we would have to spend from \$54 billion to \$56 billion annually on defence, doubling what we spend now. Could the member share how this is justified while pharmacare and dental for Canadians, which would cost one-third of this, are not supported by the Conservatives?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, again, this is not an easy answer. It is justified, from my opinion, and we are obviously supporting putting 2% into our military, because as I explained in my speech, the world is a volatile place and people dying around the globe. I am not trying to take away from dental care or pharmacare, which are primarily provincial jurisdiction, but the point is that national defence is a federal jurisdiction issue, and it is what we should be focused on in the House.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, The Economy; the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Disaster Assistance.

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. and very capable member for Kings—Hants.

It is an honour for me to participate in this discussion, and I like to see it as a discussion as opposed to a partisan debate because this affects us all. Security is a universal problem, regardless of where one falls on the political spectrum.

I am going to take an unusual tack and take us back to 1940. At that point, Canada had something in the order of the third or fourth largest navy in the world, probably one of the larger armies in the world and a growing air force. In fact, Canada was considered a place where a lot of the training took place for people in the air force.

It was not a good time for the allies. The Germans were making really good progress right across Europe, literally taking over quite a number of countries, and the British were rightly concerned. The British gold reserves had been moved to Canada. There was talk that the royal family might need to be moved to Canada. The situation was pretty grim.

Business of Supply

President Roosevelt was trying to help as best he could with the allies, but he was hampered by domestic politics. Of course, Canada was involved in that war at that point in 1940 very extensively. Prime Minister Mackenzie King realized early on that Canada was going to need to transfer its security arrangements from the declining British Empire to the ascendant American Empire. To that end, he met with President Roosevelt in Ogdensburg, New York, in a railway car, and he negotiated with President Roosevelt the transfer of those security arrangements. Both the prime minister and the president saw that the defence of North America was going to take a mutual effort.

President Roosevelt was concerned about the upscaling of Japanese aggression in the Pacific, and he saw the British Columbia coast as an easy entry point to North America. German subs were lurking in the north Atlantic, sometimes in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and President Roosevelt felt that something had to be done.

The initial position of President Roosevelt was to simply make the Canadian military part of the U.S. north command, and that was a position that was rejected by Mackenzie King, who wanted to keep the Canadian military as a separate stand-alone military under the direction of the Government of Canada and the Parliament of Canada.

Out of the Ogdensburg agreement came the Permanent Joint Board on Defence. It was, has been, and still is the senior advisory body to develop defence architecture for North America during the past 80 years. However, the working presumption has been that Canada would have a fully functioning stand-alone military capable of defending Canada and contributing significantly to the defence of North America.

That was very true 80 years ago, and for a long time it continued to be true. Canadians like the idea of being independent of the American military adventures. However, what they do not like is paying for it.

Members will recall in this very chamber President Obama, in the nicest, kindest and gentlest way, saying that they would appreciate some help with burden sharing. Members will also recall that President Trump, in his own irritating way, said much the same thing.

• (1610)

Secretary General Stoltenberg has also said much the same thing and has taken note of our contribution to NATO, yet the entire premise of Mackenzie King's argument with President Roosevelt was that Canada would have an independent military that was capable of defending Canada and contributing significantly to the defence of North America. NORAD was the most significant outcome of the permanent joint board on defence, and it has been a valuable point of collaboration between the two militaries. Canada has been a huge beneficiary of that treaty.

That was then, however, and now is now. Over the years, through all Canadian governments, military capabilities have declined, along with our percentage of GDP spent on military spending. We have, as a previous member said, enjoyed a prolonged peace dividend. What he did not add, and I add it here, is that it has been at

the expense of our American cousins. As John Manley, the former foreign affairs minister, once said, we cannot always go to the bathroom when the bill arrives. We have spent too much time in the bathroom, and the bill has arrived.

“Strong, Secure and Engaged” contemplated about \$163 billion of additional spending over 20 years. Unfortunately, even this relatively modest goal has proved to be difficult, as the military has lapsed about \$5 billion in the last three years. The military's own readiness report makes for some depressing reading.

Then along comes February 24, when, as others have said, everything changed. Our entire threat assessment accelerated the timeline way beyond anyone's previous expectations. At that time the defence committee was engaged in a threat assessment. When we began the threat assessment, none of us had anticipated that Russia would actually carry out an invasion of Ukraine. If we are to defend our own sovereignty and, as importantly, contribute to the sovereignty of others, we have to step up with real fiscal firepower. It is in equipment and personnel, and it is in personnel and it is equipment. Witness after witness after witness at the defence committee keeps telling us about CAF's problems with recruitment and retention of personnel.

Military personnel are expensive. It costs literally millions of dollars to train and retain a pilot. Retaining a pilot is as difficult as training a pilot. Cyber-specialists are a hot commodity, and private companies can offer generous salaries and benefits that are very attractive.

Witness after witness tells us of a procurement system that is broken. Journalist Gwynne Dyer once said that the next war will be a “come as you are” war. There will not be any time to fix anything and there will not be any time to buy new stuff, and the bills will be huge, in part because we kept kicking the decisions down the road. I am glad to see a decision has been made on F-35s, but the all-domain warning system is going to be a hugely expensive acquisition.

Russia has been showing that it has hypersonic capability and that it has militarized the Arctic. If we cannot defend our sovereignty on our own, then we will have to rely on others, and if we have to rely on others, we have to hope that their interests align with ours. Prime Minister Mackenzie King intuitively understood the desire for an independent sovereign nation, and he further understood the cost of being that independent sovereign nation.

• (1615)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite clearly understands the importance of making vital investments in our national defence to get up to our NATO commitments. It is also clear from the debate today that the government's partners in the NDP simply do not. They have an ideological opposition to making the investments that are required in defence and they do not understand that investing in our security is fundamental to anything else that we want to do as a country.

Business of Supply

I asked the foreign affairs minister at committee whether the agreement with the NDP involved any commitments with respect to foreign policy or security policy, and she said no. That is good news, I think. It also shows that the NDP is not as engaged in these issues as it should be. However, then I asked the minister if she was confident that the agreement between the government and the NDP would hold if the government chose to increase defence spending, and she could not answer that question.

I am concerned that the NDP agreement with the government will limit our capacity to invest in defence spending and will hold the government back in doing the things that it needs to do. Does the member share my concerns that the partners that the government has in the NDP are going to put those required investments at risk?

• (1620)

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, the short answer is “no”.

I will just point out to all members of the House that without security, we have nothing. What we watch on our television sets every night shows that security in Ukraine is illusory. Therefore, talk about other spending in other elements of government becomes illusory. I make the core point that a government needs to provide security for its nation before we can talk about anything else.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government avoided making any decisions on the F-35s for seven years.

In the meantime, it spent hundreds of millions of dollars to maintain the old CF-18s and purchased old FA-18s from Australia. It spent money bringing these jets up to standards and maintaining them. After this seven-year boondoggle, it has finally decided to buy the F-35, the jet that the government swore it would never buy.

Could my colleague expand on that?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, the F-35 is a terrific platform, particularly in the elements of interoperability. If in fact we do get ourselves involved with the all-domain awareness system, the F-35 would be a major contributor to that, as will be ship-based information systems, and as will be land-based systems. That will all be integrated, because as General O'Shaughnessy once said, “If I can't detect it, I can't defend against it.”

Yes, it has been a long time coming. I hope this is a decision that will be executed quite quickly and that we will get on with the integration into the all domain awareness system that is contemplated by NORAD.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, when it comes to military spending, there are different aspects, one of which is making sure that maintenance dollars are made available as well.

The Liberals have continued the expensive trend of contracting out the work to repair Canadian ships and planes, resulting in greater expenses to the military and to Canadians. Does the member believe that in order for Canada to ensure it is getting the great-

est value for its money, we should be ensuring the qualified personnel in our armed forces do this work instead of contracting it out?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I am agnostic as to whether it should be personnel within the CAF or exterior personnel. Some of this equipment is highly sophisticated, and we simply cannot keep people in the military to fix a particular part of a particular plane, so there are times when contracting out makes more sense than actually having a full-time employee or employees look after that particular equipment. This is very sophisticated equipment, so I leave that decision ultimately to the officers involved.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood for sharing his time with me today. I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to the opposition motion on national defence spending.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: February 24 was the end of the post-Cold War era. While nobody can claim to know exactly what will happen next, I expect the foreign policy landscape to be altered for decades to come.

As such, this is an important time for all parliamentarians to reflect on how we want to see Canada and its role in the world. I believe this is a crucial moment in our country's history, and I want to reiterate my support for increased defence spending. I also want to use my time to point out other areas where I think Canada should be a world leader.

• (1625)

[*English*]

I have a number of family members who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces, from my grandfather, whom I am extremely proud of, to my aunt, who just recently retired. I want to make sure her name gets on the record. My aunt, Mary Blois, served 30-plus years in the Canadian Armed Forces. My fiancée's sister Kylie and her husband Keith both are service members stationed here in the Ottawa area, and her father Hamish was a member who served in the United Kingdom, so I know fully the important contribution that our service members make every day. Let me go on the record for thanking all members of our Canadian Armed Forces for their contribution and their service here today.

I was reminded of that when I joined the Minister of National Defence for the deployment of HMCS *Halifax* from Halifax. We were able to engage with the families and the service members. It was an important reflection for all of us on how important those members are, particularly in the times in which we see ourselves today.

The war in Ukraine has heightened the continued importance of our ability to respond militarily with our NATO partners. Our government has made important investments to strengthen our military capacity through “Strong, Secure and Engaged”. We are increasing defence spending by 70% between 2017 and 2026. I will echo the comments of my hon. colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood that I do not want to make it a partisan debate, but this is a marked departure in terms of the investment that we saw under the last government, when spending actually fell below 1% of GDP.

[*Translation*]

I think all members of this Parliament will join me in recognizing the importance of our men and women in uniform. As such, I think we should also focus on ensuring that they have the equipment and materiel they need to do their job well and be as well-protected as possible.

As I said, I had a chance to visit the Irving shipyard and Maritime Forces Atlantic in Halifax. While I was there, I saw a major acquisition for our Coast Guard and one in the works for our navy, the Canadian surface combatant, which will replace our frigates. We must not underestimate the importance of renewing and investing in our military equipment.

[*English*]

Beyond our immediate military needs, continued partnership with the United States on continental security will and should be a top priority. I understand the Minister of National Defence is exploring options on NORAD upgrades. I appreciate the fact that she is doing so and that the government's attention on this file is moving forward, because it is warranted and it is beneficial.

The Arctic will also be an important region in the days ahead for many reasons. First and foremost are the impacts of climate change. The impacts are being felt, and they will continue to be felt in this region in the days ahead.

Of course, the Arctic is also our border with Russia. We need to continue to focus on working with territorial governments not just to improve infrastructure but also to improve our capability to respond to events in the Arctic, whether they are related to transportation, our military or climate change. I have heard many members of Parliament in this House speak about this. The government is working in this domain, but the events of the last six weeks warrant that the work continue and be expedited in this area.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

I would also like to suggest to my colleagues in the House that beyond the immediate threat posed by the war in Ukraine, the effects of climate change also warrant an important conversation about military spending. Our Canadian Armed Forces must be equipped to respond to events at home and abroad with our allies. We know that the instability caused by global climate change will lead to political and social volatility that could threaten regional and international security.

Beyond the important discussion on military commitment and capability, I believe the time has come for Canada to position itself on three fronts where we have the capacity to help serve the world.

Business of Supply

First, we can think about food production. As the proud chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, I might be a little biased. However, I think Canada's capacity to produce food has become even more important since the war in Ukraine began. Ukraine and Russia produce a significant amount of the world's food. As I mentioned earlier, when war is being waged on their lands, farmers find it increasingly difficult to cultivate their fields.

[*English*]

We have that capacity, and we need to start thinking about how we can tie our capacity in the agriculture sector to our foreign policy. Let us talk about fertilizer, for example. We have heard comments in the House about some of the implications that are going to be happening. This is not a six-month problem. This is a next-10-years problem. The genie has come out of the bottle. Europe, our allies and indeed countries around the world will be looking for alternative routes, vis-à-vis some of these crucial inputs.

We have a responsibility, I would argue, morally and ethically, but also an economic opportunity that should not be passed up, to be part of helping to ensure that there is global food security. I would welcome all members of the House having this continued conversation in the days ahead. I really think it is important on that side.

[*Translation*]

We can also think about energy security. Russia produces natural gas and oil.

[*English*]

I am going to turn to English because I only have one minute.

On energy security, Canada has a lot to offer. I know that, for some members in the House, there will be a contention between fossil fuels and looking to the future. The world is not black and white: It is grey. We have to do both at the same time.

