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# House of Commons Debates

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(Hansard)

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Tuesday, January 31, 2023

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)  
[*English*]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and consistent with the current policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Acts of the 27th Congress of the Universal Postal Union”, done at Abidjan on August 26, 2021.

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### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and consistent with the current policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization: Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies”, done at Geneva on June 17, 2022.

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### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to the motion adopted on Wednesday, January 18, 2023, regarding the federal government consultant contracts awarded to McKinsey & Company.

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### VIOLENCE AGAINST PREGNANT WOMEN ACT

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (violence against pregnant women).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the member for South Surrey—White Rock for seconding my bill. It means a great deal to me.

It is my honour to rise to introduce this private member's bill, which would go a long way to addressing violence against some of the most vulnerable people in our society, pregnant women. The violence against pregnant women act seeks to amend the Criminal Code to ensure that the acts of knowingly assaulting a pregnant woman and causing physical or emotional harm to a pregnant woman are factored in as aggravating circumstances during the sentencing process.

Colleagues, the risk of violence against women increases when they are pregnant. However, consequences for their attackers do not increase at all. There are more than 80 cases in recent Canadian history of women who have been killed while pregnant. Each of these women was killed by men who knew they were pregnant. The killers intentionally sought to do harm to the mother or, in many cases, end the pregnancy. As it stands at this moment, our justice system fails to take these actions into account.

I am confident that this bill will receive widespread support from a House that stands united against gender-based violence in all its forms. In the words of the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, “It is a form of abuse that costs lives, and it must not be tolerated in Canada. These acts are part of a continuum of hate that needs to be disrupted, and each one of us has the power to help break that cycle.”

Canada is failing its pregnant women and the children they have chosen to carry to term. Sentences issued by our courts should match the crimes committed. Our country needs this law to ensure that criminals who attack or kill a pregnant woman can be sentenced appropriately by our courts.

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

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1005)

**PETITIONS**

## EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am here today to table a petition from the people of my riding who have a lot of concerns about expanded polystyrene. They know that when it gets into the marine environment, it can cause significant harm to marine life, seafood resources and the ecosystem. When it gets into that system, it is impossible or very hard to clean up from shorelines. It breaks down and gets everywhere, and it enters the marine environment, which is profoundly dangerous.

We know from what the petitioners tell us that the qathet Regional District and the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities have unanimously endorsed the prohibition of EPS in the marine environment, and we hope that Canada will follow suit.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of many people from the city of Winnipeg who would like to see an end to fossil fuel subsidies and who would like to see the wealthy be made to pay their fair share, whether it is individuals or corporations, in order to fund a climate transition for the lower-carbon economy that respects indigenous rights and puts workers first by ensuring that investment in new infrastructure is also an ambitious job-creation program for the country, among many other things. I encourage folks to take a good look at the content of the petition for all of those details.

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place to present petitions related to the concerns that so many Canadians have.

In particular, today, I present another petition that calls the government and the House of Commons' attention to the fact that the committee studying MAID right now has heard testimony asking for infanticide in this country. These petitioners would like to call our attention to the proposal for the legalized killing of infants. They say it is deeply disturbing and infanticide is always wrong.

These petitioners today call to the government and the House of Commons' attention the fact that infanticide should not be allowed in Canada.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too am tabling a petition today noting that Louis Roy of the Collège des médecins du Québec recommends expanding euthanasia to “babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with severe deformities and very serious syndromes”. This proposal for the legalized killing of infants is deeply disturbing to many Canadians. Infanticide is always wrong.

I join the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada who are calling on the Government of Canada to oppose this horrendous proposal.

● (1010)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too rise to present a petition from many of my constituents and people across the country calling on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to allow the killing of children, as has been proposed at committee by a member of the Collège des médecins du Québec, who mentioned expanding euthanasia to babies from birth to one year. Killing children and killing babies is always wrong. We on this side and many Canadians call upon the government to reject that and ensure there is no euthanasia for children.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by numerous Canadians from coast to coast in this country who want to draw to the attention of the House comments made by Louis Roy of the Collège des médecins du Québec, who recommended euthanasia to babies from birth to one year of age who are not born in a healthy way and have severe deformities or a serious syndrome. This proposal is basically the state sanctioning of infanticide. The undersigned of this petition do not believe that the state should be sanctioning in any way, shape or form the euthanasia of babies from birth to one year.

[*Translation*]

## SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak while you are in the chair.

[*English*]

I want to wish you, Mr. Speaker, a very happy new year, as the statute of limitations on saying that starts tomorrow, February 1.

[*Translation*]

I am proud to present a petition regarding a very important issue for Canadians, especially those in my riding.

[*English*]

It is the question of the pollution of our oceans with plastic. Ocean plastics is a crisis. It is recognized globally and it was recognized recently at COP15.

The petitioners in this case call for the Government of Canada to strengthen regulatory definitions to include more single-use plastic items and close loopholes that currently allow a tremendous number of plastic items to be replaced with more problematic plastic; to remove the exemption that allows banned products to continue to be manufactured; to implement a clear action plan to eliminate all single-use plastics by 2030; and to bring proposed regulations into force within six months of their publication.

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present, on behalf of many Canadians from coast to coast to coast, this petition for the Government of Canada in light of the recent statements made before committee by a member of the Collège des médecins du Québec, who recommended expanding euthanasia to “babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world with severe deformities and very serious syndromes”. This proposal for the legalized killing of infants is deeply disturbing for many Canadians and infanticide is always wrong, so I submit this petition to the Government of Canada today.

## PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY

**Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions I want to present to the House today.

The first petition deals with the ongoing national unity crisis. It is a particular concern for my constituents in Alberta. The petitioners note that the government, through rhetoric, policy, action and inaction, has caused a national unity crisis. They call on the government to take responsibility for the national unity crisis it has created and, as one important remedial measure, to ensure there are no bureaucratic or legislative roadblocks for provinces that wish to exercise their constitutionally allowed measures of autonomy.

• (1015)

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling speaks to the ongoing detention of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian of Uighur origin and human rights activist who is detained currently in China, and has been for well over a decade, for his action in support of the political and religious rights of Uighurs. Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen who was taken from Uzbekistan into China, and he has been detained since. He has never had an opportunity to meet his youngest son, who is now well into his teenage years.

The petitioners note that evidence now makes clear that the Chinese government's treatment of the Uighurs meets most, if not all, of the criteria for genocide, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to take the following actions: to demand that the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services in accordance with international law; to formally state that the release of Huseyin Celil from Chinese detainment and his return to Canada is a priority of the Canadian government of equal concern as the unjust past detentions of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor; to appoint a special envoy to work on securing Mr. Celil's release; and to seek the assistance of the Biden administration and other allies around the world in obtaining Mr. Celil's release, similar to what happened with the case of the two Michaels.

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

**Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition I am tabling is similar to a petition tabled by a number of my colleagues. It relates to a proposal made by Louis Roy of the Collège des médecins du Québec rec-

*Routine Proceedings*

ommending the expansion of euthanasia to “babies from birth to one year of age”.

This proposal from such an association is deeply disturbing to Canadians. Canadians generally recognize that killing children is always wrong, and the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call on the Government of Canada to be clear in its opposition to this proposal and block any attempt to allow the legalized killing of children in this country.

## CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

**Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, next I am tabling a petition from people who are concerned about a Liberal proposal in the Liberals Party's last election platform to politicize the charitable status determination.

The Liberal proposal was to withdraw charitable status from organizations where the people involved had views on abortion that the Liberal Party disagreed with. This proposal would jeopardize, the petitioners say, the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that happen to have a difference of opinion from the Liberal Party on these issues. It would hurt the many Canadians who depend on the work of these charitable organizations.

The petitioners say the government has previously used a values test to discriminate against worthy applicants to the Canada summer jobs program, denying any funding to organizations that were not willing to check a box endorsing the political positions of the governing party. The petitioners say that charities and other non-profit organizations should not be discriminated against on the basis of their political views or religious values and should not be subject to a politicized values test.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis without discrimination on the basis of those values and without the imposition of another values test. The petitioners also call on the government to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

## HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next two petitions that I will be tabling deal with the human rights situation of minorities inside Afghanistan.

The first one specifically deals with the situation of the Hazaras. The petitioners note a history, going back to the 19th century, of the Hazara people being subject to genocide. They note that these waves of genocidal violence have continued, and they continue up to the present day.

*Government Orders*

Canada made a significant investment in Afghanistan, with \$3.6 billion in assistance to Afghanistan over the years as well as over 150 brave women and men in uniform who died in that conflict, that underlines the connection that Canadians have to the Afghan people. The petitioners therefore ask the House to continue to advocate and to stand up for the rights of the Hazara people in Afghanistan, to formally recognize past acts of violence as genocide and to designate September 25 as the Hazara genocide memorial day.

The next petition deals with the challenges faced by another minority community in Afghanistan, which is Afghanistan's historic Sikh and Hindu communities. The petitioners want to see the government take steps to support these minorities and to welcome refugees from these minority communities to come to Canada.

These minority communities faced severe violence and pressure even prior to the Taliban takeover. Things for minority communities, as well as Afghans in general, have gotten much worse since that takeover. The petitioners want us to remain seized with the human rights situation in Afghanistan in the midst of those ongoing challenges.

FALUN GONG

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition highlights the plight of Falun Gong practitioners in China and the human rights abuses they face. This persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China has now been going on for decades.

The petitioners note a number of actions that could be taken, including measures to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The House passed legislation on that already at the end of last year. However, the petitioners want to see continuing action by the House and by the government responding to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and to continue to hold those responsible for that persecution accountable.