I would argue that we have a responsibility to look at ways that we can respond on the natural gas and oil side. It would not be easy to turn something overnight, but is there an ability there? Let us talk about critical minerals, hydrogen and small modular reactors. Those are going to be really important to energy security in Canada. I would argue that we could use those technologies and export that capacity to the world.

Finally, on critical minerals, we are making really important investments in the automotive sector but we have to have critical minerals be those key inputs to make sure we have capacity in this country. I wish I had more time. I look forward to hearing from my hon. colleagues.

Business of Supply

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his speech. I particularly appreciated his remarks on critical minerals and the importance of developing them in Canada.

I want to get the member's thoughts on whether he feels it is important to use national defence spending to upgrade our early North Warning System, in particular expanding it to include coastal surveillance, maritime and underwater surveillance, and even space surveillance. Does the member feel it is important? Does he feel this would be a good use of taxpayer dollars in the upcoming budget?

● (1635)

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I do not pretend to be a policy expert in the domain the member just asked the question about.

On the principle of working with the United States, particularly, in a continental approach, in terms of approaches on coastal elements, I think cybersecurity is an element we also have to be focused on. I believe that now is the time to be looking at these investments. We still have to maintain fiscal balance. I have said that before in the House.

These investments, to the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, are crucial to the underpinning of our success in this country and to the rules-based international order.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me begin by complimenting my colleague from Kings—Hants on his French. It was very nice to hear him.

He said that the government already started making investments in 2017, but there are three major problems in the armed forces: procurement, recruitment, and retention.

For example, with respect to procurement, forces members have been asked to buy their own boots lately because the government has been unable to provide them.

As for recruitment, the target is to have 25% women, but with all the sexual misconduct cases, which the government tried to cover up, it will not be easy to recruit women.

Finally, with respect to staff retention, the family structure has changed, and the constant moving around does not entice people to join the armed forces.

Has my hon. colleague considered these three major problems, which require investments?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, or rather her questions since there were several components.

First, I have confidence in the leadership of the Minister of National Defence, and we will work with the Canadian Forces to change the internal culture. Of course, as I said, as far as investments in the Canadian Forces are concerned, it is also about supporting them on the human resources level, by funding recruitment and retention programs, for example. It is not just equipment and combat gear, but also human resources that are needed to continue to improve the culture within the Canadian Forces.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is quite clear that this 2% figure of GDP for military spending has no real basis in sound military thinking. Of course, it was coined by Donald Trump. I understand recent testimony before the defence committee has made it clear, from a number of academics and experts, that the 2% has no grounding in any real figure.

What is important, of course, is effective spending. I am curious about my hon. colleague's thoughts on the 2% as an arbitrary figure. Does he think it is effective?

My second part is this. We know that, in 2015, the Liberals said that they would not purchase the F-35 fighter jet. Last week, the Liberals announced that they were pursuing a fighter jet that does not have Arctic capability and is unlikely to create jobs here in Canada. Two things the member touched on in his speech were the importance of Arctic sovereignty and creating jobs in Canada.

Can he rationalize that for me?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, first of all, I do not think it was Donald Trump who put forward the 2% benchmark. I think that was established in 2014 at the Wales Summit.

To the member's question, whether or not it is 2%, I think it is a benchmark for governments and countries that are involved in NATO to aspire to. To continue to support that type of investment in our security, on that principle, I agree with it.

He mentioned, of course, the F-35. My point to him is that it is seven years later. The world changes, and I am a little bit disappointed in some of the principles from the NDP. They do not understand that the foreign policy landscape has changed. Canada has a role in the international community. We need to be there with these critical investments and I think, at the end of the day, I believe in what Procurement Canada has done in terms of the pathway on this jet.

● (1640)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

It is an honour today to speak to this important motion on behalf of my riding of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan. For anyone who is just tuning in, the motion reads:

That, given that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance has made an immeasurable contribution to peace, security, and prosperity for all its members, the House call on the government to increase spending on national defence to at least two per cent of Canada's gross domestic product, in accordance with NATO's 2014 Wales Summit Declaration.

Business of Supply

It would be useful to start by discussing how much Canada spends on defence compared with other members of NATO. Canada sits in 25th place among the 30 member organizations when it comes to defence spending as a share of gross domestic product. We spend 1.36%, which is more than Slovenia, Belgium, Spain and Luxembourg. Some of the countries that spend more on their militaries are Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania and Denmark.

Canada is a founding member of NATO. We signed the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 because we saw this alliance as an important tool in preserving global peace. Being part of an alliance such as this, especially as a founding member, means something. It means that Canada must keep up a certain level of operational readiness and be prepared and equipped to help our allies, our friends, in times of crisis. It does not mean that we can just rely on the United States for security. Continuously underfunding our military and not meeting our commitments to NATO means that we are failing our allies, our friends and more importantly, our own national sovereignty.

It is worth noting that the Liberals are playing a shell game with the way that defence spending is reported to NATO. They now report many things as defence spending that most people would see as having very little to do with operational readiness, such as payments to veterans, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, and information and technology support. Even including those numbers, we still fall sadly short of our commitment.

We all know the proud history of Canada's armed forces. This is especially important this week with the anniversary of Vimy Ridge, where so many brave young men paid the ultimate price. It is worth remembering that we once had a strong and well-funded military. We can name any number of important battles from the 20th century, and Canada was an integral part of so many of them. The bravery and ability of the men and women in our fighting forces has always been second to none, but under the Liberals, they are forced to use old equipment. Who can forget Jean Chrétien sending our men and women to Afghanistan with green fatigues?

On the topic of procurement, and as a former member of the Royal Canadian Air Force, I am happy to see the government finally discuss the possibility of potentially awarding an F-35 contract later this year; that is, if negotiations go well. This seems to be a theme for the government when it comes to military procurement. The Liberals push everything back and it gets more expensive through delays, bureaucratic studies and increased costs. Be it F-35s, polar icebreakers or the Joint Support Ship program, programs just grow in cost when the Liberals get involved.

I should give them credit for their one and only successful purchase. They bought 40-year-old F-18 Hornets from Australia. What good did that do us? These were delivered after Australia purchased its own modern F-35s.

• (1645)

Last month, the PBO released a report explaining just how broken our military procurement system is, and with so many other policies, the Liberals say one thing and do another. They claim they are spending more on defence, but the PBO exposed that these commitments are continually pushed back to future years. This

risks overloading our procurement system and casts serious doubts on its sustainability. While there is an urgent need to increase Canada's defence spending, it must be done in a manner that gets results for dollars spent, a foreign concept to the government. I wonder how much of the current DND budget is spent on focus groups, cancelled contract fees or just wasting money on the inflated cost of projects that they have delayed for a decade.

In 2014, following Russia's first invasion of Ukraine in Crimea, NATO members all agreed to spend 2% of their GDP on defence to bolster our defences against Putin. Some may choose to believe that these are European problems and that this is all happening far away, but the truth is that Canada shares a border with Russia. I remember Prime Minister Harper making annual trips to northern territories. This was important to show the world that we take our northern sovereignty seriously. Now the Liberals are postponing Canada's polar icebreaker program, just like every other procurement program. I do not know if the current Prime Minister has even bothered to visit Canada's north outside of election campaigns. It shows where his priorities lie.

Today, with the obvious war crimes being perpetrated against civilians in Ukraine, it is time for us to honour our commitment to our NATO allies. Members of the House may know that Saskatchewan is home to one of the largest populations of Ukrainians in Canada, making up 14% of our population, so we can understand why the reports coming out of Bucha are so heartbreaking and hit so close to home for so many in my province and in my riding.

We could be doing so much more to help Ukraine. We could ship our surplus army vehicles to Poland with our C-17s. We could look to third parties to purchase air defence equipment, such as Stinger missiles or UAVs, to send to Ukraine. We could even send our CF-18s to NATO's eastern flank in Romania, Poland or the Baltics instead of having them do exercises in the Netherlands. Ukrainians need our help now, real help, to repel an invasion, not just more sanctions.

We heard last week from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He addressed the House and asked each of us for help in protecting his people from Putin. If his pleas cannot convince the government to finally honour our NATO commitments, I do not know what will. It is time to back up our talk with action.

Business of Supply

Before closing, I would like to point out that my grandfather served. He was a British soldier from Glasgow, Scotland, who served with Canadian soldiers when they landed in Europe and started to fight their way through to Germany. At that time in my family's history, my grandfather was inspired by the Canadians and their efforts, men who had left their homeland and travelled halfway around the world to defend others. My grandmother saw the kindness of Canadian soldiers as they brought food and things that my family members, who were living on rations, did not have.

We have the ability in the House to do so much more. We have more to do and this is the time for our nation to stand up and do its part in this world.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, some of what the member said is factually incorrect. He accused the Liberal government of playing shell games and specifically referenced the fact that the percentage of GDP includes veterans' pensions. Is he aware that in 2018, NATO amended its definition of the 2% to include veterans' pensions? They are part of the calculation now, despite the fact that he uses that as an example to suggest that there is some kind of "shell game" going on.

More importantly, to address one of the comments toward the end of his speech, he said that we need to back up our talk with actions. What is that? Is he referring to when Stephen Harper was a tough guy with Vladimir Putin and told him to get out of Ukraine? Was he backing that up with action at the time? I ask because at the time he was spending less than 1% of GDP on our military.

• (1650)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, I will address the comments that I made earlier on. My comments were concerning operational capability, which has obviously gone right over the head of the member across the way, who is obviously not focusing on the issues at hand. We have to focus on our operational capability, and that is what this is about. It is the 2% going directly to procurement and to sustain our military and its operational effectiveness.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

NATO is asking its members to allocate 2% of their GDP to military spending. That is the subject of today's motion.

However, another international organization, the UN, has also proposed that wealthy countries such as Canada allocate the equivalent of 0.7% of their GDP to the international development of impoverished countries. Under the Liberals, this percentage is 0.27%, but it was 0.32% under the Stephen Harper government. This percentage is now lower with the Liberals in power, even though they boast that they are champions of international aid. That is just laughable.

The Conservatives say that we must agree to the request of an organization to which we belong. In this case, it is the NATO request concerning military spending.

Do they support the UN request for international aid? In my opinion, they go hand in hand.

[English]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the question from my colleague across the way.

When I spoke earlier on, I shared about my family's values and the generosity that my family received from Canadians. It is disheartening to see that our government is not focusing on other things and thinking beyond our own borders. The whole point of this discussion is to see that we do have a role and responsibility as the nation of Canada not only to stand up and protect our neighbours, but also to look after those who are facing challenges and economic austerity.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, my question for my hon. colleague is informed by my lived experience. I am proud to have served seven years now in our country's largest naval reserve division, and of my role in being appointed, as one of 14 individuals, by the Secretary General of NATO to advise on what the future of NATO and our alliance will look like. As the only Canadian, it did bring me quite a bit of sadness to see that we were not spending at 2%.

Would you support the investment in an enhanced Arctic presence to fight for our Arctic sovereignty, to enhance our capabilities to defend that sovereignty and to modernize our submarine fleet?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member needs to address all questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the member.

I would like a brief answer from the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, yes, 100%. I am disappointed that we have to rely on our British allies, who are contacting us and saying that if we are having problems with Arctic sovereignty, they can help us and we can use their submarines. We should be upgrading our submarines. I see this as a good opportunity for Canada to speak with Australia, Britain and the United States and look at upgrading our submarine fleet so that we can actually have the capability to protect our northern waters.

• (1655)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is important that I thank the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, and it is also important to read out what the motion is about. It states:

That, given that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance has made an immeasurable contribution to peace, security, and prosperity for all its members, the House call on the government to increase spending on national defence to at least two per cent of Canada's gross domestic product, in accordance with NATO's 2014 Wales Summit Declaration.

For the folks out there watching today wondering why we put the motion forward, it is because this simply was not getting done.

Business of Supply

I am going to focus my arguments on Arctic sovereignty and security. The reason I will do that is we need to understand in Canada that Putin has even made aggressive moves toward our own country. He has made claims to the Arctic seabed, which would add just under a million square kilometres to his existing claim. It is concerning to us as a nation, but it is especially concerning to our residents in the Arctic, and frankly to our allies as well. The threat is real. We have seen Putin deliver on that threat in Crimea and Ukraine, and he is very capable of delivering on it with others as well.

I will start off my arguments with what the experts are saying. We hear rhetoric from the Liberals, but we also hear some good comments from members who have been on the committee for many years. They give an accurate assessment, and I commend them for that.

I will start with my first article, “Canadian Forces in desperate need of new spending, procurement follow-through, experts say”. This is an article posted on April 2, 2022, which is very recent. Dave Perry, the president of the independent foreign policy and defence think tank, had these comments:

Perry said the image of the military used to be one focused on peacekeeping, but the direction the Forces are supposed to take is less clear now.

After that, Perry said the first step “would be for the government to actually make a decision about whether or not spending the money is a priority or not. I don't think there's been much evidence that it has been for this government.”

All we are asking for this afternoon is to bring spending up to the 2% commitment, that promise, especially considering the threat is very real in our north, especially in the Arctic.

It is one thing for us to have a rhetorical battle here in the House of Commons, but I am going to speak to what some leaders in the Arctic are saying about their concerns around their own security and sovereignty.

This is in another recent article, from March 24, 2022:

N.W.T. Premier Caroline Cochrane said Russia's aggressive actions should serve as a wake-up call to shore up safety and resiliency in the North.

“Now with Russia invading Ukraine, it does show that we are vulnerable,” she said. “We need to make sure that we have the structures, the infrastructure in place, the services in place so that our people can not only thrive but that we can maintain Arctic sovereignty.”

Here is a leader of one of our territories who is very concerned about this.

I will go to a mayor in the Arctic as well, Clarence Wood, who is the mayor of Inuvik. The article notes:

He says he's not worried for the safety of people living in Inuvik right now, but he also thinks locals would be “foolish not to be worried” about Arctic sovereignty, in light of current events.

“Russia has ambitions,” he said. “They've always had ambitions in the Arctic, and with the expansion of their military to their Arctic regions, it puts us even closer. So, yeah, I'd say we have concerns. We have a very limited military presence. I don't think it would take the Russians very long to go through here if they put their mind to it.”

Here again is a mayor on the front lines in the Arctic who has concerns and obviously represents the people of his region. I have heard this. I have been to several Arctic conferences, and a common comment I hear from residents is that this is their front yard

and they are seeing a potential threat coming across the Arctic and the North Pole.

I know time is limited and always is in this place, so I will speak to the motion and what is actually being done.

• (1700)

I think 2% is an aspirational goal. Obviously it is something that has been aspired to by previous governments. It is one thing to aspire to it in word, but it is another to aspire to it in actual delivery. What I am getting at is that it is one thing to make big promises and say, “Hey, we are going to do this”, but then not deliver. An example of that would be in the estimates around Arctic sovereignty. We have seen comments from the government, again talking big.

Speaking to what the member from Saskatchewan said before regarding accusing former prime minister Stephen Harper of talking to Putin and not having done anything, at least we had a prime minister who would stand up to him, and aggressively so. He understood the threats to Ukraine and other nations around Russia, and he spoke to Putin in a way that he needed to be spoken to. I think our country wishes our Prime Minister would do similarly, but that just is not happening.

In getting back to the estimates, we looked at what the government is actually spending on this. We know the commitments of NORAD. We have heard from many experts that billions are necessary to upgrade our northern defence system. The government had only committed \$163 million as of last year to even try to attempt to fix the system. General VanHerck, a leader of NORAD, as an example, has said that billions are necessary to upgrade the system in the north to get it to the standards of 2022 and beyond. To me, the government is just not delivering.

I am going to speak to an article by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, entitled “On the Arctic Watch: Why we need to protect Canada's sovereignty and security in the Far North.” The article states:

The [Liberal] government, right before the 2021 federal election, issued a joint statement with the Biden administration on the need to modernize NORAD but there are no timelines, financial commitments, or shopping list of desired capabilities. The statement acknowledges Arctic geopolitical competition, the impact of climate change, and advances in conventional missile threats (e.g., Russian hypersonic missiles) and leaves it open to both parties on what those capabilities can be.

Business of Supply

The whole premise of why we are here tonight is that it is necessary but it is simply not being delivered. I think we could agree, probably members from both sides, that all we want to see is this stuff delivered. We want to see boats in water. We want to see defensive capabilities actually purchased and acquired and the procurement process fixed. I think we want to get this thing fixed. We do not want to just have an argument where we poke each other in the eye. We really do want to get this across the line.

The budget is coming up this week. This is a call deliberately ahead of that, so that the Liberal government can make some good decisions and put that money into the budget. Our wish would be that it actually gets done.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree almost entirely with the member's speech. I am also against eye-poking. Generally people end up blind when there is eye-poking, and in this particular file, it is not a good idea to be blind.

The early warning system is massively expensive. It has also yet to be invented. Bits and pieces of it are invented. It is extremely difficult to see where this is going. I do know that this is going to cost literally billions of dollars. As General O'Shaughnessy would say, "I can't defend what I can't see."

I am asking the hon. member to cut the government a little slack on this. He should not be cutting the government a little slack on some of the other procurements though. I would be interested in his thoughts as to where we move first, because we need to up the game.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, it is that whole "fail to plan, plan to fail" analogy. However, I would say, even going back to former president Kennedy, there was not the infrastructure to go to the moon at the time when he made the call to say that they were going to get there, but he made the call to say that they were going to get there. I think we need to have the leadership, from the entire House, say that we need to get there. Let us find out what we need, in terms of procurement.

I have heard, first-hand, the problems with some procurement, some of the never-ending plan changes, that a shipbuilder could never keep up with the changes from the bureaucracy and different ministries around that stuff. We need to set the course to get there and set a timeline to do it, rather than just pontificate in the clouds about some aspirational goal that we will get there someday.

We need to set a timeline, back it up with the funds that are expected, that 2% being part of that, and then we will get there.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, although I agree with the substance of the motion, I am somewhat uncomfortable with the motion itself. It talks about increasing spending.

We have been here for weeks, and I have heard my Conservative friends criticize the government for spending too much. If we were to increase military spending from 1.37% to 2% of GDP, that would represent \$16 billion in additional annual spending at a time when

we need to help seniors, increase health transfers and invest in housing. Where will this money come from? Money does not grow on trees.

My question is simple: Must we choose between social housing and tanks?

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, money does not grow on trees in Quebec, nor does it anywhere else in our country, or anywhere for that matter. We know it is a very expensive endeavour to do this, but it is an accurate response. Indeed, the government is spending a lot of money, but is it spending it in the right direction? That is a huge question mark. We would disagree on how the government is spending money. It is one thing to throw money at a problem. However, to do it in the proper way to get things done, that needs to be done efficiently with the proper procurement process, with the right targets set and the right timelines. That is where we differ from the government across the way.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, following up in that vein, last week we were debating a Conservative motion that called for no new taxes and a return to balance. Today, we are talking about a motion that would represent about \$30 billion, give or take, in new spending. I am just wondering about what we often hear from Conservatives. I know the member is saying we would spend differently, but where is the \$30 billion of spending that he thinks ought to be cut in order to make room for these priorities?

While I am on my feet, I would mention that I was part of a foreign affairs study in 2019 of Canadian sovereignty in the north. I know some members are looking for examples of where New Democrats think we could spend in military spending. That report, which was a unanimous report, is a great place to start.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I have read that report. It is 28 recommendations, and it is a great report and a place to start and really build our defences.

I will go back. The NDP premise today has been all about priorities for money and other things that are important. I do agree with the member that things are important, but if we cannot defend our own borders and our own country and our own people and, where premiers are asking to be defended in the north if we cannot do that to start, then I do not know where we will be if somebody else decides to set up their shop on our shores. I would say that is where we need to spend the money.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate. I apologize, but I am going to have to cut the length of the member's speech. He has seven minutes to deliver his speech.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

Business of Supply

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, Talleyrand, a diplomat whom I admire, always said that if it goes without saying, then it will go even better if we say it. Let us say what must be said.

I am pleased to rise to speak today on this Conservative opposition day. Knowing that the devil is in the details, I want to take this opportunity to try to better understand this proposal which, while it seems valid, does require some reflection.

Unlike being a member of your local book club, NATO membership brings with it certain obligations. One such obligation is that member states allocate 2% of their GDP to defence-related expenditures. This 2% is a figure, a symbol. I know the Liberals are fond of symbols. In fact, it seems to me that the Liberal government is a little too focused on images, on symbols and on promises that are all too often meaningless. Meaning is the way. It is the path. It provides direction. Without meaning, we go astray.

As we have learned over the past few years, Canada has gone astray in terms of foreign affairs and national defence. It is hard to believe, but just four of the NATO member countries spend less than Canada on defence. As Canada, with its jet-set diplomacy, travels the world lecturing everyone about Ukraine, it spends less than Belgium, Spain, Luxembourg and Slovenia. Yes, Slovenia. That is shameful. Slovenia's biggest resource is comedians. Gaspar Proust, a worthy successor of Pierre Desproges and master of irony, loves to say to whoever will listen, "I'm a disillusioned Cartesian. I think, therefore I am, but I don't give a damn."

Canada does not seem to give a damn about its defence policy.

Beyond the symbolism, let us talk about what it all means. What will Canada do if it decides to spend 2% of its GDP, as required by NATO? Will Canada do that just to say that it did it? Will Canada do it just to look good, for its image, to contribute to world peace? Why will it do so?

Spending is one thing. Making good spending choices is another. We know the Liberal government loves to spend, but making an effective contribution to global peace is a different story. Right now, the Canadian Armed Forces have a serious personnel issue.

Let us talk about recruitment. The government is having a hard time recruiting new soldiers. The Canadian Forces were hoping to recruit almost 6,800 people last year, but they got only 2,800. The forces themselves admitted that that was not even close to the target, which was impossible to achieve. Even though the ads suggest excitement with that "There's no life like it" slogan, it is clear that major operations are few. Instead it is mostly training, training and more training, which can be discouraging for people who are looking to make a real contribution. Recruitment does not deliver on its promises. Right now, equipment is going unused because there are no people to use it. The labour shortage is affecting the armed forces too.

Let us talk about retention. In 2018, the Auditor General released a report stating that the Air Force had only 64% of the qualified pilots needed for operations and that 22% of technician positions were vacant. The Navy has ships, but few sailors. Without more sailors, the existing personnel are overworked, and this leads to exhaustion and disinterest. The lack of workability, the lack of excite-

ment in the training operations I mentioned earlier, such as Operation Presence and Operation Reassurance, is disturbing. This does not speak to the "There's no life like it!" challenge. It does not help motivation.

Soldiers undergo six months of intensive training to go and do what? To train even more, except somewhere else. That is not very interesting. The situation is even worse for reservists, who have fewer opportunities to deploy. They are being asked to leave their civilian jobs to join the forces, with no guarantee of deployment afterwards. Let us not forget the pandemic. Courses were cancelled. Training was done online. Soldiers had to isolate. There was nothing to motivate anyone. There was also a lack of proper leadership.

Possible solutions do exist. The deployment system must be reformed. We have been saying this for many years, but it must be done.

• (1710)

We also have to do more to help forces members get settled and housed. The cost of homes, as we hear every day in the House, is skyrocketing, even for the military. Inflation is affecting our soldiers.

We must also give francophones—and this is very important to the Bloc Québécois—the opportunity to stay in francophone communities. Sending Quebecers to anglophone provinces is a growing source of hardship for a family that does not necessarily speak the language and will suddenly have to learn to live in English. Many francophone parents end up choosing to educate their children in English instead of French, which we think is a shame.

I will sum up. As we can see, spending without ensuring that there is a solid foundation, without first ensuring that there are pilots in the planes, is reckless, to say the least.

I could not leave here today without making reference to a NATO exercise called Cold Response that is under way in Norway. More than 30,000 soldiers are participating in this operation, including 10 Canadians. Just imagine the size.

The Bloc Québécois will support the Conservatives' motion while remaining wary of the Liberal government, which puts empty words ahead of meaningful action. I invite the Liberal government to stop repeating its "we are there, we were there" mantra. Instead it should do something meaningful to keep the Canadian Armed Forces off the list of delinquent NATO members.

• (1715)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply. The question is on the motion. Shall I dispense?

Private Members' Business

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

[Translation]

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

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 6, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am going to attempt time travel again. It is improbable for a place like this, but if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Do we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

ENCOURAGING THE GROWTH OF THE CRYPTOASSET SECTOR ACT

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC) moved that Bill C-249, An Act respecting the encouragement of the growth of the cryptoasset sector, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-249, the encouraging growth of the cryptoasset sector act. It has been 14 years since work conducted by Stuart Haber, W. Scott Stornetta, and Dave Bayer was used by a person operating under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto to launch a concept called blockchain.

Since the Nakamoto paper was published, the concepts it contained have been operationalized the world over to launch a pantheon of innovative products and practices that are revolutionizing how people interact and transact with each other. Canada's Parliament has yet to debate the cryptoasset sector. This debate today marks the first time we are doing so.

I am going to break down the public policy challenge before us today in six parts. They are what cryptoassets are, why the sector is important to Canada, why Parliament needs to turn its attention to the sector, why this bill is the best approach for Parliament to take in the matter, problems this approach will prevent, and my desired approach to building consensus for this model.

Let us talk about the first point. What are cryptoassets? Within my bill and within my speech today, I use the term "cryptoasset" and define it as, "digital assets that are secured by means of cryptographic systems, including the blockchain system, that do not rely on a central authority and are based on algorithms agreed to by the majority of users."

Cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, are one type of cryptoasset. Transactions use blockchain to record transactions and issue new units, as opposed to fiat currencies that have a central issuing or regulating authority. Non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, are another cryptoasset. NFTs are digital assets that represent real-world objects such as art, music, in-game items and videos. They are bought and sold online, frequently with cryptocurrency, and they are generally encoded with the same underlying software as many cryptos.

Rather than spend the limited time I have today breaking down the technical aspects of how cryptoassets operate, I encourage colleagues who are not familiar with the subjects to spend some time watching the multitude of videos, reading the articles and looking at the other educational resources that are now available.

I will highlight, however, that a lack of education on the topic among legislators and public servants is a problem that my bill attempts to resolve. The goal of this would be to have public policy happen in an environment based on knowledge and public consultation, rather than polarized partisan interests.

Why is the sector important to Canada? First, cryptoassets represent an important sector that could help to diversify and grow the Canadian economy. To give colleagues a sense of the size of this industry, one recent report suggests that the global cryptocurrency market reached a value of \$1.782 billion U.S. in 2021. Looking forward, the publisher of this report expects the market to reach \$32.4 billion U.S. by 2027, exhibiting a compound annual growth rate of 58.4% from 2022-27.

The global market for another type of cryptoasset, non-fungible tokens, is expected to grow from \$14 billion in 2021 to \$21.3 billion in 2022 at a compound annual growth rate of 52.1%. The market is expected to reach \$82 billion in 2026 at a compound annual growth rate of 40.2%. Canada should be a natural home for this type of innovation and investment.

Many view the decentralized nature of cryptoassets as an attractive feature in and of itself. By removing intermediaries from computer networks, distributed ledgers can facilitate new types of economic opportunities that were not possible before. The blockchain technology underlying Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies has been hailed as a potential game-changer for a large number of industries.

Another common reason for investing in cryptoassets is the desire for a reliable, long-term store of value. This property makes cryptocurrency attractive to people who are worried about things such as bank failures, or so some rationale goes.

This brings us to why Parliament needs to turn its attention to the sector. As with any industry, there are massive potential benefits to Canada, as well as potential pitfalls. The call to us, as legislators, should be to find a path that promotes growth and investment in the sector within Canada, while protecting those working in the space, as well as consumers.

Many innovators and proponents of cryptoassets in Canada are actually calling for the federal government to use its convening power to provide policy clarity to the industry. The current lack of clarity, particularly on safeguards to protect those working in the space, is seen as an impediment to investment. That is to say, who would invest in a sector that is likely to be regulated at any time, but likely by people who know little to nothing about how the industry operates? The same could be said for government investment in the sector.

● (1720)

Further, a significant amount of jurisdiction for policy related to the sector falls to the provinces. A patchwork of rules and regulations is popping up across Canada. Provincial jurisdiction must be respected, but the federal government could have a role to play in convening provinces to establish an opt-in set of harmonized policies that would make it easier for investors to operate and to provide safeguards.

At the same time, given the newness of the sector and its rapid pace of growth and innovation, there are risks. Education to help investors evaluate risk could benefit the sector. Specifically, a broader public understanding of what is real and what is speculative mania, what is protected by government regulation and what is not, how to prevent digital asset theft, and how cryptoasset volatility occurs, could benefit the sector, as could safeguards that are present for other asset classes such as traditional securities to prevent fraud and illegal activities.

High profile instances of alleged fraud, such as the QuadrigaCX scandal, which many Canadians will be learning about via the Netflix film on the topic this week, underscore the need for what we are discussing today. Our Parliament should also be seized with this issue because other jurisdictions are well ahead of us on this matter. If we continue to lag in setting a framework for Canada, this will become an impediment in future negotiations regarding trade and will drive talent and capital away from Canada to other jurisdictions with more robust frameworks.

For example, the European Union has recently introduced its proposal for a new EU law on cryptoassets under the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive. The European Blockchain Partner-

ship is also planning a pan-European regulatory sandbox in co-operation with the European Commission for data portability, business-to-business data spaces, smart contracts and digital identity. This will cover sectors including health, the environment, mobility, energy and more.

Private Members' Business

Last month, U.S. President Joe Biden signed an executive order directing his federal government to come up with a cryptocurrency plan. The order will coordinate efforts among financial regulators to better understand the risks and opportunities presented by digital assets, particularly in the areas of consumer protection, national security and illicit finance.

The Biden administration stated that this was in response to the explosive growth in digital assets and a desire to maintain American technological leadership. The results could shape the contours of a rapidly innovating industry, yet Canada has not moved forward in this regard. At the same time, the innovative functions of blockchain technologies and the decentralized essence of how they function should not be hampered by a lack of clarity or knee-jerk reactions from legislators.

Those who believe that cryptoassets are the means to all sorts of evils are missing the point as much as those who might profess that cryptoassets without any attached policy are the magic wand for all our ills. This is exactly what is happening here in Canada. The political debate on cryptoassets is becoming polarized before we even begin to discuss it in this place.

Some in Canada are advocating for policies that would lead to bans of many types of cryptoassets, which would be a colossal blow to a potential enormous economic boon for our country. On the other hand, some are openly advising the public that cryptocurrencies, which are volatile, currently subject to an enormous amount of regulatory uncertainty and untested as an inflationary hedge against periods of sustained high inflation, are good ways to solve Canada's inflationary problem.

Rather than go down the path of reactionary populism or highly damaging knee-jerk over-regulation, we should choose a better way. That brings me to what my bill would do.

Private Members' Business

The bill would require the Minister of Finance to develop a national framework for the cryptoasset sector and, in developing the framework, to consult with persons working in the sector who are designated by provinces and territories. It would require the Minister of Finance to formally ensure that cryptoasset experts are leading voices in the policy development process. It would also be open to public submissions.

Given the newness of the sector, the bill would also enshrine consultation of innovators who work in the space, while asking those who traditionally have primary access to the finance minister on such matters, such as lobbyists and public servants, to engage via their traditional access routes so that a fulsome position on what the government should or should not do is developed. It would enshrine provincial jurisdiction by ensuring that any framework would be on an opt-in-only basis for the provinces, and would require the Minister of Finance to ask the provinces for input during the consultation process. This would prevent policy from happening behind closed doors in the federal government without more open consultation.

• (1725)

The bill takes an optimistic view of the sector, rather than pessimistic. That is, it could be an important part of the Canadian economy. Other, more pessimistic views that have been used in other jurisdictions have functionally kneecapped the space to the detriment of those nation's economies.

The bill would ask the minister to ensure Canada remains an attractive place to attract and retain investment and talent, while protecting those who work with cryptoassets. Most importantly, rather than prescribing any particular policy, the bill would create a mechanism to formally engage the expertise of cryptoasset talent in policy development. It would require the framework to be reviewed by committees of the House and the Senate, and it would require this work to be done within a three-year period.

My rationale for putting this bill forward is to depoliticize what is becoming a polarized discussion of the space and to open the policy process to those innovators who need us to support them but also not set unnecessary roadblocks that would stand in their way. I am hoping that, if this bill passes, innovators, provinces and those interested in cryptoassets will have a clear and productive mechanism to work with the federal government to drive common-sense public policy that will see Canada become a world leader in this space.

Many innovators, cryptoasset practitioners, bankers, lawyers and members of the general public have expressed great excitement about this open and novel approach to setting public policy for the cryptoasset sector. In fact, I have had legislators from other jurisdictions around the world look at this as a novel approach to tone down the rhetoric on the subject and actually do something that resembles work, which could hopefully be duplicated on a larger scale.

One particular example that I would like to highlight, with regard to feedback, is from Morva Rohani, the executive director of the Canadian Web3 Council. She says, "Bill C-249 has launched a long overdue public policy discussion on the benefits of cryptocurrencies in Canada. The Canadian Web3 Council is supportive of the

development of a national framework to encourage the growth of the cryptocurrency sector in consultation with the industry."

I hope that this bill will give an opportunity for colleagues of all political stripes to educate themselves on cryptoassets and to develop their party's particular policy stances on the challenges and opportunities the sector presents to our country from a place of knowledge and sound judgment, rather than populism or knee-jerk reactions to regulate away anything new.

To that end, I want to state to all members of the House that I am open to amendments to this bill. I tried to present a framework that could be rigorously reviewed by the finance committee members and witnesses, with constructive amendments to be made on the scope or content provided. If a colleague wants the bill to do more, I encourage them to take it to committee and to amend it.

I hope that colleagues will evaluate this bill in the spirit that it is intended to evoke in the House, and that is a supportive, cross-partisan approach to nurturing a nascent and highly important innovative economic opportunity for our country.

• (1730)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for bringing this important discussion to the House. She articulated in her speech how we really do need to have important conversations about cryptocurrency in the future and how it works. Again, in that spirit of trying to be not partisan, I have read through the bill. I think, by and large, the framework and the idea of forcing those conversations and making sure that we are addressing, as legislators and as lawmakers, how we position this industry in the days ahead is really important.

I looked at subclause 3(1), in terms of the fact that the framework is to "encourage the growth" of the sector. I may agree with that. I certainly have to get my own head wrapped around it, and this will be an important discussion about where I stand on this issue.

Would the member be open to an amendment around, as opposed to saying pro-growth in this sector, at least exploring ways on the administrative burden? She mentioned about not trying to be too partisan one way or the other. Would she address that point on the language and whether we can have something perhaps a little more neutral in saying how best to move forward with the sector writ large?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I look forward to debate on the topic. I would say that the industry is a way to diversify Canada's primarily natural resource-based economy, something that the government has stated it desires to do. I would like to hear from the government or government members, even off-line, why "growth" would be a problematic word in this context.

I do not think that growth is necessarily incongruent with the need to look at some of the safeguards to protect those who are working in the space but, again, if the bill gets to committee, I really hope that the question the member asked is what is asked to witnesses and is what is discussed among other committee members, so that what comes out of Parliament is something that sends a signal to industry that Canada gets this.

We want to see growth in innovative new sectors. At the same time, we also want to address public policy challenges that have been brought to the forefront without, as some jurisdictions have said, legislating away any potential economic opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Calgary Nose Hill for her speech. She told us a lot about how cryptocurrencies create such great opportunities.

Peter Callaghan, commander of the Toronto Police Service's financial crimes unit, said, "Cryptocurrency in general is a problem for us, and we realized early on that it was a money laundering tool that could facilitate criminal transactions such as the sale of drugs and guns. That is exactly what criminals are doing."

My question is simple: Is that what the member for Calgary Nose Hill meant when she was talking about great opportunities?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, that is an odd question. Regular currency can be used to conduct illegal activities as well. The challenge that the Toronto police outlined in that example is that the framework that might be used to detect or prevent that in this emerging space is something that is worthy of discussion and the federal government, as I have outlined in this bill, likely has a convening role in that regard.

What I worry about is that the industry itself is becoming polarized, as per that question. I would like to see the industry not be labelled bad or good, but that we talk about how we put a policy framework in place that both encourages growth and also safeguards those who are working in the space and those who are consumers.

• (1735)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for putting the bill forward in such a non-partisan manner.

There is a huge opportunity for Canada. We just need to look at what happened with Ethereum. Ethereum was largely developed in Canada, but has moved to Switzerland. Why? It is because countries like Switzerland and Japan have clearly laid out national rules that explain what kind of development, what kinds of tokens, what kind of crypto, what kinds of applications can fuel the blockchain industry, particularly when we look at the opportunities of Web 3.0.

I have spoken with people in this space, innovators who simply want to be able to get a bank account so they can start. Unfortunately, there are many misconceptions with regard to the industry. I was hoping that the member might be able to point out some of the challenges Canadian innovators have had and continue to have.

Private Members' Business

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I would answer my colleague's question in the context of my Bloc colleague's question. The industry itself is not inherently bad or good. It is what we as a country choose to make of it. Any province, including the province of Quebec, would have huge investment opportunities chased away if we overly politicize this. I hope that does not happen.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today on this important private member's bill. I want to thank my colleague across the aisle, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, for bringing the bill to the House of Commons.

How Canadians use money and make payments is changing, thanks to the emergence of new digital technology. Bill C-249 seeks to understand the benefits of cryptocurrencies and these new technologies. I commend the member opposite for inspiring discussion on this emerging economic sector. This is an important debate to be had.

I first want to highlight the benefits that cryptocurrency has on Canada's economic growth and the future of money in our country.

Billions of dollars of wealth has been created in the cryptocurrency space. Companies are getting on board. Walmart, Reebok and IBM have implemented crypto and blockchain solutions to maintain the transparency and integrity of their supply chains. Internationally, cryptocurrency is a useful tool. After the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the Ukrainian government pivoted to accept donations of cryptocurrency to fund its military defence and humanitarian aid. They raised over \$100 million in support.