- (1020)

ETHIOPIA

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the final petition I am tabling today highlights the conflict that occurred in Ethiopia. The petition was submitted prior to the signing of the latest peace deal.

The petitioners want to see the Canadian Parliament and the government remain seized with those ongoing challenges. No doubt, they hope for the effective implementation of a peace deal that allows people to live together in peace and harmony, as well as to provide support and amelioration of circumstances for those who were suffering as a result of the violence that occurred during that conflict.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to designate Thursday, February 2, 2023, as an opposition day.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CANADA EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT**

The House resumed from January 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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

Just as a reminder, I am splitting my time with the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

I will lay out some of the issues with the Liberal child care bill, Bill C-35, that will need to be addressed.

I thank those who work in the child care system and who look after our children.

To be clear, this is not a child care strategy. In my province of British Columbia, a 2019 survey found that the greater Vancouver area, represented by several cabinet ministers in the Liberal government, had only enough child care spaces for 18.6% of children in the metro region. That is bad enough in urban areas of our country, but in many rural regions of Canada large child care centres do not exist at all. This bill offers rural parents or those who need flexibility nothing. Again, it chooses to ignore the simple fact that low-cost child care is not possible if child care resources are not accessible to begin with.

However, the rural-urban divide is not the only issue with this legislation. There is a serious concern about the complete lack of focus on ensuring that child care spaces go to those most in need instead of creating advantages for the already well off. After all, affordable child care should be prioritized for those who otherwise cannot afford it.

There is no means test. Under the current Liberal proposal, someone who works on Bay Street with children already in day care will get access to \$10-a-day child care the same as a lower-income family. People who do not need to work have the same access as a family who needs to work.

There is no flexibility for families who are not working the weekday office job hours and who currently have different types of child care options that work for their shift work or their schedules. That is because this legislation dogmatically preferences not-for-profit and government child care over operators working and running child care centres in the private sector. These are people, most often women, who work in their homes, who have small businesses and who often have young children.

When my son was a baby I found someone to come into my home part time. That was back when maternity leave was only six months, and it was hard to work with such a young baby. Having someone come in was expensive, and I was not making a lot at the time. However, it was the only option I had at the time as few child care centres took infants that young or would allow me flexibility with part-time needs and hours. Christina became like family.

Anyone who has this type of scenario would not be applicable in this legislation. When my son was a toddler he was in the home of a wonderful woman, Pauline, who had a group of kids. Because I needed flexibility in child care due to the type of contract work I was doing at the time, the larger, structured child care centres did not work for what I needed.

The scenario of in-home small business child care does not meet the priorities of the government's legislation. Instead of giving parents freedom to determine what child care works best for their children and their lives, the government has opened the door for a two-tiered framework of child care. Under the government's plan, only not-for-profit and government child care spaces have open access for parents to utilize the Liberals' program as the legislation states is the priority. That is not universal access and the legislation does not include strategies to address spaces or labour.

We know there are labour shortages. About a year ago, in Kelowna, it was announced by one centre that they had to say goodbye to about 24 children, because they could not find the staff to meet the government licensing requirements. That left families scrambling with little ability to find a new location with waiting lists being long.

A Vancouver operator of 300 spaces said, "In the past two years, we've had to close programs temporarily, whether it's for a day or two, or shorten hours for a week". A report on child care recruitment published in January 2023 found that in British Columbia, 45% of child care centres are losing more staff than they can hire, and 27% of child care employers turned away children because of a lack of qualified staff.

• (1025)

To adequately staff the Liberals' proposed plan in British Columbia, they found that 12,000 new child care employees were required. Still, current recruitment and retention programs are failing with several thousand employees behind target.

When the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development put this bill forward, she said its purpose was to enshrine the Liberals' record on children and family into law. However, their record on this file is something that they are not strong champions of. Canada was once ranked 10th among the OECD for the well-

### *Government Orders*

being of children, but under the present government, Canada has fallen sharply to 30th place.

We will work on this side of the House to try to make this legislation better and more accessible to parents who want and deserve the freedom to decide what kind of child care works for their family. Looking beyond this, a future Conservative government will work hard on ways to increase child care workers and spaces and to ensure there are stable, good-paying jobs for families to keep more of the money they earn in their pockets.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to greet all my colleagues who are here this morning.

[*English*]

I ask the hon. member from British Columbia this: Would she not agree that it is a seminal moment in policy and for Canadian families and children that a national early learning and day care agreement has been put in place? Would she not agree that families from coast to coast to coast, including in Kelowna, are saving literally thousands of dollars today on day care fees, which is helping out with affordability and giving children the best start they can receive in their lives and for their futures?

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely, there are some people who are able to access this, but it is not universal, and the government is hand-picking the exact types of formats that will work for this. There are many families who do not fit within that traditional format of putting their children in a not-for-profit or government-run facility. There are many people who have their children in smaller locations, such as in families' homes, and all of this is left out. Therefore, it really does not allow for flexibility and freedom, and it is actually likely going to gridlock the current systems that exist right now in the not-for-profit and government systems.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised to hear the official opposition questioning so many things when the Quebec system, which has been in place for 25 years, works. It also works well in the fight against poverty. I am receptive to my colleague's argument that it is those who already have money who will benefit. However, that is not what we have seen in Quebec.

Here is a statistic: The number of single-parent families on welfare dropped by 64% from the year the child care system was created to 2016. That is also because more women had jobs. Child care in Quebec was not built overnight. We began by laying the foundation and then continued to build up services, which are delivering results in the fight against poverty.

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I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

[English]

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, sure, there have been results, but the reality is that in Quebec the program has existed for over 20 years. As of right now, there are over 50,000 children on waiting lists to get into child care.

It has seen some results, but there is still a lot of work that it obviously needs to do because it does not have complete universal child care, and not everyone who needs a child care space has it in Quebec.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House given the support that we in the NDP have given to this important legislation.

We know that work needs to be done to improve it, but it is really hard to take anybody from the Conservative Party seriously who is critical of moving forward toward universal, affordable child care. It is a party that, when it was in government, waged a war on women. It cut the status of women department, cut programming when it came to women, refused to implement an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, and did nothing to advance the desperate need for child care that women face in our country.

This legislation is critical to lifting Canadian women up. Despite the rhetoric from the Conservative leadership, let it be known to Canadians today that the Conservatives do not want to lift Canadian women up and ensure that there is affordable, accessible child care in our country for all of us.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member finally came back to referring to what the legislation is. The member mentioned universal child care. This is not universal child care. The government is hand-picking the types of organizations that are applicable for this. That was the whole premise of my speech, and I would ask the member to go back and listen to my intervention again.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the speech the member just gave, she criticized this legislation for not being means-tested. I would remind her that when she ran in the last election under the leader from Durham, the Conservatives' plan was to get rid of this universal child care and replace it with a tax credit. A tax credit would be the least available option if one were looking to means-test a program. Can she somehow explain to the House how it is she ran on a tax credit, which by no means would provide a means test, and is now suddenly critical of that specifically?

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, in Canada if we had not had hundreds of thousands of people laid off in the resource sector who had very good-paying jobs, if we did not have 40-year inflation where people can barely buy food and groceries, maybe it would not be such an issue that they would not be able to afford their basic necessities and not be able to afford child care.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if a couple, Fred and Martha let us say, living near Hoadley, Alberta in a rural area, have incomes that are close to or just above minimum wage, would they get the pleasure and privilege of paying for day care for millionaires in downtown Toronto or downtown Mon-

treil while their taxes are not going to provide any benefit because there will be no government-sanctioned day care spaces in a community that only has a couple of hundred people?

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the government does not have any money. The government takes money from its citizens and then gives it back, and so the scenario is in fact playing out as the member has said. The government is hand-picking who it is giving the money back to. In fact that person maybe does not have access to a lot of child care facilities where they live in a rural area. Absolutely, because the government is hand-picking who it is going to be giving this money back to.

• (1035)

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this place and contribute to the debate on Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

As a mom and a grandmother of 11, I understand the importance of having access to quality child care, and I join my colleagues in recognizing those who work in this sector and the very important work they do, and I thank them for it.

With all of the fanfare that this two-to-three-decade plan in the making to nationalize child care has been given, this bill falls flat when it comes to providing a solution for the issues that currently face families who need these programs. As part of their confidence and supply agreement that sees the New Democrats support the minority government through to 2025, the Liberals promised to introduce this legislation by the end of 2022.

With that deadline fast approaching, the Liberals introduced this bill last December. While the bill sets out to establish a vision for a Canada-wide community-based early learning and child care system, it lacks substance in charting a path to get there. Not only does it not address the problems that already exist, but it creates even more.

In declaring their goal to support the establishment and maintenance of a Canada-wide early learning and child care system, where families have access to affordable, inclusive and high-quality early learning and child care programs and services, regardless of where they live, the Liberals have included one proviso that has many families and child care providers concerned.

That condition is found in paragraph 7(1)(a), to "facilitate access to early learning and child care programs and services—in particular those that are provided by public and not for profit child care providers".



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To start, it favours or gives preferential treatment to public and not-for-profit providers over any other type of child care program that exists. Only public, non-profit child care spaces have open access for parents to utilize the supports of this program. If a family chose a new, privately owned centre or one that has recently expanded to meet the demand, it cannot access the subsidy it needs at that centre, therefore limiting the child's ability to access quality child care.

Families are diverse and so, too, are their circumstances. The federal government should not be dictating what child care is best for families. Conservatives recognize that Canadian families should have access to affordable and quality child care and believe they should be able to choose child care providers who best suit their families' needs.

Second, this bill does nothing to address the wait-lists of thousands of families needing child care. For example, the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario projects that, by 2026, there will be 602,000 children under six whose families will want \$10-a-day care and the province will only be able to accommodate 375,000 of them, leaving 227,000, or 38% of those children, without access.