Even residents in my riding use cryptocurrency for personal investment opportunities, and I am sure the same can be said for constituents in ridings across our country. It is a popular and growing investment. There are undeniable benefits to cryptocurrency, and the hype to invest is certainly growing. However, the sector does remain under-regulated.

Governments around the world have their work cut out for them to craft legislation and regulate this new technology. Bills like Bill C-249 make important contributions to the debate on how to regulate cryptocurrency. However, I am concerned that it is narrow in scope. While it certainly highlights the benefits of cryptocurrency, I am concerned that it does not necessarily address the risks involved in the cryptoasset sector. Specifically, it does not address the potential vulnerability and financial instability inherent within the cryptoasset industry. These risks, vulnerabilities and instabilities need to be accounted for as we move forward.

Private Members' Business

As we transition into a digital world, governments must ensure that cryptoassets have proper oversight. Things like cybersecurity provisions must be established for these sectors. Simply, as cryptocurrencies rise in popularity, Canada needs the proper regulatory infrastructure in place to guide, shape and inevitably regulate the growth. Without these safeguards, we put the safety and security of Canadians at risk.

Of utmost concern to me is that we cannot overlook the dark elements that can be a consequence of the unregulated growth of cryptoassets. Around the world, people in the black market are trying to legitimize their wealth by venturing into the crypto space. This illegal and unregulated activity has posed unintended, or perhaps intended, consequences to economies and democracies around the world.

Over the last month, we have seen the Russian oligarchs use cryptoassets to circumvent western economic sanctions and enable the illegal invasion of Ukraine. This allows Russian oligarchs to preserve their wealth amidst the Russian economic crash. It is undermining the international community's economic sanctions and, most importantly, it is enabling the perpetuation of the atrocities that Russia has been committing against Ukraine.

Closer to home, there is also evidence of the use of cryptoassets in illegal activity as well. Just last month, cryptocurrency was identified as enabling the illegal occupations and blockades here in Ottawa, Windsor and Coutts. Digital currencies allowed protesters to receive global donations without any obstruction or regulation. The freedom convoy's own cryptotoken was designed in such a way as to make it difficult for our law enforcement to connect the individual donors to the actual funds, and this is an evolving problem.

● (1740)

Without proper regulation, the presence of cryptocurrency and its illegal activities will continue. Digital currencies undoubtedly appeal to people looking to evade the scrutiny of law enforcement. They are decentralized, which makes it difficult for government to know what is happening. To this point, I reference Matthew Burgoyne, a leading Canadian digital currency lawyer. He stated that, when faced with scrutiny, "crypto can simply be transferred to another wallet address...and it can continue to be transferred in an effort to obscure the original source, or in an effort to remove the funds as much as possible from the wallet that was frozen."

As digital currency moves from wallet to wallet, it gets harder to track by law enforcement. Without proper regulation at the federal, provincial and territorial levels, cryptocurrency could become a vehicle for abusive transactions, facilitating money laundering, terrorist financing, criminal activity and tax evasion. Transactions involving cryptoassets are also vulnerable to fraud. There is currently inadequate investor and consumer protection for these activities.

The safety and security of Canadians' financial activities are of course always of central concern to our government. Therefore, as we move forward and we craft policy and cryptocurrency legislation, our legislation must ensure that we adequately address these risks. It cannot simply focus on promoting unbridled growth of the cryptoasset. I fear that this is what we would do with the current version of Bill C-249. Our policies must also clearly delineate the shared jurisdictions of this file. Under our constitutional conven-

tions, the federal government must consult with the provinces and their securities regulators on possible regulations to cryptocurrencies. Currently, I do not believe that this bill would do that.

In addition, international institutions and partners also play a key role in our policymaking. Cryptoassets are a transnational asset. Regulating them requires co-operation among countries. We should ensure that international experts from other jurisdictions are included in our policy-making as we move forward.

We must understand the risks of digital currencies just as much as we understand and promote the benefits of them. Cryptocurrencies have numerous benefits locally, federally and internationally. There is no doubt of that. However, without thorough regulations being implemented, these benefits may be outweighed by the risks. There are real conversations that need to be had as citizens, as members of Parliament and as governments, on what the future of money is going to look like. Those conversations must happen sooner rather than later as more and more Canadians invest in cryptocurrency.

Although I do not believe that in its current state this bill adequately addresses those risks, I thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for bringing this important discussion forward and being open to how it evolves as it moves through the House.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Calgary Nose Hill for Bill C-249, which is a subject that I find to be most interesting.

The bill is about cryptoassets, cryptocurrencies and virtual currencies. It is truly fascinating because it covers extremely innovative technologies that are being adopted by the more formal economy. We know that cryptoassets and cryptocurrencies are based on transactions authenticated by blockchains. These transactions can take place person to person and on the web, but without any intermediary. It is understandable that those who love technology, especially in the banking world, are fascinated by this and why we can see that there are a certain number of significant risks associated with the development of cryptoassets.

Bill C-249 is basically a bill that promotes cryptocurrencies. One of its main objectives is to ensure the growth of cryptocurrencies. This is one of the fastest-growing sectors, and the market is already doing the work on its own. It is not like Alberta's oil. We do not need public money for it. The industry is self-sustaining.

Private Members' Business

The bill then talks about the need to lower barriers in a sector to which there are no barriers. This is about regulation. This is an incomplete bill that starts to unravel from the very beginning. The bill then claims we must minimize the administrative burden in a sector where there is virtually no administrative burden.

I do want us to talk about cryptocurrencies. I want us to analyze the sector and consider the state's role and the need for regulation, but this is not a great start. To me, Bill C-249 sounds like an ad for cryptocurrencies.

This brings me back to yesterday's speech from the Conservative member for Abbotsford. I am bringing this up today because it really stood out to me. Yesterday during the Conservative filibuster, when the member for Abbotsford talked about all the criticisms he made during the prebudget recommendations, I was quite surprised to hear his comment. I was at the Standing Committee on Finance. The committee was discussing the prebudget recommendations and the member for Abbotsford did not make a single recommendation. This year, the Conservatives did not propose a single recommendation. They proposed nothing.

We brought in our witnesses—people from Davie in Quebec City, which still does not have its fair share of federal shipbuilding contracts, our farmers, our community organizations and our businesses, all of whom offered up proposals to stabilize our supply chains—and we made proposals, but the Conservatives had nothing, nothing at all.

Yesterday, the member for Abbotsford said something in connection with Bill C-249. He said that when parties have pre-budget recommendations—which they did not, of course—they have to set priorities, practise statesmanship and start with what is most important. To me, given the current conditions, the economic recovery, coming to the end of the pandemic and having so much work to do, I am surprised that the Conservatives would use their time in the House to introduce this kind of bill.

Speaking of setting priorities, I decided it was important to get out there and talk to people dealing with the negative repercussions of cryptocurrencies. Such people exist, and I wanted to hear what they had to say. I think it is worthwhile, especially as I also think we need stricter regulations and Bill C-249 is noticeably lacking.

Consider the Vancouver police, for example. It does not get much more hands-on than those folks. They believe that cryptocurrency ATMs are being used as conduits to move the proceeds of crime. That worries me. The lack of regulations in this area worries me.

As my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean said earlier, the Toronto police have also indicated that cryptocurrencies in general are problematic. They are known to be a money laundering tool that can facilitate criminal transactions, such as the sale of narcotics and guns, and that is certainly what has materialized.

The member for Calgary Nose Hill was saying that although this is true, any payment method can be used for the same purpose. However, there are varying degrees of ease. Person-to-person transactions without intermediaries and without state regulation make things easier. I am very surprised that Bill C-249, without any hint of a regulatory proposal, comes from the law and order party.

• (1750)

The U.S. Department of Justice has just created a new director position to tackle fraud specifically involving cryptocurrencies. That is in the United States.

In its budget, which was just tabled, Quebec highlights the need to better protect Quebecers against cyberthreats and expresses the will to combat tax evasion strategies more effectively, which reflects a willingness to do the hard work to ensure that the cryptoasset sector develops in a secure and fair environment for all. That is what the Quebec government is saying, and, in this place, we defend Quebec's interests.

For its part, the IMF, which is attuned to the issue of global monetary and financial stability stated the following:

Crypto assets and associated products and services have grown rapidly in recent years. Furthermore, interlinkages with the regulated financial system are rising. Policymakers struggle to monitor risks from this evolving sector, in which many activities are unregulated. In fact, we think these financial stability risks could soon become systemic in some countries.

Based on what the IMF experts are saying, I feel that they have placed the cart before the horse by introducing a bill that is essentially a tool to promote an industry that is already doing very well.

There is a host of risks for consumers. I like that the title of the bill refers to cryptoassets. We have stopped calling it “cryptocurrency” because it is not really currency and it does not play the same role as currency. It will therefore not replace currency.

Currency is a store of value. Its purpose is to retain value. However, cryptoassets are assets that fluctuate tremendously based on factors such as speculation. This makes the ill-informed investors—if we can call them that—who put their money into them more vulnerable.

Currency is also a unit of account. Until Quebec becomes independent and starts using the Quebec dollar, we will still use the Canadian dollar, which does the job very well. In fact, the value of cryptocurrencies is still assessed against the Canadian dollar. It is also a medium of exchange.

Cryptocurrency also functions as a medium of exchange, but it is a very decentralized medium that can, as I said earlier, facilitate criminal transactions, under-the-table transactions and many others. The fact that it is decentralized makes it all the more important to regulate it. I am worried about that, and so is the Bloc Québécois. We know that we are not the only ones who think that way.

Private Members' Business

Paul Beaudry, the deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, spoke to us about bitcoin. We know that there are a lot of different cryptoassets and cryptocurrencies, but he told us that Bitcoin was more for speculation than for payment. If we have reached the point where the Bank of Canada is worried about these issues, then perhaps we should be asking the Bank of Canada whether this bill addresses its concerns and meets its expectations. I would venture to say that the bill does not.

I now want to talk about our support for the bill. This bill is at second reading, the stage at which we vote on the principle of the bill. This bill could be improved, and my colleague spoke about that. It could be amended in committee. However, given the need for a framework, for regulations and for consultations with stakeholders, I strongly believe that we would end up having to rewrite the entire bill by making the amendments we would be comfortable with.

The bill would be rewritten so much that I do not think the amendments we would want would even be in order as part of the committee's study of this bill. We therefore think that it might not be a constructive use of parliamentarians' time to send this bill to be studied in committee. For these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will very likely not be able to support the principle of this bill.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my thanks go to the member for Calgary Nose Hill for bringing this bill forward. As others have mentioned, I think this is a really important discussion. Whether we would like it or not, whether people want to be boosters of the industry or critics of it, there is no doubt that this industry is growing, that it is significant and that it is beginning to play a significant role in a number of different financial affairs in a number of different ways. I do think it makes sense to begin having conversations about how we can regulate that space in the public interest.

I appreciate some of the points that have been made about what I might call the aesthetic of the bill, the language that was chosen and the way that it speaks about the industry, but I am going to present a little bit of a different view, I think, in saying that I do not think we should let that get in the way of trying to continue the conversation that was started by this bill just today.

I think we have heard some really important concerns. They are not new. We have heard these concerns out and about, so to speak, about cryptocurrency. We have heard concerns about the way in which it can be used to launder money and the way in which criminal organizations appear to be using cryptocurrency to advance their own illegal agendas. We have also heard concerns elsewhere, outside the debate tonight, about the speculative nature of cryptocurrency and the way it acts for some, apparently, in the way that a gambling addiction does: People get addicted to trying to make quick money off cryptocurrency and exhibit a lot of patterns that are similar to folks who have gambling addictions.

I also want to raise an emerging area of concern in respect to cryptocurrency that has to do with the environment: the amount of real-world energy and real-world costs to the cryptocurrency industry for something that may prove to be fundamentally speculative in

value. We are hearing of coal plants and gas plants, for instance, in the United States, that had been heading toward decommissioning but have been given new life and are producing new emissions in order to satisfy the needs of these industries. That is all the more reason that it is imperative for legislators to take on this task sooner rather than later. It is not as though this bill is the gateway to launching the cryptocurrency industry. It is here; it is already active; it is growing exponentially; and it is having real effects.

Oftentimes in this place, we are stuck talking about industries that have been carrying on without any form of regulation, as is the case with this particular industry right now. It is operating, and there are no rules. It is the Wild West. We often talk about things that have been around for a long time that have no regulation. It becomes, as time goes on, even more difficult to regulate in the public interest once the die is cast for industries like this. I think of some of the problems we are experiencing now with social media and some of the attempts that have been made even just recently to try to bring some order to the social media universe and to try to mitigate some of the harms that an unregulated social media space can have for democracy, among other things.