Third, it does not address the concerns of operators who do not have the staff or infrastructure to offer more spaces. Currently there are not enough qualified staff to keep all existing child care centres running at full capacity, let alone staff new spaces. Government estimates also suggest that, by 2026, there could be a shortage of 8,500 early childhood workers.

In British Columbia, 27% of child care centres turn away children due to lack of staff. One child care director who oversees 13 child care programs with 350 spaces says that, "In the past two years, we've had to close programs temporarily, whether it's for a day or two, or shorten hours for the week...in order to meet the licensing regulations".

● (1040)

There are also concerns of inflation increasing operating costs. Many child care centres that offer food programs are now considering seriously cutting back on the programs or eliminating them all together.

The cost of inflation is putting pressure on child care centres, and they need to lower costs because the funding they are receiving is not reflecting the drastic rise of inflation. They are now faced with cutting down costs in drastic ways.

In a Globe and Mail article, an owner of a child care centre in Calgary stated, "If we've got to start jettisoning expenses...do we start cutting back on our food program, or even eliminate it in its entirety over time?" Once again, the Liberal government is not taking into account the inflation crisis it has fuelled when implementing new policies.

While we would see the demand for child care increase as a result of this bill, it would not solve the problems of lack of access to more spaces, frontline burnout, staff shortages and rising costs. Affordable, quality child care is critical, but if people cannot access it, it does not exist, as I have already stated. Bill C-35 would do nothing to address accessibility.

In the time that I have left, I want to focus on the clause that will create a national advisory council, which has already been appointed. Clause 9 states, "A Council is established, to be known as the National Advisory Council on Early Learning and Child Care, consisting of no fewer than 10 but no more than 18 members, including the Chairperson and the ex officio member." That ex officio member would be the deputy minister.

The chairperson, and up to 18 members, would be appointed by the minister for three-year terms. The members of this council would, of course, be paid with the remuneration to be set by the Governor in Council. These members would be entitled to reimbursements for travel, living and other expenses incurred for their work on the council, including the deputy minister.

They would also be deemed to be employees for the purpose of the Government Employees Compensation Act, and to be employed in the federal public administration.

Here is the thing. While this bill appears to put a focus on respecting and valuing the diversity of all children and families, and respond to their varying needs, the national council would have zero representation of entrepreneurial providers at the table.

In provinces like Alberta and New Brunswick, the majority of stakeholders are private, and there are a large number of them, in fact. It is 67% for Alberta and 80% for New Brunswick. There would be no one who will bring to the table the views of those female entrepreneurs who have stepped up and made investments to meet the need for child care in this country.

The government is not taking into account the realities of families who have access only to private child care providers. The national advisory council should have representation for the different options of child care offered across this country. Canadians need a solution that is flexible enough to fit their varying needs, not an Ottawa-centric, one-size-fits-all solution. That starts with representation on the national council for entrepreneurial child care providers.

In conclusion, I find that this bill is superfluous to the child care issue. It would do little but create a council of bureaucrats with full benefits and compensation to dictate to Canadians the Liberals' view of what the provision of child care should be across this country. This bill needs to be amended, and many of my colleagues have already noted that. It is flawed, narrow in its approach and does not address the issues facing this sector and the families who desperately need it.

● (1045)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back and I welcome all my colleagues back to the House of Commons.

*Government Orders*

Over the course of the break, I had lots of time to knock on doors. I talked to lots of my neighbours. Milton is one of the youngest communities in Canada demographically, so I overwhelmingly heard from my constituents that they were thrilled about the amount of money they were saving every month on child care.

While the Conservatives ran on a promise to tear up those agreements and remove national child care from my community, it would be devastating for my community. They have been talking a lot about affordability, but the \$450, \$500 or \$600 a month that my constituents are saving on child care fees is really supporting them.

What is the Conservative plan to support families and their young children in those early years?

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, I too have communities in my riding that have very young demographics, and they do not have access to the kind of child care the current government is proposing to fund exclusively.

At a time when families are struggling, when they are already worried about how they are going to pay for their mortgage, feed their families or heat their homes, they should not have to worry about access to child care, which many already are, because this bill does nothing to improve access for people who do not have it right now.

Bill C-35 is providing Canadian families with a single solution to which access is limited. It is critical that we open up not only this debate but our minds to the reality that we need those small, privately owned child care spaces, most of which are operated by women, to meet the demand of young families.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to begin by wishing you a happy new year.

In response to my colleague's speech, I think it is important to emphasize that child care is not just a business. It is not just about tax credits. It is also a place where children learn.

I would like my colleague to tell us more about the provinces' role and that of indigenous peoples in delivering early learning programs and services. Is that not a priority? What kind of conditions do we want to create for our children?

This is not just about giving them four walls and a safe place to be. We also have to think about their development, and that means creating a robust public system.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, I will try to speak to the first issue the member raised around provincial jurisdiction. We know that while this bill does not make financial promises, the government has already signed framework agreements with all the provinces, and indeed it has cited the framework agreements as a reason for why it has not put very much detail in this bill.

We know that if the goal is really to deliver universal access to child care, it needs to take into consideration the very real and diverse needs of parents today and all of the options that are available

out there. It should not shut out those small, female-owned and operated child care programs that are so desperately needed. I would encourage that member and his colleagues to consider all that is not contained in this bill and the implications that it has for young families across Canada.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I remember when I first ran for office back in 2015. I think of the city of Langford in my riding with so many young families, and this is such a desperate need.

I have heard my Conservative colleagues talk about freedom of choice. My constituents did not have that. Conservatives put a lot of value in the private sector, but the private sector has not met the need. It has not stepped up to the plate, not in the availability of spaces or the affordability of those spaces.

There is a need for the government to get involved in this. The Conservatives talk about government dictating the program, but the private sector has been dictating the parameters of the program and it has not met the needs of my constituents or the needs of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Again, my question for the hon. member is this. If the private sector has so obviously failed to meet that need, why do the Conservatives put so much stock in continuing with the status quo? There is such an obvious need for the government to get involved in this program to meet the needs of my constituents and Canadians right across this country.

● (1050)

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely reject the premise that the government is not already involved in funding public, not-for-profit child care programs. Conservatives understand that we cannot meet demand without both the private and the public sector.

We also need a national labour strategy. There is no mention of a national labour strategy in this bill, one that will definitely need to be addressed if we are going to move forward in creating more spaces. Until something is done about that labour shortage, it is going to get worse. The families that will benefit from this legislation at this point in time are those that already have secured child care spaces in a public, not-for-profit program.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in September 2020, the Governor General delivered the Speech from the Throne that outlined our government's intention to create a Canada-wide early learning and child care system with provinces, territories and indigenous partners. That was the start of our journey to transform the way child care is delivered in this country.

This is why I am standing in the House today, and I will be sharing my time with the member for Hamilton Mountain.

What we had at that time was a patchwork system that strained family budgets, left early childhood educators underpaid and left many children without proper care.

*Government Orders*

Our government's vision for a Canada-wide system recognizes that high-quality early learning and child care enrich children's cognitive, emotional and social development, which has the potential to deliver long-lasting and far-reaching positive outcomes throughout a person's life. Child care is also an important support for parents, families and communities as it enables parents, particularly mothers, to reach their full economic potential, which contributes to a strong economy and greater gender equality. That is why we are committed to supporting the establishment and maintenance of a Canada-wide early learning and child care system, including before- and after-school care.

Through budget 2021, we committed a substantial investment of up to \$30 billion over five years to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system in collaboration with provincial, territorial and indigenous partners. We have already seen great results. We now have agreements with all provinces and territories to reduce fees, build high-quality spaces and ensure early childhood educators are better supported.

Since the signing of the Canada-wide agreements, all provinces and territories are seeing child care fees significantly reduced, and we are on track to achieve our goal of an average \$10-a-day licensed child care by March 2026. This really is a significant accomplishment. As the hon. Minister of Families, Children and Social Development has said, we want to ensure that future generations of families across Canada can count on the progress we have achieved so far.

Bill C-35 builds on the incredible work that our government has already done. From day one, our government has been making life more affordable for Canadian families.

In 2016, we introduced and implemented the Canada child benefit, which gives more money, tax-free, to nine out of 10 families and has helped lift nearly half a million children out of poverty. From August 2021 to August 2022, in my riding of Surrey—Newton, nearly 28,000 children have been supported through \$103 million in benefits due to the Canada child benefit.

Our Liberal government is committed to ensuring that families have access to affordable, inclusive and high-quality early learning and child care no matter where they live.

That leads us to the legislation before the House today. Bill C-35 was first tabled just over a month ago, and today I am honoured to speak in support of this bill.

• (1055)

British Columbia took the first steps with us towards creating a Canada-wide system of child care when it was the first province to sign an agreement in July 2021. Less than two years later, in December 2022, British Columbia announced an average of 50% reduction in licensed early learning and child care fees. Spaces in the \$10-a-day program reduce the average cost of child care from \$1,000 a month for full-time, centre-based infant care to \$200 a month for the same service, saving families an average of \$800 per month, per child.

I also want to point out that by the end of 2022, because of federal and provincial investments, British Columbia had nearly doubled

the number of spaces in its \$10-a-day program, from 6,500 to over 12,500 spaces across the province.

I am also very encouraged to see that more people are choosing to pursue studies in early childhood education in British Columbia. Building on the province's work to introduce another wage enhancement, I look forward to seeing additional measures under the Canada-wide system that will support the recruitment and retention of this essential workforce.