All of that is to say that I welcome this bill, even though I may not like all of the language. Certainly I have been reassured by the debate tonight that if this bill were to go to committee, there would be a lot of people around the table who would have the right concerns and would be interested in figuring out how we can regulate this space in the public interest so that Canadians who wish to do so can avail themselves of whatever benefit there is to this industry. It is reassuring even to have a table where we can talk about what the real benefits are, versus just a kind of participation in a game of speculation in which there are winners and there are losers. I think I am not wrong in saying that predominantly a lot of young men in particular seem to like to invest in cryptocurrency. Some of them have done very well for themselves; some of them lost the shirt off their back, and it will be a long time before they recover from their foray into the world of cryptocurrency.

• (1800)

I think it behooves us as legislators to talk about this. Whether the language of the bill is a little more boosterish than I might like is beside the point. I do not think it is fatal to the project. I would welcome the opportunity to get into this more at committee to ask these very questions, to invoke some of the real expertise from outside this chamber and to help us all learn more about it as legislators. It would also create a forum for the Canadian public, who have a lot of questions about cryptocurrency and what exactly it means, and maybe whether they should invest in it or just ignore it because it is a Ponzi scheme.

I think a lot of Canadians are looking for a credible source of information. A committee would provide an opportunity not only for legislators but for Canadians to follow along to hear from not just industry experts, I hope. I would want to hear from people whose business is consumer protection. They could talk about the impacts I was referring to earlier. They might include addictions specialists who are looking at the gambling aspect of cryptocurrency as experienced by some people. I would also want to hear from people who are watching the environmental impacts of the industry and have something to say about how it ought to proceed. That is not all. I see some heads shaking in the Conservative benches, but that is not about saying no to the industry. I know there is a movement afoot that had suggested how changes to coding language could significantly reduce the environmental impact of cryptocurrency.

For me the real point is that these are things we should be talking about, and we should not be talking about them 20 years from now, as is so often the case with legislatures when it comes to new industries and new technologies. This is usually because it is really hard to find agreement in these kinds of places and we tend to be hypersensitive to the connotation of using this kind of language to describe it as opposed to that. I understand that. I am guilty of it myself. I say “guilty”, but I do not think it is a bad thing in certain contexts. In this case, I really do welcome the opportunity to dive further into this. It is why I am prepared to support the bill at second reading, and I believe my colleagues in the NDP are prepared to support the bill at second reading, in order to try to create a forum to get into these matters more.

There is a real public interest in continuing these conversations, and I am quite reassured by the debate tonight. There are a lot of members of Parliament from all sides of the House who are live to the real concerns and real risks of this industry and also appreciate that there may be some positive potential. We may want to get straight on what that positive potential really is. If we find that this is just a speculative enterprise and it does not add any real value, then perhaps we should be skeptical of it. I do not pretend to know that answer at this point. As a member of the finance committee, I would appreciate the opportunity to delve more deeply into it, and supporting the bill for me and for my NDP colleagues is an opportunity to advance that discussion in a forum where we might hope to make some progress on regulating this industry.

I note that the bill calls for the minister to table a framework. We do not have a regulatory framework in the bill and it does not really authorize anyone to make a regulatory framework. It just calls for a minister in the government, whatever the government of the day may happen to be, to table a document that, as is the wont of this place, will lead to more conversation. There will be more opportunities to criticize. If it is too boosterish, there will be opportunities to criticize that. If it is too heavy-handed from a regulatory point of view and certain people feel that this shuts down the positive opportunity of the industry, whatever that may be, there will be an opportunity to provide feedback on that. Doubtless there will be a government bill at some point before the industry is actually regulated in Canada.

I see this as an important first step in establishing the conversation and taking it seriously here on Parliament Hill. That is why I

Private Members' Business

am pleased to provide my support to the bill today, notwithstanding some of the legitimate criticism that we have heard here tonight.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for the bill that she brought forward to attempt to make Canada a leader in the crypto space, which we kind of already are.

I heard a couple of comments today from speakers about growth. We have to have certainty before we can continue to grow. This is trying to provide certainty to the industry so that people know the rules as they go forward. A couple of years ago, there was a framework specifically around cryptoasset trading platforms. The Canadian securities administrators, with all of their provincial trading commissions, put this together and it set a framework. It is a very public document worked on in collaboration. It established, for exchanges that wanted to be exchanges in this country, a path to that goal. In Ontario, my home province, we have had a number of spot exchange-traded funds in this province, which is significant. The United States does not even have that yet. It only has future exchange-traded funds.

In addition to that, Bitbuy, just in the last quarter of 2021, worked with the OSC IIROC to be a market maker: to be an exchange and a marketplace for cryptoassets to be traded, because this framework was done three years ago. Just as the member for Calgary Nose Hill provides, let us get the experts and the industry to come together so we can get this moving forward. In the United States, people only wish that they had a spot ETF. Let us not get mixed up on the growth. What the member for Calgary Nose Hill is trying to say is let us not get in the way of growth. Let us make sure that industry has certainty so companies will want to come here and invest their billions of dollars.

The market cap of the cryptoassets is \$2 trillion. That is in 13 years. The market cap of gold is \$10 trillion. Therefore, it is \$2 trillion for crypto and it is \$10 trillion for gold. How long has gold been around? It has been around since the earth was established. There is \$100 trillion in real estate, so there are huge opportunities here. We have to continue to push forward. That is what they want.

Private Members' Business

I will give an example. Let us look at all the different entities that businesses have to deal with. I made a list. They have to deal with the securities administrations and their provincial administrations, including the OSC and all the ones in all the provinces. IIROC is one they have to deal with. CRA is on the list, for how they are going to be taxed. The entities include the Department of Finance, potentially, the Bank of Canada, potentially, and on and on. When we say that it is the wild west and it is not regulated, that really is not the case, in my opinion. Obviously, people are transferring money into investment accounts, and it is monitored in many different ways including how it is backed, how it is secured and where the assets are held. It is not really the wild west, I would say, and I am sure the chair of the OSC, the executive director and the president would all love to have a comment on that. There is regulation, but we need more certainty because of the investment.

One example is Bitcoin mining, or miners in general, and how they are taxed by the CRA. Where is GST applied? Where is HST applied? When is the actual tax triggered? There is a dispute right now with the CRA as to where and when that occurs. This is what the member for Calgary Nose Hill is talking about. Let us have the framework of industry experts get around the table and say, "Hey, what the heck, are we charging HST every time we mine a Bitcoin?" That does not make any sense. This is not a service business. This is a mining company, just like Kinross Gold or somebody else. That is what we are talking about.

In regard to illicit activity, I am going to say right now that this is the last \$20 bill I have. There is more crime done with twenties than will ever be done with cryptocurrency. What I will say is that the amount of crypto crime is decreasing. From 2020 to 2021, it decreased by almost 60%. Why is that? Only a stupid criminal would do a crime with crypto, because it is a public ledger and that wallet has an address.

- (1805)

There was a case where a couple defrauded billions. It was thousands of Bitcoin, and they held onto it for five years. The minute they tried to transfer that money in the fall of 2021, the FBI picked them both up and charged them. Only an idiot criminal, and there are some out there, would do it with this. They are going to go with cash or something else. They are not going to do it with that.

My colleague from Quebec made a comment. We are always getting to know each other, which is great. In Quebec, for example, there are a number of Shakepays. There are Shakepays in Montreal. I am sure some of my colleagues have heard of Shakepay before. Also, there is a Bitcoin mining company. There is about five or six. It is called Bitfarms. There is more than just Bitfarms, but Bitfarms is a \$1-billion company traded on a public stock exchange. It went through all the regulatory burden to become publicly traded in la belle province.

I think it would be great if Bitfarms, Shakepay and a number of these Quebec-based companies reached out, did a little government relations, and explained to the government, not in an embarrassing way, but in an informative way, that this is a new industry of 13, 14 years, and explained that CRA income tax issue. That would be great.

To my good colleague from the NDP, who I had the honour of serving with on the industry committee, Bitfarms is 100% renewable energy from Hydro-Québec. It is green. By the way, there is a North American mining council whose mandate is to be a leader in renewable energy. There are great initiatives coming out of this. There are solar initiatives in the southern states, and wind initiatives. Some of the greatest innovation in green energy is actually going to come out of crypto. It is hard to believe, but it is true.

The best and brightest minds. When I was going to university, and that was quite a long time ago, people were learning how to chisel rocks. Now, the best and brightest minds are going into the crypto space. We want the best and brightest to graduate from these great universities and work in Canada. We do not want them to go to Silicon Valley.

In fact, the crypto space is not even in Silicon Valley, it is in Miami and Toronto. That is where we want people to be. The U.S., the UK and the European Union are all working through this process we are proposing here because they see the value in this one-time opportunity to be the world leader in this space. That is what we are trying to do here with this bill.

There is much to talk about. We are having executives from Bitbuy and WonderFi come to speak to us in a couple of weeks. They are going to explain the process they went through to be market-makers in Ontario. They would love to talk to all members of Parliament to explain how the process works and how the regulation works. We are not trying to slow things down.

Business wants certainty. This is how we are going to do it. As well, there is FINTRAC and know your client rules. These are money services businesses. They know what they are doing. They have to go through all these things to do it.

The last thing I will talk about quickly is remittances, as well as Bitcoin, the lightning network and Strike. Twenty-four percent of the GDP in El Salvador is in remittances. That is where somebody in Canada or the U.S. transfers money to a relative. Honduras, Haiti, Jamaica, there are all sorts of them, and they are all over 20%. They go to a money market and they get hosed. I am not against money markets, but I am just saying they get hosed. They can do this with Bitcoin, lightning and on the Strike network. It is that quick, and it costs nothing. That is making a difference.

Two million people in this country are unbanked. This industry is giving people a leg up. We have to make sure that all the technology is in Canada and the innovation is in Canada, so we not only make the lives of Canadians better, but subsequently, give opportunities and livelihoods to people who have never even had a bank account. It has been a real thrill to speak on this.

• (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I stood up, someone heckled, “Explain Bitcoin.” I can tell members that as much as I would like to think that I have a fairly decent understanding of money supply and how that works, when it comes to cryptocurrency, there is a learning curve that is still required on my part to be able to articulate it in the fashion in which members opposite would like to hear.

However, I can tell members that it is something that is of great concern for all Canadians. The impact it is having in society, not only here in Canada but worldwide, is quite significant, and I think there is a keen interest from a number of stakeholders, whether governments, financial institutions, consumers or producers, in regard to what cryptocurrency is, how it continues to evolve and what impact it is going to have on modern-day society.

As has been pointed out by members on all sides of the House, there are probably more questions regarding the whole concept, which I understand has now been around for over a decade in one form or another, than there are actual answers, so I do believe that we need to see more work done on this particular file.

When I went to university, I had a very basic study of some economic policies, which I enjoyed, and one does get an appreciation of what money supply is. When the member opposite was waving a twenty-dollar bill from his seat as a prop or whatever one might want to call it, the cash that we see in our society is a fraction of the money supply. I think that what we have witnessed over the last many years is different forms of currency coming through in order to facilitate the purchasing and selling of product, whether it is a service or a widget. However, we all know, for example, that at one point in time it would have been through the barter system and, quite frankly, there is, to a certain degree, some people who participate in the barter system. I say that, because at the end of the day, much like currency, whether it is the Canadian or U.S. dollar, it is always going to be there in some form or another, and I feel fairly confident of that.

When we hear about cryptocurrency and the manner in which it is expanding, it is quite significant, and I will expand on that point when the debate comes up next.

• (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have seven minutes to complete his speech.

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.

Adjournment Proceedings

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about some of the challenges we have seen with donation matching programs launched by governments in response to crises around the world.

When there is some singular event causing massive destruction elsewhere in the world, one way that governments have provided assistance is through matching programs that match private donations up to a certain amount. I believe that, in general, matching programs are a very positive vehicle. They are a mechanism for encouraging private participation in humanitarian work and promoting the habit of private giving in general. Because matching programs are often time-limited, they can encourage individuals to make their donations in a timely way. These programs also reflect the important idea that governments and private actors can and should work together to advance international humanitarian objectives.

However, there is one significant problem with matching programs. The risk is that, by offering matching opportunities to some organizations and not others, the government uses its financial and rhetorical power to direct private donations in a particular direction. People naturally want to give to organizations that are beneficiaries of a matching program, so that their contributions will be effectively doubled. Promoting donations to these organizations in particular is part of the point of matching programs.

However, if people who might otherwise give to unmatched organizations instead choose to direct their donations to organizations that are the recipients of matching programs, these organizations who do not benefit from matching programs end up receiving less private money than they would otherwise.

The government is picking winners and losers among humanitarian and development organizations when they construct matching programs that apply to a certain narrow set of organizations and not to others. This perverse outcome is something that should be avoided. I believe that when it comes to matching programs, the government should always cast a very wide net. The government could, for instance, establish a policy of matching donations to all charitable organizations that are responding to a particular crisis.