It is worth noting that cutting child care fees is one way we can put money back in people's pockets, at a time when inflation is making life more expensive. This much-needed support will dramatically help reduce the cost of living. The relief that these savings offer parents of young children cannot be overstated. It means that thousands of dollars can be used for energy bills, additional groceries for their families every month, or other essential matters.

This legislation makes it harder for any future government to cancel or cut child care and undo everything that we have achieved for children and families, together with the governments and jurisdictions across this country.

Passing Bill C-35 would build on the amazing journey that has seen transformative co-operation between the federal, provincial and territorial governments and indigenous partners. Through individually tailored agreements with the provinces and territories, we carefully stitched together this system and created a Canada-wide early learning and child care system that is accessible and affordable. It is worth building on into the future. That is what this bill will allow us to do, through an ongoing partnership approach. It does not impose any conditions or requirements on provincial and territorial governments, nor indigenous peoples. Bill C-35 is not a top-down approach. It is an act of partnership, building on the collaborative work with provinces, territories and indigenous peoples.

I am keen to support this legislation because it will serve to strengthen the Canada-wide child care.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you and the other members had a very merry Christmas. I wish all members, and of course the residents of Surrey—Newton, a very happy new year.

During my conversation with members of my riding on the ground they were asking me to support a system like this, child care that benefits families that need it. I respectfully ask all my colleagues to ensure the swift passage of this bill, giving Canadian families enduring access to high-quality, affordable and inclusive early learning and child care.

• (1100)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the things I am seeing come out of this debate is that there seems to be an inability to see the word "and". The Liberals and the NDP love to put the word "or" in their policy and legislation.

*Government Orders*

My question for the member opposite is this. Does he not believe that all families have different circumstances and different needs, that this policy or legislation excludes so many families that are on wait-lists and so many women entrepreneurs who cannot access this and therefore cannot provide the day care needed for those people on wait-lists, and that it does not provide a labour strategy to help with frontline burnout?

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, I can say that the system we are building is an affordable and inclusive system. I gave the example earlier that in British Columbia alone, the capacity has gone from 6,500 to 12,500 spaces across the province, and I am sure other provinces are following the lead that British Columbia has taken and are creating those spaces.

However, I want to remind my hon. colleagues on the other side that we need Bill C-35 because I know the record of the Conservative government. When Prime Minister Harper took over, Ken Dryden had formed an agreement with all 10 provinces and territories on universal child care and early learning, and what happened? When the Conservatives came in, child care cuts were made. With respect to the Kelowna accord to help our indigenous partners, do members know what happened? It was gone. Regarding Kyoto on the environment, after the Conservatives came in, it was gone.

This is why this bill is even more important, so that our future generations will have a system that is inclusive, affordable and universal.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as I listened to my colleague's speech, I would see that he certainly understands all the benefits of affordable educational child care.

However, in the previous version of the bill, Quebec's exemption was right there in black and white. After all, Quebec is a success story. I would like to know why that was not included in this bill. If it were clearly stated that Quebec could opt out with appropriate financial compensation, I think another Quebec-Canada fight could be avoided.

[*English*]

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, Quebec has led the way for many, many years when it comes to child care, and I have to give it credit. We continue to learn from the Quebec model on this particular issue. We are glad that the other provinces and territories are now following Quebec's lead by partnering with us and continuing to build the early learning and child care system.

Moving forward, I am sure that we, as Canadians, along with Quebecers, will continue to bring in a system that works for all and helps our children and families moving forward.

• (1105)

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I really appreciate this bill because it would incorporate into legislation the importance of implementing UNDRIP, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples., as well as make sure that all children are being taken care of. It would create a system to ensure that children are being taken care of.

What I also like about this bill is that it would create a national advisory council on early learning and child care. I wonder if the member agrees that this new advisory council must also include indigenous experts in the area of early child care, so we could make sure there is true reconciliation, something we need to see more of. I wonder if the member agrees that we need to ensure indigenous membership on that council.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Nunavut has said it all. I support her on this one, and I am sure the advisory council would be very diverse in its background and would also be inclusive with indigenous membership.

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is so nice to be back in the House with friends and colleagues. I would like to take advantage of the very end of the statute of limitations to wish everyone a very happy new year. I particularly wish the residents of Hamilton Mountain a happy new year.

It was so great to be back in the riding over the holidays, but I am thrilled to be back in the House today to stand to speak in support of Bill C-35, which we hope will become the Canada early learning and child care act. This bill would enshrine into law the Government of Canada's commitment to working with provinces, territories and indigenous peoples to build a Canada-wide system of early learning and child care, a system that would help ensure families in my riding of Hamilton Mountain, and families across Canada, can access high-quality, affordable and inclusive early learning and child care, no matter where they live.

In my riding of Hamilton Mountain we have many early learning and child care centres that provide access to high-quality early learning, such as Today's Family, YMCA, YWCA Hamilton, and Umbrella Family and Child Centres, and I have been proud to tour some of those facilities with the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. Centres like these not only benefit our children, but they also benefit parents who can afford to go to work knowing their children are being cared for and educated.

As a mother, I wholeheartedly agree with all of those who say that child care is not a luxury. It is a necessity. My friend and constituent Ala Mohamed is a child care worker at YWCA Hamilton. Her heart has been melting with joy since just before Christmas, when a barrage of parents started calling because they could not believe the child care refunds they were getting, just in time and when they needed them.

There were parents who could suddenly afford Christmas gifts and stop struggling to meet their mortgage payments, mothers who could finally go to work to help support their families and parents who could start planning higher education for their children. Ala said that parents are happy that child care costs dropped, while the quality of that child care has been enhanced because of renewed support for registered early childhood educators.

*Government Orders*

We believe parents should have the opportunity to build both a healthy family and a healthy career, and that children deserve the best possible start in life. As part of budget 2021, the Government of Canada made a transformative investment designed to give them that start, an investment of up to \$30 billion over five years to build a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. Combined with previous investments announced since 2015, a minimum of \$9.2 billion per year, ongoing, will be invested in child care, including indigenous early learning and child care, starting in 2025.

We are already seeing results well ahead of schedule. Women's participation in the workforce in Canada is near an all-time high of almost 85%. The Bank of Canada credits the early learning and child care plan, saying "This increase in the participation rate of prime-age women has expanded the labour force by almost 100,000 people, helping ease firms' labour shortages and hiring challenges." This means mothers are already finding they can afford the choice to find full-time work.

In November of last year, Nunavut became the first jurisdiction in Canada to reduce fees for regulated child care to \$10-a-day under the Canada-wide system, joining Yukon and Quebec in delivering an affordable child care system to its residents, and doing so more than three years ahead of schedule. This is a tremendous achievement, one that will make life more affordable for families that use regulated child care in the territory, and while families in Nunavut are enjoying the benefits of this system to their fullest, they are not alone.

Every other province and territory that has not yet achieved \$10-a-day care has announced fee reductions to parents under the Canada-wide system. This is a first and critical step toward our ultimate goal, which is regulated child care that costs an average of \$10 a day across Canada by March 2026.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

The Canada-wide early learning and child care system is becoming a reality. The legislative measure that is before us today will strengthen and protect this system so that it remains a reality for future generations.

[*English*]

The Canada-wide early learning and child care system is becoming a reality, and the legislation we are considering today would help strengthen and protect that system to ensure it is a reality for generations to come.

Here are some of what this legislation would work to achieve. It would provide support for the continued implementation of an affordable Canada-wide early learning and child care system by enshrining the vision, the guiding principles, and a commitment to long-term funding. It would enhance transparency and accountability by requiring the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development to report annually to the public on progress being made in the system. It would also establish in law the national advisory council that would provide third-party expert advice on issues and challenges facing the ELCC sector in Canada.

This legislation is critical. As we build on the early successes of the Canada-wide agreements, we want to set the foundations for success over the long term. We are doing this by enshrining into law the federal government's commitment to strengthening and protecting this Canada-wide system.

[*Translation*]

This bill is the result of collaborative efforts between the Government of Canada and its partners and stakeholders.

[*English*]

Bill C-35 builds on the collaborative work we have undertaken with provinces, territories and indigenous peoples from coast to coast to coast. This is not a top-down process. It is not imposing anything. It is driven by shared interest and close partnerships and collaboration.

This legislation respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction and the vision and principles of both the 2017 multilateral early learning and child care framework developed with provinces and territories, as well as the co-developed indigenous early learning and child care framework, which was jointly released and endorsed in 2018 with the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council.

By enshrining these principles and vision into federal law, we are building not only stability into the child care system, but also predictability and commitment. We want provinces, territories and indigenous peoples to know that the federal government is in this for the long term, that our commitment to ensuring access to affordable, high-quality and inclusive early learning and child care from coast to coast to coast is one they can count on, one that will endure.

That is why I am supporting Bill C-35, and I would urge the Conservatives to do the same.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course quality, affordable child care is what every Canadian wants for their child. There is not a parent or person watching who does not want their child to have the best, to have access to the best.

In the member's speech, she said that this program enhances child care. We have seen that the Liberals did not account for inflation. In fact, as quoted in *The Globe and Mail*, many child care facilities are having to decide whether or not to cut their food programs. The Liberals did not account for inflation and, in fact, it is not enhancing the child care experience.

What is the member's rebuttal to that?

• (1115)

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** Mr. Speaker, what I know and have heard from constituents in the riding of Hamilton Mountain is that this child care system is working. Parents are getting the relief they need and the child care system is getting better for them.

*Government Orders*

I have heard directly from my constituents that this is something parents needed and that childhood educators have been clamouring for. They are so grateful to this government for creating a system so parents across this country, not just the parents in Quebec, have access to an equitable, affordable, high-quality child care system.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague opposite on her speech and particularly for saying a few words in French near the end. That is always appreciated. It was very kind. I thank her for that.

We have heard this before. Quebec already has a child care system that has been in place for a long time. It was implemented by Pauline Marois, who was the Quebec education minister in 1997. This is not the kind of thing that can be set up overnight. It is something that is built up and improved over time through trial and error. We are improving our system from year to year.

If there is one thing that Quebec does not want to see with something like this that is working relatively well, it is federal interference. There are several recent examples of that with passports and employment insurance. Those are well-documented fiascos.

We also do not want to see the federal government put its big paws all over Quebec's child care system. The federal government and Quebec reached a financial agreement that would enable Quebec to opt out of the system with full compensation. That was good to see. It would enable Quebec to use that money for other things. However, that was in the previous version of the bill; it has not been included in Bill C-35.

Does my colleague agree that the bill should be amended to specify that Quebec can opt out with full compensation? What are her thoughts on that?

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for the question. I really enjoy working with him at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Here in Canada we are very proud of Quebec and the system that was created there. The entire country has learned from Quebec's system, which respects provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

[*English*]

It has the parameters to be able to continue to grow and to enshrine the principles while still respecting the jurisdiction of provinces and territories and to learn from them, as we have already heard this morning. We will continue to learn from the Quebec system and continue to improve.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for mentioning Nunavut a few times in her speech. Indeed, I am quite proud to stand as an NDP member and to have created so much interest in Nunavut.

I have seen a record number of MPs come to my riding. Indeed, the minister came to my home community of Iglulik to make the announcements about the day care program, and we are seeing the positive impacts of this program that started.

My grandson, of whom I am very proud, and my daughter have seen positive impacts. However, they have also seen a bit of a nega-

tive impact, and that is in the administrative burden that is being caused.

Could the member talk about the administrative burden that may be alleviated through the positive implementation of Bill C-35 to make sure that this day care system that they are so excited about does not create more of an administrative burden for the child care providers in the communities?

**Ms. Lisa Hepfner:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I have enormous respect for the member for Nunavut, and I absolutely appreciate her intervention. I would say that the government has every intention of getting this legislation right, and I would invite any input she has into helping alleviate that administrative burden.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my enthusiastic colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Yesterday, my colleagues from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou and Laurentides—Labelle spoke to Bill C-35. Today, I will be delivering a somewhat complementary speech, and I want to reiterate that the Bloc Québécois is voting in favour of this bill.

In 2022, Quebec marked the 25th anniversary of its family policy, which ushered in an integrated family allowance and a parental insurance plan and provided for the development of affordable educational and day care services. This is just one more development for Quebec society that confirms the distinct and unique nature of our nation. The objective of this progressive plan was to ensure equity through universal support for families and increased financial assistance to the most vulnerable families, to make it easier for parents to achieve work-life balance, and to promote child development and equal opportunity.

The architecture of the child care system and its success stories have been commended by many experts in education and in public policy development around the world. The OECD described Quebec's system as “one of the most ambitious and interesting early education and care policies in North America” and added that “none of [the] provinces showed the same clarity of vision as Quebec in addressing the needs of young children and families”.

Others have made similar comments. We have been hearing them for more than 20 years. Quebec is most definitely and without question a distinct society, and its child care program is another example of what makes it different. Naturally, the Bloc Québécois is pleased that the federal government is adopting our model 25 years after it was implemented. It is noteworthy that other countries, such as Japan, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Australia, adopted it as a model before the federal government did.

I also want to talk about the introduction of early childhood centres, or CPEs, and what they helped Quebec women accomplish, as well as their role in poverty reduction.

Quebec is second in the world for the best integration of women into the labour force. The Research Chair in Taxation and Public Finance of the Université de Sherbrooke compiled the OECD data, and the employment gap between men and women aged 25 to 54 in Quebec is the smallest of the 32 OECD countries. For 2019, the employment rate for women 25 to 54 was 83.4% whereas for men in the same age range it was 86.8%. In Quebec, the gap is therefore 3.4 percentage points. In comparison, the average gap in OECD countries is 17.1 percentage points, or five times greater than the gap in Quebec.

The employment rate among Quebec women rose from 65.5% in 1996 to 83.4% in 2019. Only Sweden performed slightly better, and only by half a percentage point. In practical terms, this means that women were able to take up positions related to their training or even advance to positions that otherwise would have been out of reach without the child care system. In single-parent families, women were able to enter the workforce without fear of “breaking the bank”, as we say back home. More generally, women could actually see themselves having better work-life balance, pursuing graduate studies, and so on.

Now I want to talk about poverty. In 2023, providing affordable child care services in a public system is also a very effective way to fight poverty, and everyone wins. After child care services were introduced in Quebec, the number of single-parent families on social assistance dropped by 64% between 1997, the year the system was set up, and 2016. With more women in the workforce, more income and consumption taxes are paid, so the system helps finance itself, to some extent.

This bill will help move Canadian provinces toward true work-life balance. With more than 1.8 million single-parent families in Canada, it is not surprising that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce believes that the number one barrier to career advancement or a career change, whether chosen or imposed, is the lack of affordable child care. This was examined in an article in *The Globe and Mail* last spring.

• (1125)

We need to tell it like it is. Do not forget that women still tend to be responsible for the children, for the household. There has been some progress since I had children, but more needs to be done.

In this case, the statistics are clear. Current child care costs are so high that one parent's take-home pay, often the mother's, is almost entirely allocated to child care. That does not make sense. On average, fees seem to be \$1,600 per month in Ontario, according to recent research done for 2022. This reality impacts mothers, as well as the availability of labour and everything else that revolves around that, including the local economy, personal growth, professional growth, tax revenue for the government, the socialization of children and much more.

Quebec, an authority known the world over as a forward-thinking pioneer in family policy, will not participate in the federal program and will receive full financial compensation. The opposite would certainly have been unacceptable. However, we want to see it written in black and white: Quebec can fully withdraw from this program with compensation. This would prevent a potential fight between Quebec and Canada.

### *Government Orders*

One caveat though: although Quebec is way ahead of the Canadian provinces, when it comes to setting up such a major program, they should be wary of some of the choices made by Quebec governments that came after the progressive Parti Québécois because some of those governments were not quite so progressive.

Bloomberg recently published two articles on Quebec's early childhood centres. The title of the first, dated December 31, 2018, is “Affordable Daycare and Working Moms: the Quebec Model”. It analyzes the reality of the hybrid child care system and delves into why the provinces should guard against allowing the private for-profit sector to play too great a part.

Here is a quote from the article: “Unfortunately, the private for-profit non-subsidized sector has not been as good for child development. The parents/users who are in this part of the system, the private, non-subsidized sector of the program, have on average low-quality care, as opposed to the subsidized centres, which have a very high level of quality.”

That is what Bloomberg found in its research. The economist who made that statement was echoing the sense of unfinished business expressed by Pauline Marois, who headed up the initiative during her time as education minister.

The second article, published in April 2021, is entitled “Lessons from Quebec on Universal Child Care”.

His analysis involves the exceptional maintenance of public child care services in Quebec during the pandemic. He warns us about the market-based model used in the rest of Canada and the United States, even with the various tax arrangements.

Allow me to paraphrase: Even in the best of times, advocates of this market-based approach consider it a tenuous business model for child care, which requires heavy staffing to meet even basic safety requirements, and the children lose out as well. I think we should be aware of this, because quality child care is an “intangible good”. Its quality is more difficult to assess, so market-driven programs compete on cost rather than quality.

I will end with this. Earlier, I mentioned Pauline Marois. The family policy developed while she was the minister of education under a Parti Québécois government is decidedly the policy that changed everything for millions of women and families in Quebec. It was nothing less than a revolution for women with families. I am certain that several generations of Quebecers recognize this. It is an exceptional political legacy. I heartily thank Ms. Marois.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. Her words are always well-thought-out.

*Government Orders*

I would like to take a moment to address the official opposition's opposition to this bill. It says that it cannot support the bill because the system or framework being created does not meet all child care needs. What we are creating is a system, a base to which we can add more flexibility later on.

At the time the elementary and secondary school system was being created, had the government used the argument that it could not create large schools and a Quebec public school system—since that is under provincial jurisdiction—we might not have an elementary and secondary school system today.

What does the hon. member think about that?

• (1130)

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who is the chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I am a member of this committee.

He is absolutely correct. I totally agree with him. To borrow a well-known saying, Rome was not built in a day.

Implementing a major policy takes time. It cannot be done overnight. Major policies take time, and we need to take the first steps. We need to lay the cornerstone, otherwise there will be no building.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when I served on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, we looked at the situation in Quebec. I was told that there were problems with new families being unable to find a space for their children.

Are there any recommendations for improving the situation in Quebec?

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Mr. Speaker, it is true that there are problems. It is not all perfect. After the Parti Québécois and Pauline Marois put the system in place, successive governments did not always do the right thing, so to speak. Those governments were not as progressive. We need to be careful of that.

That is exactly what the Bloomberg analysis says. We need to implement a system that is sustainable and improved from year to year.

I heard many speeches by my opposition colleagues. They talked about a lack of staff. It is true that there are staffing shortages everywhere, so I am going to suggest a solution that will attract workers, and that is unionization. If child care workers are unionized, then we will not have so-called cheap labour.

According to what I have read, the wages of non-unionized workers tend to be much lower, often close to or just over the provincial minimum wage.

If we want to attract workers, then we need to think about giving them decent working conditions and wages. I would like to remind the House that 98% or 99% of child care workers are women.

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased that the Bloc Québécois will be supporting what is essentially an NDP bill.