In particular, it has seemed to be the tendency of government to launch matching programs with big, established multilateral humanitarian organizations with which the government has long-established relationships. This is the easy thing for government to do and it may also entail less of certain kinds of risks. As the saying goes, nobody ever got fired for buying IBM.

Adjournment Proceedings

The problem is that there may be other good reasons to prefer matching programs with organizations other than big, well-known multilaterals. In many cases, smaller, local charities will have particular competencies and connections on the ground. The organizations best positioned to provide humanitarian relief in Lebanon may not be the same as the organizations best positioned to provide humanitarian relief in Ukraine.

The easy way out for government is simply to work with big organizations that have some capacity to operate everywhere, but matching donations to smaller, local outfits may actually have a greater, real impact. These organizations may also be leaner and more efficient.

A focus on large, multilaterals ignores the potential of uniquely Canadian-based and affiliated organizations, in some cases led by diaspora community members with particular connections abroad and in other cases simply Canadian organizations that are leveraging Canadian innovation and involvement. Imagine the experience of someone who starts a local Canadian not-for-profit organization, has a strong base of support here and suddenly finds that they are losing donations at a critical time because Canadians are instead choosing to donate to multilaterals that are benefiting from a matching program from their own government. This is not right and it is not fair.

Now I have also seen how government matching programs often miss Christian and other faith-based organizations that are doing good development work in the service of all. A secular government should be neutral on questions of religion, which means providing matching opportunities for faith-based and non-faith-based organizations alike. This would be a neutral position, but by avoiding faith-based organizations in the matching program, the government is not taking a neutral position.

My initial question was about matching in the case of Ukraine. Notably, in the case of Ukraine, Canadians have been extremely generous, donating far above the allotment for the matching program, and the level of generosity in this case means that the perverse outcomes of only matching donations to one organization may likely be less of a factor, but this is a larger policy issue that needs to be addressed by government and I hope it will be.

• (1820)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is deeply concerned about the worsening humanitarian impact of Russia's unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine. We stand strong in our unwavering commitment to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to those affected by the conflict.

Canada responds to complex humanitarian crises through an established international humanitarian response system, comprised of United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and experienced non-governmental organizations. This mainly involves providing financial assistance to help meet the urgent needs on the ground. The flexibility provided by monetary assistance is essential in complex, fluid operational environments like the one that we see in Ukraine, allowing humanitarian organizations to procure relief items and deploy key equipment and trained

personnel quickly and efficiently through established and coordinated humanitarian networks.

To date, in 2022, Canada has committed \$145 million to support the humanitarian response, which has been allocated to experienced UN, Red Cross and NGO humanitarian partners, many of which are working with local NGOs. This includes \$100 million in response to the UN humanitarian flash appeal and the regional refugee response plan for Ukraine.

[*Translation*]

To really make the most of Canadians' generosity and these strong interpersonal connections between Ukraine and Canada, we launched a \$10-million matching fund in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross in February.

[*English*]

In recognition of the success of the matching fund, an additional \$20 million was announced in March, increasing the total amount matched to \$30 million. When humanitarian crises occur, such as the one we are witnessing in Ukraine, Canada's immediate priority is to get life-saving relief to the most vulnerable quickly, safely and securely in a manner responsive to the complex environment.

Canada is partnering with the CRC because the Red Cross movement had the earliest and best access to affected populations, as well as a proven ability to address the multisectoral needs of those affected by the conflict. As a global network of humanitarian organizations, the strength of the movement is its ability to quickly mobilize personnel, equipment and critical supplies directly through local societies to help people affected by emergencies all over the world. The Red Cross was on the ground in Ukraine prior to the escalation of this conflict and continues to work in close coordination with global and local actors to address critical needs.

The generosity of Canadians has been remarkable. We recognize and value the immense contribution of organizations such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, which are working hard to support the humanitarian response in Ukraine and surrounding regions.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

As the crisis unfolds, our government will continue to re-evaluate the best approaches and the best partners to meet evolving humanitarian needs.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for her response. She did confirm the policy that I identified, and it is one that I think should be revisited. That is the policy of emphasizing partnerships with large multilaterals.

It is not that working with these organizations is unimportant, but including small Canadian diaspora-led organizations as well as larger Canadian diaspora-led organizations can be very effective as well. When we have matching programs, we should be careful that we are not directing away from those organizations toward a small set of chosen partners.

I would quibble a bit. The parliamentary secretary talked about how the benefits of these large multilaterals are that they move quickly and that they can work with organizations that are local on the ground. I would say that working directly with organizations that have already established local partnerships can often allow for a quicker response, and fewer resources are lost in the process of transferring them to the multilaterals and then to those small organizations.

I know this is not something that can be changed on the fly, but I would encourage the government to look at this issue.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Madam Speaker, I would say to my hon. colleague that it is not either/or, and certainly we are constantly re-evaluating.

Since the onset of the crisis in 2014, Canada has supported the humanitarian response in Ukraine with over \$194 million in humanitarian assistance through experienced humanitarian partners. Their unparalleled access to affected populations and their ability to provide neutral, impartial emergency assistance quickly and efficiently are paramount at this time.

The matching fund was established to support the generosity of Canadians. With the urgency to respond efficiently, we are working with experienced humanitarian partners and using supply pipelines that are already established.

[*Translation*]

As long as the Ukrainian people are grappling with the challenges of this emergency situation, we are committed to ensuring those humanitarian needs are met.

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening as we are nearing budget day.

Canadians who have been recently asked have listed their priorities for the government, and I hope all government members here this evening are listening very attentively as we prepare for this budget.

Ipsos did some polling of Canadians and listed the top three priorities of Canadians. In this poll, 53% of Canadians ranked “help with the soaring cost of everyday needs due to inflation” as a priority, so this is obviously a huge issue. We have seen it in all parts of our economy. Housing inflation is a very big one, with the price of homes in Canada having doubled in recent years under the government's time in office. The average Canadian home clocking in at over \$800,000 puts it well out of reach, and even those below the average are out of reach for people looking to enter the market for the first time.

Adjournment Proceedings

We also know that Canadian households will face an average of an increase of \$1,000 more in groceries this year, which is going to put an incredible stress on families when an absolute majority of Canadians, more than 50%, are already within \$200 of not being able to meet their financial commitments. They are within \$200 of insolvency. As well, a third of Canadians are currently meeting the definition of being insolvent right now.

The second priority, listed by 45% of respondents, is “lowering taxes”. This would ease some of the pressures Canadians are facing. We know that the price at the pumps has gone up, which is making things incredibly difficult for Canadians, particularly those in rural areas. We saw the price at the pumps go up again on April 1. Global instability doing what it does is very much outside the control of our government here domestically, but the tax increase it implemented on April 1 was directly under its control. People cannot afford to get to work, get to medical appointments or take their children to recreational activities. This is within the government's purview, and it could do something that would be very responsive to the needs of Canadians.

Next, 40% of Canadians ranked “greater investments in health care” as a top priority. Over the course of the pandemic, which put incredible stress on our health care system, we saw the government refuse to meet with the provinces to give them stability and predictability with respect to health care funding, which is of course incumbent on the government.

What Canadians are looking for and what this boils down to is that Canadians want a government that is going to be prudent. It is time to respect the tax dollar. It is time to respect Canadians, give them a break, give us a break from inflation, give us a break from housing inflation and help Canadians keep a little more money in their pockets so they can afford to heat their homes, feed their families, save for the future and maybe one day buy a home of their own.

• (1830)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to have this opportunity to address our government's fiscal position, as well as the many ways that we are improving affordability for Canadians.

In 2015, we promised to invest in the future of Canada by incurring small deficits while targeting investments in economic growth. In our first four years we made significant investments in housing, transportation and indigenous reconciliation. We grew the economy while reducing poverty and unemployment to all-time historic lows. We lifted 1.3 million Canadians out of poverty and began to tackle climate change in a serious and meaningful way. We grew the size of the economy while reducing our debt-to-GDP ratio every single year.

Adjournment Proceedings

This was an enviable financial position and was built on fiscal prudence. This position would allow us to invest further in the growth of our nation or prepare us for economic shocks that may come in the future. While we could not foresee a global pandemic or a war in Europe, when it comes to the finances of the country Canadians can rest assured that our net debt-to-GDP is the lowest in the G7 and we have improved our relative position over the course of the pandemic. We have seen strong economic growth and have recovered 112% of the jobs lost during this health crisis.

Canada remains committed to our strong fiscal anchors that were first articulated when we formed government and reiterated in the 2021 budget. This means we expect to continue to reduce our debt-to-GDP ratio while unwinding the COVID-19-related deficits. While it is true that the cost of the pandemic was significant, it was more than reasonable that the federal government use our strong fiscal position to take on this burden. We did this so small businesses, Canadian workers and family household budgets did not have to. While Conservatives may see these investments as frivolous or unnecessary, I would expect the nine million Canadians who were able to feed their families, or the 450,000 employers who were able to employ 5.3 million Canadians, would disagree with that position.

Our government is also focused on targeted measures here at home to help Canadians make ends meet. This includes lowering taxes for the middle class, \$10-a-day child care and a more generous OAS and GIS for seniors. All of these programs were not supported by the Conservatives, including increased investments in health care.

I am pleased to say this plan is working. Canada has exceeded its goal of creating a million jobs, well ahead of expectations, and we have seen the strongest job recovery in the G7 alongside the lowest net debt.

Our government's focus will continue to be on jobs and growth and making life more affordable. These are priorities that will form the foundation of our upcoming budget, as well as our commitment to continue to be a responsible and careful fiscal manager.

• (1835)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, when Canadians hear the government say things like they should not worry because the net debt-to-GDP ratio is great in response to the concerns they have, such as having to choose between heating their home because the price of natural gas has gone up so high or feeding their family because the price of groceries have gone up so quickly and so much, it is really tough for them to feed their family on that word salad. Those global comparators do not do anything to address the individual concerns and the harsh realities those Canadian families are facing.

When the government says that it took on debt so Canadians did not need to, who is responsible for paying that money back? That money does not belong to members in this place or the government. It is collected from Canadians and borrowed in the name of future generations of Canadians who are going to have to service the debt and some day that bill will come due. That is the government's job.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, we understand all too well that Canadians are being impacted by high inflation. However, these price increases are global and Canada's rate is still lower than

the United States or the average of the OECD, the G7 or even the G20. Understanding this fact, our government will continue to move forward with measures to help Canadians make ends meet while also remaining fiscally responsible. I hope the Conservatives will start to support some of those measures that help make life more affordable for Canadians.

I would like to conclude by making something very clear. The federal budget that will be tabled later this week will demonstrate how our government intends to continue building a stronger and more resilient economy, one that generates shared prosperity for all Canadians while maintaining our country's low debt advantage, long-term fiscal sustainability and strong credit rating, all while making life more affordable for Canadians.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, time and time again I have risen in the House to bring to the government's attention the flooding and wildfire disasters in my riding and the horrific impacts they have had on my communities. I would be remiss if I did not mention that this is budget week and the window of opportunity to receive funds to help repair many of the damages that British Columbians have suffered is quickly closing.

In October 2021, I met with the City of Abbotsford along with other members of Parliament to discuss the city's request to the provincial and federal governments for dike infrastructure upgrades. During that meeting, we talked about the record of the City of Abbotsford, which has been making these requests for many years, and even the fact that the member for Langley—Aldergrove, the member for Abbotsford and I were in a meeting with the mayor just a few weeks prior, before the floods happened, talking about the need for the federal government to work with the province and the municipality to address these major infrastructure gaps.

When the first request was put in about a decade ago, at the time, estimated upgrades for the dikes would cost approximately \$500 million. Fast-forward to a few months ago, and the cost to upgrade flood mitigation infrastructure has skyrocketed. The City of Abbotsford put forward four options to mitigate the threat of the Nooksack River overflowing its banks again. The options ranged in cost from \$209 million, which would restore us to the previous standard and offers little protection, to a whopping \$2.8 billion, which would provide protection for Matsqui, Sumas and Clayburn Village well into the future.

Clearly, what happened in my riding and across B.C. was a costly lesson to learn. Hesitation on the part of both provincial and federal governments of Liberal and Conservative stripes to get funding out the door cost our communities a heavy price, and the bill to build back continues to grow. We cannot afford any further delays in building flood mitigation infrastructure moving forward.

Adjournment Proceedings

We know there is going to be another flood. We know that we are going to face another disaster. It might be in 10, 15 or even 30 years, but right now the mind of Canada, as we have the government's attention, is on British Columbia. We have an opportunity to do something that is going to keep people safe for many decades to come.