The Liberals have been promising a public child care system for 30 years now. It is the NDP and the hon. member for Burnaby South who have made this bill happen, a bill that will finally deliver on the promises that have been broken for 30 years.

The child care system in Quebec has influenced and inspired other parts of Canada. British Columbia currently has the best child care system in Canada. We are very happy about that.

However, I am concerned about the deterioration of the child care system in Quebec. TVA Nouvelles revealed this week that parents are saying that it is a bit of a child care lottery and that everyone else is being left behind. Many parents cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel. Many Quebec parents are worried about the deterioration of the child care system in Quebec.

Is my colleague prepared to criticize the CAQ government for this deterioration of the child care system in Quebec?

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Mr. Speaker, sometimes, the NDP members make it sound like they deserve the credit for everything.

Quebec's child care system has been in place for 25 years. The problem is not the system itself, but accessing it.

As I said earlier, there are some political parties that followed the example of the Parti Québécois, which was very progressive, and others that did not do what the creator of the day care system, Pauline Marois, would have wanted.

The decisions that negatively impacted the system are not those of the most recent government, but those of previous governments and a certain Liberal Party.

• (1135)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The questions and answers are far too long.

Some members have not had the opportunity to ask questions, like the Green Party members.

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Repentigny that this bill is really important. I would like her to speak more about the need to invest in the workforce.

I spoke with people at the Three Rivers YMCA in my community, and one of their concerns is that it is difficult to hire and retain early childhood educators. That is understandable, because the federal government, along with the Province of Ontario, has set a fairly low wage floor of \$18 an hour. As the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario likes to say, without child care workers, there is no child care. It is seeking a salary scale starting at \$25 an hour.

Could the member for Repentigny give the federal government some advice on how to fix this problem?



*Government Orders*

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Mr. Speaker, I would have a hard time giving the federal government advice on how to do more in an area of provincial jurisdiction. I will not be giving any advice.

The advice I can give to everyone would be to promote unionization in the provinces. A unionized workplace has a higher rate of staff retention and workplace satisfaction. What is more, it offers better salaries, better social benefits and better workplace practices. Under those circumstances people are more motivated to work.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Repentigny for her excellent speech. I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-35, which enacts development funding, maintenance and strengthening of child care services throughout Canada.

Quebec has its own way of building the services it delivers to the public and organizing its commitment to responding to the realities facing young families. It was the Parti Québécois under Pauline Marois that gave us this network of child care services that the rest of Canada dreams about today. The development of the model for early childhood centres stems from a strong network and the skills of their managers and educational staff; it is the envy of many around the world.

I would like to discuss what is involved in developing a child care system. It is not an easy task. It involves many stakeholders in our communities. Most of the tasks fall to the provincial and territorial governments. In Abitibi—Témiscamingue, the shortage of child care spaces and the shortage of early childhood educators are hindering our economic development. The money given to Quebec will undoubtedly help advance new types of projects in the coming years. For example, Adria Power Systems created spaces for its employees. Child care services are at the heart of a strategy to attract and retain workers.

The development of child care services, like that of health care services, involves many stakeholders at the provincial level. Many sacrifices were made in Quebec to allow for the development of our child care system. It is a tall order. It takes a lot of effort to open up a space in a child care centre. I would like to remind members that, to create spaces, we must compete for the same resources as the rest of society. We need project managers, architects, engineers, entrepreneurs, plumbers and electricians, every type of construction tradesperson and professional. It is important to understand that there is a labour shortage in that sector, which results in delays and increased costs.

When we open day care spaces, we have to think about getting a sufficient number of staff members to provide and maintain services for the thousands of parents who are waiting for a space that will enable them to get back to work or to school. The labour shortage has an impact on every part of society. Consequently, predictability in such an ambitious project is also a factor for success. We need to train as many people as possible who want to work and have a career in child care. We must have the wisdom to recognize and value the professions that revolve around children under the age of five. Educators are an important factor in early childhood development, and we need to recognize the value of their work by developing quality training programs in our CEGEPs and universities,

while providing adequate funding. I commend these educational institutions for their contribution.

The quality of the curriculum is just as important as the quality of the care. The curriculum in Quebec has gone through several iterations and has evolved over the years. It keeps pace with the children's development and takes advantage of their interest in play to spark a desire to explore, create, reflect, learn and advance through the stages of socialization. That is the way to educate the next generation. Quebec still has to complete its network and secure the funding it needs to adapt and innovate in the area of services for special needs children. To do so, it will need to develop even more specialized care, which is desperately needed.

At this stage, the Bloc Québécois is willing to support Bill C-35 in principle so that it can be studied in committee, where witnesses will shed light on the intent and scope of the bill. The Conservatives would rather send families cheques, and we cannot fundamentally change their minds, but they will come to see that there are many benefits to developing a high-quality, accessible, flexible, inclusive and even universal child care network.

We also have some qualms about the bill. It is not a bad bill, but it bears thinking about. Our concern is that the bill fails to respect the distribution of powers set out in the Constitution. The Constitution clearly states that education and family policy are not under federal jurisdiction.

● (1140)

Every Quebec government has challenged the legitimacy and legality of federal spending in provincial jurisdictions. However, the framework proposed by the federal government in this bill involves the application of the so-called federal spending power. In its current form, the bill would require all provincial and territorial governments to comply with the multilateral early learning and child care framework. We will have to check whether the text is acceptable to them when the bill is studied in committee.

In the case of Quebec, the framework exempts it from the application of the federal family policy for the next five years and gives Quebec \$6 billion in compensation for opting out of this centralist policy. After that, however, there is a good chance that the federal government will have a fight on its hands. Still, the framework does respect Quebec's opposition to federal meddling in its jurisdictions, especially since Quebec is not only a pioneer in child care, but a model of success as well.

*Government Orders*

However, the Liberal government added a nuance to Bill C-35, and we would like to understand why. Bill C-303, a precursor to the current bill, was tabled in the House in 2006. Clause 4 of that bill recognized Quebec's unique jurisdiction and would have allowed it to opt out and receive a transfer payment instead, if it so chose. As members of Parliament, we will have the responsibility of moving an amendment to that effect during the committee study.

The current agreement with the Quebec government runs for five years. However, the inclusion of a full right to opt out for Quebec would forestall another quarrel between Quebec City and Ottawa over the federal government's meddling in Quebec's jurisdictions, which it does so well.

Maybe the government is afraid that future governments will decide to back out and switch to another payment model for families. However, it is also true that, if we have to keep battling over funding, as we do in the case of health care, this bill will not settle anything.

Quebec's stance in its relations with the federal government is that it must have a full right to opt out with compensation. The social progress in Quebec that the federal government is looking to emulate today should not be used as a pretext for once again violating Quebec's right to hold a certain political view of its relationship with the federal government.

I would also like to point out that we can see other political movements brewing in Canada's western provinces, and those provinces seem to be starting to understand Quebec's position better.

It used to be harder for us to explain to Parliament what makes Quebec different and to get members to understand that centralization is not the solution to everything. There are plenty of reasons for wanting the federal government to stop meddling in the provinces' jurisdictions. This might be an opportunity to strengthen ties between the provinces and Quebec.

I sincerely hope that we can solve this problem. To be clear, I would like the bill to be amended by adding clause 4 of the former Bill C-303 as tabled in 2006. It would be a good idea for Bill C-35 to follow its predecessor's example by recognizing the Quebec government's unique expertise in North America when it comes to child care, as the international community did in 2003.

The passage of this bill would allow Quebec to obtain significant funding that would enable it to complete its child care network and enhance working conditions in the sector. Now that would be something to be proud of.

• (1145)

[English]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, and I serve on the industry committee, and he is an excellent member of that committee.

He raises, very astutely, the issue related to the labour shortage. From my experience in my area, health care, especially public health care, has been one of the things that we can attract continued investment in and also challenge U.S. massive subsidies to corpora-

tions, where the subsidy goes to individuals and their support of health care. One of the reasons we support dental care as well is that it is going to retain jobs. Child care is also going to be an important feature with this.

Could he reflect on the testimony we have had over the last year about the labour shortage issue? Not only is this an opportunity to protect investment and jobs in Canada and Quebec, but it will also propel another level of younger employees who will have great experiences, skills and qualities that we will be able to retain for generations.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Windsor West for his kind words. Naturally, I return the compliment.

One interesting aspect to the labour shortage is that, when young parents are forced to stay home with their kids because they cannot find a child care spot, they become workers who are not working anymore. The lack of child care spaces therefore has the side effect of impeding access to the labour market.

Legislation would allow the provinces to guarantee a spot for those people so they could access the labour market. There are certainly men and women who are at home with their children who could set up a child care service or even become early childhood educators. However, one important aspect of an early childhood centre, for me, is the question of having qualified, trained employees. People do not want to entrust their children to just anyone, to someone who is simply going to put them in front of the television and have the television educate their children. That is not how education works. Screens are not the answer; interaction is. Educating and socializing our children is an absolutely fundamental aspect.

There are elements there to combat the labour shortage. We need to better educate our children, but we also need to better train our educators.

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think everyone agrees that affordable, quality child care is critical, but if one cannot access it, it does not exist.

I come from Oshawa where we have a lot of shift work. People require it for different opportunities. Some people work on the weekend. My colleague, the member for Windsor West, talked about the labour shortage.

*Government Orders*

Could my colleague discuss options for people who just do not fall into the nine to five option? The bill would do absolutely nothing for this accessibility issue. Does he have some ideas for the government to improve the bill?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, to me, this is one of the most important points. The solution is very simple: Set up a robust public system. The private sector is incapable of offering solutions that are accessible to everyone. One of the big dangers right now, one of the big challenges, is access to child care spaces. That holds true just about anywhere.

With a robust public system, resources will be available with more flexible hours and they will give parents what they really need.

Again, I say that a robust public system is the solution.

• (1150)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to wrap my head around the Conservative Party's approach to this. I have asked members of that party this question several times but they have never answered it. Maybe the Bloc member has some insight into this.

The Conservatives seem to have a newfound interest in ensuring that programs are means tested, but we know that their default, whenever it comes to any program, is to have a tax credit. There could not be anything that is less means tested than just a standard tax credit that applies equally to everybody. It was their signature move under the Harper government. Everything was a tax credit, which we know only benefits wealthier Canadians. Those particularly in need do not have the same kind of ability when it is just a tax credit.

I wonder if the member from the Bloc has some insight into this newfound desire of the Conservative Party for things to be means tested.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with several points in my colleague's analysis of the Conservative position.

At the same time, I would like to point out that perhaps the federal government should mind its own business, respect provincial jurisdictions, lower its own taxes and let the provinces raise theirs. It is not the federal government's place to dictate a national framework of principles or values to be imposed on our children. Why is there so much money just lying around unused in Ottawa?

There is an inequity here. The government is reaching into people's pockets. It is our money. Transfers always have conditions attached, as we see in health care, as we see in child care. Clearly, the system is not working.

The federal government has a responsibility to give this some serious thought and perhaps take a step back.

[*English*]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from York region, the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

It is great to return to Ottawa after several weeks in our constituencies where all my colleagues heard issues and concerns from our residents and to ensure their voices were heard here.

I do wish to give a quick shout-out to the residents of my riding, Vaughan—Woodbridge, and that the new year is proving to be a healthy, productive and prosperous one for them in all tangents.

It is a pleasure to rise this morning to speak to legislation that reflects the core values of our government in building a more inclusive Canada; a Canada where Canadians know that their government has their backs; a Canada that gives the best start for our children from coast to coast to coast; and a Canada we know we want, one that is a leader in the rights of children and their families.

Bill C-35 is important legislation as it would establish an act respecting early learning and child care. Affordable and inclusive early learning child care is an essential driver of economic growth, socio-economic activity, and today is making life vastly more affordable for Canadian families in all our ridings.

The purpose of Bill C-35 is to strengthen and protect the system by enshrining its principles into law and also help guide future federal investments into this great program, which is benefiting so many families, literally thousands and thousands of families across our beautiful country. Frankly, the legislation marks a historic milestone in our government's commitment to ensuring that families across Canada have long-lasting and enduring access to affordable, inclusive and high-quality early learning and child care.

Bill C-35 is the result of engagement between the Government of Canada, the provinces, territories, indigenous governments, organizations and stakeholders. It reflects the core values of our government in building a Canada that is inclusive for everybody and in building a Canada where we see inclusive economic growth, a strong and growing middle class and assisting those who wish to join the middle class.

Many of us here who are parents of little ones know the exorbitant and sometimes unreachable cost of day care that Canadian families have faced for generations. However, we know that the introduction of early learning and child care plan is a transformational one for Canadian families.

For example, it has brought the cost of day care for families in the province of Ontario down by literally thousands of dollars, thousand of dollars that are back in the pockets of hard-working families in Ontario and, of course, across this blessed country.

*Government Orders*

As many of my colleagues know, my family was blessed with a surprise during COVID. Leia is now 15 months old and attends day care in the heart of my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. Leia is truly a blessing from God to our family and has made life so much more special. She is awesome.

I want to thank the early learning childhood educators at my daughter's day care, and all the day care centres across Canada, who are taking care of our kids, nourishing their souls and their bellies. A special shout-out to the folks at my daughter's day care, the team headed by Nenza and ECE staff Isabella, Christine and so many others. I thank all the early learning child care educators across this beautiful country.

The agreement on early learning and child care is having a significant impact on the pocketbooks of Canadian families. I will give an example of this, and it truly reflects how we are helping Canadian families with affordable, high-quality day care for their children.

Prior to the Christmas holidays, families at our day care centre were informed of the new fee schedule and for children like my daughter Leia the reduction of monthly day care fees was approximately \$760 a month or on an annual basis, \$9,400. Those are after-tax dollars. If we do the math, that is approximately \$14,000 in before-tax savings for families. That is \$14,000 savings for families just in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. That is money back in the pockets of families in Vaughan—Woodbridge and in every other riding across the country.

We have signed agreements with all provinces and territories. This is how we put in place measures to help our economy, to help Canadian families and to give the best start to children across our country. That is real change. That is helping Canadian families. That is why Canadians have elected us to come here and do the good work to help them.

● (1155)

For hard-working Canadian families, whether in Vaughan, Halifax, Vancouver or anywhere in between, saving over \$10,000 on child care fees means real savings. These savings can be used for clothes, sports activities or however parents wish to utilize these funds. It is real change, and it brings real relief to Canadian families.

Since 2015, whether it is in offering the Canada child benefit or the Canada workers benefit, increasing old age security by 10%, doubling the GST, raising the personal expenditure amount to \$15,000, reducing taxes for millions of hard-working, middle-class Canadians or supporting students, helping Canadian families by providing real relief from increased costs for their daily necessities has been a paramount concern and objective for our government. Frankly, we have the backs of Canadians. We will always do so.

The goal of the Canada-wide early learning and child care system is for families to have access to community-based, high-quality, affordable, inclusive and early learning child care. It should be there no matter their socio-economic standing or racial identity, whether their children have disabilities or require needs-enhanced or individual support, or where they live in Canada.

Our government has committed nearly \$30 billion over five years to make high-quality early learning and child care affordable, and yes, accessible. We have worked with the provinces. We have instituted best practices, and we will continue to do so.

Combined with our previous investments announced since 2015, a minimum of \$9.2 billion per year, ongoing, will be invested in child care, including indigenous early learning and child care, starting in 2025-26.

Economists know that affordable and high-quality day care results in increased participation, primarily of women, in our labour force. For example, we know that in Quebec's situation, women's labour force participation went from 4% below the average to 4% higher than the average. That is good policy.

I applaud la belle province for instituting a child care system before the rest of the provinces did and before the national program. We are looking at best practices. That is what we do as a government. We will continue to do so.

In addition, it is estimated that the early learning and child care system will raise the Canadian real GDP by as much as 1.2% over the next two decades. This would primarily reflect the increased labour force participation rate of women and people entering the labour force, as well as the lower cost and greater affordability of child care for Canadian families.

Inclusive child care is a win for Canadian families, a win for the economy, and most importantly, a win for children. That is a path that we must continue to institute for Canadian families.

This is a seminal moment, I believe, for legislation that we have introduced as a government. For decades, we have been talking about a national system of child care for Canadian families from coast to coast to coast. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? We have done that.

With Bill C-35, we have delivered for Canadians. That is why they sent our government here. Bill C-35 is a next step to enshrining the principles of the early learning and national child care agreement.

Bill C-35 would enhance and provide further transparency and accountability. I am all about transparency and accountability.

*Government Orders*

The act would require reporting by the federal government on the progress made to establish a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. The act would also enshrine in law the national advisory council on early learning and child care, which would provide third party expert advice to the Government of Canada and serve as a forum for engagement on issues, challenges and specific challenges facing the early learning and child care sector.

The legislation commits to maintaining long-term funding for provinces, territories and indigenous peoples for ELCC and enshrining the principles of a Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

In my last minutes, I would like to say that the early learning and child care system across Canada is already delivering results. If we read the Bank of Canada's "Monetary Policy Report" for January, we have already seen indications that the labour force participation rate of women with young children has increased by several points. The Bank of Canada concluded that approximately 100,000 individuals have now entered the labour force because of the measures we have made to assist Canadian families from coast to coast.

It is the right thing to do. We started it with the Canada child benefit, which now delivers approximately \$26 billion a year, tax-free, to Canadian families in all our ridings. We all know the difference that is. This is now the second piece, where we have an early learning and child care system.

I know the benefits for the families that go to the same day care that my family sends little Leia to. We see the benefits. Yes, we are blessed as a family. I can only imagine the difference this is making for families across the country where they are seeing literally thousands of dollars of savings.

I will say this: There is nothing like seeing a bunch of young kids who are 15 months old playing together—

● (1200)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton; I congratulate her on her wedding.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I am a happier member this year.

Madam Speaker, my question for the member opposite is actually about ideas to add to what has been put in place here. Organizations like CUPE are saying that there are three times more spaces needed than have been created.

When we studied this issue in the status of women committee, it was clear that one size did not fit all. There are people who work odd hours. There are people who, from a cultural point of view, prefer to have an aunt or a grandmother look after the children. What is the government's plan to augment what it has already put forward?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, first of all, through you, I wish to say congratulations to the member for Sarnia—Lambton on her nuptials and wish her and her partner all the best in the years to come.

With the agreements that we have signed with the provinces, there is built-in funding in place to expand the number of day care spots as we go forward. We obviously need to attract and train as many ECEs as are necessary as we see the demand come forward. That is going to be a good-news story, I believe, where we see more parents saying "hey, this program works for me". We are going to help them and be there for them as we collaborate and work together with all levels of government because the regions are involved in the province of Ontario, and of course the province is involved. Therefore, it is so important that we are there, ear to the ground, on these issues.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am having a hard time figuring out what the government is thinking these days. Most of the time, the feds seem to be telling Quebec how it should do its job. Take Bill 21, for example. The feds say Quebec does not have the right to pass a secularism law, that it is ridiculous and that the way Quebec is using the notwithstanding clause is just wrong.

They are doing the same thing with Bill 96. They say Quebec does not have the right to do that, and they are going to stop it. Here in Parliament, the feds say they want to protect French, yet they want to undo Bill 96. They say Quebec does not know how to handle health care, so they want to tell it what to do. They will send the money, but they will tell it what to do with that money.