In the last number of weeks, I have probably stood more often on this issue than on any other I have spoken about. The Emergency Planning Secretariat, a local organization for 31 first nations, is calling for some of this work to be done. The Letse'mot community forum that I am part of, which means "one heart" in the Halq'eméylem language, has put forward many requests. I have also met with numerous indigenous bands in my riding: Sq'ewlets, Siska, Spuzzum, Shackan and Lytton First Nation. They are all calling on the federal government to improve emergency responses on indigenous lands.

Now is the time to act. Now is the time to protect British Columbia. Now is the time for the government, in the budget on Thursday, to put forward the taxpayer funds to protect British Columbia. I am pleading with the government to give more than \$5 billion. Just Abbotsford alone will cover half of that, and we have not even talked about Merritt and other small communities in the Fraser Canyon that cannot afford to pay for the infrastructure upgrades that are required. Taxpayer dollars are needed. I plead with the government to put them in the budget in the next couple of days.

• (1840)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada has been there from the very beginning, and we will continue to be there to support the people of British Columbia. While I am sure the member will understand that I am not able to discuss what is in the budget before it is actually presented, our government has been there for the people of British Columbia since day one to help them through the response and into what is now the recovery.

The impact of November's flooding and landslides on British Columbians was enormous. Residents across the Lower Mainland saw their homes, farms and businesses devastated. Thousands were displaced from their communities. When the province turned to us for help at the height of the emergency, our government responded. At its peak, just over 750 Canadian Armed Forces personnel were on the ground supporting evacuations, assisting with logistics and protecting critical infrastructure. Nine aircraft supported the evacuation of 330 people.

The same month, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Emergency Preparedness travelled to B.C. While there, the Prime Minister announced the creation of a new joint committee between the federal and provincial governments to guide immediate and ongoing support. Through this committee, our government continues to work together with our B.C. counterparts and with indigenous leadership to ensure a coordinated recovery and a build-back effort.

Our government also matched every dollar Canadians donated to the Red Cross response. With the province doing the same, every dollar Canadians gave turned into three for British Columbians.

Over \$90 million in total was raised and, as of February, more than \$18 million had gone to over 7,400 families. We do not have the final estimates of the costs from this event yet, but we know it will be significant. The Insurance Bureau of Canada has estimated that the insurance damage alone was in the range of \$515 million.

Public Safety Canada officials are currently working closely with their provincial counterparts, on the request from the province. Through the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements, provinces access federal cost-sharing for the response to and recovery from exactly these types of events.

As we move forward on this request, our government has already set aside \$5 billion in the 2021 fall economic statement for its share, as well as to assist with other costs related to the recent extreme weather events in British Columbia, such as the Lytton wildfire. This allocation is a historic contribution that reflects the extreme nature of this particular disaster.

Unfortunately, we also know that, thanks to the impacts of climate change, the kind of extreme weather events we saw last year are only going to become more frequent and severe. That is why building resilience to weather-related disasters continues to be a priority for our government. We are already engaged in the work that demonstrates our commitment. For example, under the national disaster mitigation program, the Government of Canada has contributed almost \$28.5 million for 117 projects across British Columbia. We are working to increase forest resilience to wildfires, including by training 1,000 new community-based firefighters, investing in equipment and in other measures to reduce risks from wildfires, and supporting fire management by indigenous communities.

We are also working to create a new low-cost national flood insurance program to protect homeowners at high risk of flooding and without adequate insurance protection, as well as to develop a national action plan to assist homeowners with potential relocation for those at highest risk of repeat flooding.

We know there is much more work to do, not just for British Columbians, but to protect all Canadians from the increasing risks of climate-related disasters. I can reassure my colleague that our government is committed to the undertaking of—

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg for that summation and congratulate the public servant who wrote that. It was a job well done. It was a good summary.

Adjournment Proceedings

I have a couple of other points to quickly raise. The Duffy Lake Road was on the national news a lot when the disasters were taking place. Four people died on the Duffy Lake Road, largely due to mudslides. Much of that highway, which is very popular for tourists and British Columbians alike going into the back country, does not have cellphone reception even though it is a major arterial road and was the main conduit from the Okanagan into the Lower Mainland when many other roads such as Highway No. 1 were washed out.

I am pleading with the government to consider putting cellphone towers up as an immediate measure to keep people safe on the Duffy and to have adequate cellphone coverage. Equally, this remains an issue in other areas of my riding, such as parts of Highway 12 and other sections of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I previously mentioned, officials are fully engaged on a request for financial support

under the disaster financial assistance arrangements from the province. I would like to inform the hon. member that through the DFAA, British Columbia has received over \$860 million in federal contributions for 42 separate events that have occurred in the province since 1970. Our thoughts continue to be with those affected by the tragic events in British Columbia and with everyone involved in the recovery and reconstruction.

Yes, the bureaucrats and public servants do a fantastic job, whether it is on the ground in British Columbia or here in Ottawa, ensuring we provide, as much as possible, the type of information Canadians would like to hear.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:47 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Online News Act

Mr. Rodriguez	4019
Bill C-18. Introduction and first reading	4019
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	4019

Lebanese Heritage Month Act

Ms. Diab	4019
Bill C-268. Introduction and first reading	4019
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	4019

Petitions

Employment Insurance

Ms. Rood	4019
----------------	------

The Environment

Mr. Johns	4019
-----------------	------

Ukraine

Mr. Mazier	4020
Mr. Lamoureux	4020

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux	4020
---------------------	------

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Lamoureux	4024
---------------------	------

Points of Order

Royal Recommendation for Bill C-215—Speaker's Ruling

The Deputy Speaker	4025
--------------------------	------

Royal Recommendation for Bill C-237—Speaker's Ruling

The Deputy Speaker	4026
--------------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Spending on national defence

Ms. Findlay	4027
Motion	4027
Mr. Perron	4028
Ms. Mathysen	4029
Mr. Morantz	4029
Mr. Paul-Hus	4029
Mr. Gerretsen	4030
Mrs. Vignola	4031
Mr. Garrison	4031
Mr. Gourde	4031
Mr. May (Cambridge)	4031
Mr. Morantz	4033
Ms. Larouche	4033

Ms. Mathysen	4033
Mr. Fillmore	4034
Mr. Oliphant	4034
Mr. Maguire	4035
Ms. Chabot	4035
Ms. Blaney	4036
Mr. Gerretsen	4036
Ms. Normandin	4036
Mr. Johns	4038
Mrs. Roberts	4038
Mr. Simard	4038
Mrs. Vignola	4039
Mr. Liepert	4040
Mr. Lamoureux	4040
Ms. Mathysen	4040
Ms. Mathysen	4041
Mr. Morantz	4042
Ms. Bérubé	4042
Mr. Lamoureux	4043
Ms. McPherson	4043
Mr. Lamoureux	4044
Mr. Steinley	4045
Ms. Larouche	4045
Mr. Chong	4045
Mr. Lamoureux	4047
Mrs. Vignola	4047
Mr. Masse	4047
Mr. Deltell	4047
Mr. Perron	4049
Mr. Lamoureux	4049
Mr. Masse	4049
Mr. Lamoureux	4049
Mr. Ruff	4050
Mrs. Vignola	4051
Mr. Johns	4051
Mr. Housefather	4051
Mr. Ruff	4052
Ms. Chabot	4053
Ms. Mathysen	4053
Mr. Morrice	4053
Mr. Kurek	4053
Mr. Gerretsen	4055
Mr. Perron	4055
Mr. Morrice	4055
Mr. Caputo	4055
Mr. Gerretsen	4057
Ms. Idlout	4057
Ms. Larouche	4057
Mr. Lamoureux	4057
Ms. Dzerowicz	4057

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Sikh Heritage Month	
Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South)	4058
Autism Month	
Mr. Lewis (Essex)	4059
Port Coquitlam Heritage Society	
Mr. McKinnon	4059
University Hockey Team in Trois-Rivières	
Mr. Villemure	4059
Mock Cabinet at Bourassa School	
Mr. Dubourg	4059
4-H in New Brunswick	
Mr. Bragdon	4059
Community Celebrations	
Mr. Aldag	4060
Public Transit	
Mr. Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	4060
Vancouver Rogues Rugby Club	
Mr. Vis	4060
Autism Month	
Ms. Koutrakis	4060
Eliot Grondin and Marie-Philip Poulin	
Mr. Lehoux	4061
Vaccine Mandates	
Mr. Kmiec	4061
French in the Yukon	
Mr. Hanley	4061
Rise Together	
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	4061
Invisible Work Day	
Ms. Larouche	4062
Cost of Living	
Ms. Dancho	4062
Canadian Middleweight Boxing Champion	
Mr. Gaheer	4062

ORAL QUESTIONS

Finance	
Ms. Bergen	4062
Mr. Trudeau	4062
Ms. Bergen	4062
Mr. Trudeau	4063
Ms. Bergen	4063
Mr. Trudeau	4063
Mr. Berthold	4063
Mr. Trudeau	4063
Mr. Berthold	4063
Mr. Trudeau	4063

Climate Change	
Mr. Blanchet	4063
Mr. Trudeau	4063
Mr. Blanchet	4064
Mr. Trudeau	4064

Families, Children and Social Development	
Mr. Singh	4064
Mr. Trudeau	4064
Mr. Singh	4064
Mr. Trudeau	4064

The Economy	
Mr. Fast	4064
Mr. Boissonnault	4064
Mr. Fast	4064
Ms. Gould	4065

Housing	
Mr. Albas	4065
Mr. Hussen	4065
Mr. Albas	4065
Mr. Hussen	4065
Mr. Deltell	4065
Mr. Hussen	4065

Finance	
Mr. Deltell	4065
Mr. Boissonnault	4066

The Environment	
Ms. Pauzé	4066
Mr. Guilbeault	4066
Ms. Michaud	4066
Mr. Guilbeault	4066
Ms. Pauzé	4066
Mr. Guilbeault	4066

Housing	
Mr. Jeneroux	4066
Mr. Hussen	4067
Mr. Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	4067
Mr. Hussen	4067
Ms. Dancho	4067
Mr. Hussen	4067

Seniors	
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	4067
Ms. Khera	4067

Indigenous Affairs	
Ms. Idlout	4067
Mr. Vandal	4068
Ms. Gazan	4068
Mr. Miller	4068

Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Casey	4068
Mr. MacAulay	4068

Public Services and Procurement	
Mr. Paul-Hus	4068
Ms. Tassi	4068

National Defence	
Mr. Paul-Hus	4068
Ms. Anand	4068
Ms. Findlay	4069
Ms. Anand	4069
Ms. Findlay	4069
Ms. Anand	4069
Seniors	
Ms. Larouche	4069
Ms. Khera	4069
Ms. Larouche	4069
Ms. Khera	4069
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Hallan	4070
Mr. Fraser	4070
Mr. Hallan	4070
Mr. Fraser	4070
Mrs. Thomas	4070
Mr. Fraser	4070
The Environment	
Mrs. Chatel	4070
Mr. Guilbeault	4070
Taxation	
Mr. Kelly	4071
Mr. Boissonnault	4071
Health	
Mr. Small	4071
Mr. Duclos	4071
Public Safety	
Mr. Soroka	4071
Mr. Mendicino	4071
Automotive Industry	
Mr. Turnbull	4071
Mr. Champagne	4071
Public Services and Procurement	
Mr. Johns	4072
Ms. Tassi	4072
Housing	
Mr. Boulerice	4072
Mr. Hussen	4072

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Spending on national defence	
Motion	4072
Ms. Dzerowicz	4072
Mr. Chong	4073
Mr. Davies	4073
Ms. Pauzé	4074
Mr. Gerretsen	4074
Mr. Bezan	4075

Mr. Trudel	4075
Ms. Barron	4076
Mr. Bezan	4076
Mr. McKay	4077
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	4077
Mr. Angus	4078
Mr. Ruff	4078
Mr. Hardie	4079
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	4080
Ms. Barron	4080
Mr. McKay	4080
Mr. Genuis	4081
Mr. Beaulieu	4082
Ms. Kwan	4082
Mr. Blois	4082
Ms. Dancho	4084
Ms. Pauzé	4084
Mr. Davies	4084
Mr. Tolmie	4084
Mr. Gerretsen	4086
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	4086
Mr. Vuong	4086
Mr. Zimmer	4086
Mr. McKay	4088
Mr. Trudel	4088
Mr. Blaikie	4088
Mr. Villemure	4089
Division on motion deferred	4090

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Encouraging the Growth of the Cryptoasset Sector Act	
Ms. Rempel Garner	4090
Bill C-249, Second reading	4090
Mr. Blois	4092
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	4093
Mr. Albas	4093
Mrs. Sudds	4093
Mr. Garon	4094
Mr. Blaikie	4096
Mr. Lobb	4097
Mr. Lamoureux	4099

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Genuis	4099
Ms. Vandenbeld	4100
The Economy	
Mr. Barrett	4101
Mr. Beech	4101
Disaster Assistance	
Mr. Vis	4102
Mr. Lamoureux	4103

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