Then all of a sudden, the government comes out with this bill and says how amazing and fascinating and inspiring Quebec is and how we should do exactly what Quebec did because it works and Canada can really learn from Quebec.

What exactly is going on inside the federal government's head?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that very interesting question. It is very important to us to focus on child care.

● (1205)

[*English*]

We are concentrating on creating a system that gives the best quality of child care to children across Canada and allows them to have the best start in life so we know they can all have bright futures, whether the child is in the member's riding or in any other member's riding across this beautiful country.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I really want to underline how important this measure is for the economic security of families in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. When I first ran for office in 2015, families were saying that they would love to be able to go out and get a second job to advance their economic interests, but all the income from that second job would go to paying for child care. That is how expensive it was at the time.

*Government Orders*

This idea does not belong to any one party. There have been decades of work from the labour movement and from activists fighting for this through successive Liberal and Conservative governments. Some political parties have fought harder than others; yes, it is true. However, I invite the member to maybe pay some tribute to those decades of work from the labour movement and from activists in finally getting to the point where we are today.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's very sincere question because we do need to tip our hats not only to those people but also to individual activists through the decades who have pushed for social policy changes and have pushed for social justice to make this country more inclusive, to make this country more fair and to give every child the best start that they can have in life. We are doing that, working together collaboratively with all levels of government and obviously in this case with the provinces to bring them on board, ensure the proper funding and ensure that children have the best start in life in this beautiful country that we all get to call home.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vaughan for sharing his time.

It is a pleasure to be here in the House today. It really is an exciting day for me to be speaking on Bill C-35. There are many reasons I am excited to be speaking on this bill today and to be representing my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. Many residents in my riding could benefit greatly from this bill, and it is with great pleasure that I am here to support it.

We have already heard many members speaking about the benefits of the early learning and child care system. Members from the Bloc Québécois have illustrated the benefits it has given to Quebec society, and we are very grateful la belle province has gone ahead with this.

In the rest of Canada, it is not for want of trying that we are without a program. We have been trying for decades. Rather than going through all the economic benefits of this program, I would like to spend a couple of minutes on personal stories and history. This is not only about our economy and families or affordability, although it is about all those things; it is also about women, their choices and their ability to make those choices.

It concerns me greatly when I hear members opposite talking about the freedom of people to make these choices. I think back to my mother, who raised four children. She had a career in nursing, and she and my father both wanted a family. In the sixties and seventies, when my mother was raising her family, there were few choices for child care. If one was not lucky enough to have a mother or a mother-in-law live nearby or have a community association or maybe an organization in a church basement, one stayed home and raised one's family.

While I know my mother valued that, and we all do, I also know that she would have loved to stay in the medical profession. I imagine my mother would have continued her training, and she would have gone on to be a doctor and work in the medical field, contributing not only to her family but also to the larger society. When I think about my mother in the sixties and seventies and the history

in Canada, I must give a nod to all those who have worked on this over the years. It has been over 50 years.

For those who do not remember, the first time this was recommended was in the 1970 report from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The commission was headed by Florence Bird under the government of Lester B. Pearson, and one of the recommendations was universal affordable child care to address key issues on gender equality in Canada.

It was not until 1982, in the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, that under Judge Rosalie Abella and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's government, there was another urge to implement a national affordable child care program. Around that time, when I was working with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women at the University of Toronto, I was thinking about my career. We did not have child care. I was looking ahead and thinking about how I could balance the kind of career I wanted with raising children. I did not think I could. I waited quite a while to get married and have children.

I am very fortunate to have a wonderful family. I have enjoyed being part of that and helping to raise children, but at the time, it was not a clear and easy choice to make. For women across this country, many of us made choices over the decades that we might not have made if we had affordable, quality, accessible child care. For the women of Canada, for the women in my riding, this bill is incredibly important.

I do not want to overlook the other issues I mentioned. Bill C-35 is not just about women. It is about Canadian values. It is about equity and inclusion. It is about supporting families, and very importantly right now, it is about affordability. It really makes me wonder why people are in opposition to this bill at this time. There are certainly some concerns. We have all heard that there are things needing to be worked out.

● (1210)

However, I would suggest that any member who is concerned about this look at the agreements that have been negotiated between our government, the provinces, the territories and our indigenous partners, recognizing those jurisdictions and the needs and concerns of those organizations, read the differences between these agreements and understand that it is in partnership with our partners that we are moving forward on this and not forcing anything on people.

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. It seems there is someone online who has their mike on, and I would just remind members to make sure their mikes are off.

The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Madam Speaker, I could not understand what they were saying, but I am sure they were agreeing with what I was saying, so that is okay.

These measures that we would be enshrining in law in Bill C-35 are so important right now. Regarding affordability, in my riding I know there are families that are struggling. The hundreds and thousands of dollars these families would save would make a difference in meeting their mortgage payments and ensuring they can take care of their children.

When we look at the caregivers, the people who are taking care of not only children but seniors, and the stresses they have been under, the mental health challenges, we can think about how alleviating some of that stress would affect these people, who are still primarily women, although I am very happy to see there are more and more parents of other genders who are now participating in child-rearing.

This is also going to allow more people to enter the workforce. We have a labour force shortage right now. We have been talking about the need for more child care workers. By allowing more parents to be fully engaged in the workforce, we would be increasing labour force participation. This would help with our shortage, and it would also help with our economy. In fact, the Royal Bank study that was done recently had some really interesting facts and figures about the increase in our GDP that we would see as a result of these increased numbers. We can just compare our workforce participation with that of Quebec to see what difference that would make, and I believe the number was about \$92 billion, in terms of increase in our GDP.

It would help our economy. It would help our workforce participation. It would help women, and it would help children. We all want children to have a great start in life, and we know that this affordable, quality early learning and child care program would give children an equal start. This kind of equity and this kind of fairness are Canadian values. These are things we all agree on.

We have a historic opportunity right now to all support a bill that would move us forward as a society, increase inclusion and equity, benefit our economy and address the immediate problems of affordability. I so hope that everyone here will join me in voting for this bill.

I have so many facts, figures and statistics I could share, but I know that all of us who are interested in this subject have read them and seen them, so I just want to reiterate that I am so proud of this government, of all the members in this House who are supporting this initiative, of all the people who have worked to make child care a reality and to make this program actually possible, of the provinces that have sat down and negotiated with this government, and of the will of this government to lead, to not stick with a broken system that has not worked in the past and continue to do that, but to look forward, to be progressive and to take chances, as opposed to just sticking with what we did in the past.

Although some question the expense, I say we cannot afford not to move forward with this program at this time. The reality is that it has been over 50 years since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women first urged our government to put in place a program like this. The national early learning and child care program reinforces key Canadian values and helps build an economy that works for everyone.

### *Government Orders*

• (1215)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the part of my hon. colleague's speech about her mom being a health care worker and providing for her children.

I cannot stress enough how important quality, affordable child care is. Conservatives believe in that wholeheartedly, but what is missing in this legislation is the operators who do not fall under what the Liberals think is best. Does the member opposite believe that if operators are meeting or exceeding all provincial standards, licensing and guidelines, they too should be eligible for the program?

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Madam Speaker, I am very glad the member is supportive of this initiative. It is really wonderful to hear that some members of the bench opposite will be supporting us.

I would also say that these agreements have been negotiated province by province, territory by territory, and with indigenous partners. If members go to Canada.ca and look at different agreements, they will see the different provisions that have been made. In fact, in Ontario regulated child care providers would be able to continue to participate. The funding would go primarily for the not-for-profit sector, but 92% of the child care centres in Ontario have signed up for this program, including for-profit centres.

Each province or territory was able to negotiate what it wanted to do given where it is right now and what it saw as the needs and as the best way to move forward to ensure that all its residents have affordable, quality child care.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague with whom I am very pleased to work on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

An economic downturn is looming. However, many scientific studies have shown that a market-based approach does not work for child care services.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that. Why does she think that some members are opposed to affordable government-funded child care services?

[*English*]

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her hard work at the environment committee.

I would like to say that we are certainly not opposed to a publicly funded system. In fact, I believe we are encouraging that. However, there is great need across the country right now for quality child care spaces. I believe we have to use everything that is there as we move forward to build the system.

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We cannot start and address every issue out there. I would just say to those members who are looking at what is missing or what is not good about this program to step back and look at the entire program and at the progress we are finally making. These individual issues can be addressed. In the framework, we have clearly stated that publicly funded day care is a positive thing, something that we support. However, we want to ensure that spaces are there for people and that people can send their children to child care and take advantage of this great opportunity to have 50% less cost.

• (1220)

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I have also been hearing concerns about government oversight or government interference in this system that would help ensure that children are getting the care that they need. I wonder if the member could elaborate a little more on the importance of the national advisory council on early learning and child care that this bill would develop.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy:** Madam Speaker, I believe the national advisory council that is being established in Bill C-35 is very important in moving forward and addressing some of the concerns and ensuring that we learn from what is happening and that we are addressing individual needs in different areas. I do believe that this, the accountability and the funding are all important parts of this legislation, enshrining what we are doing in law to ensure that another government cannot come and undo the hard work that has been done over these decades.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very happy to be back in the House of Commons debating legislation. I will be sharing my time today with my friend, the member for Calgary Midnapore.

When I heard the minister talk about Bill C-35, it was like it was the panacea of child care. One can imagine my surprise when I looked at it. The agreements have already been made with all the provinces and territories, and the \$6 billion for the \$10-a-day child care has gone out the door, so why do we need this bill?

The bill says it would do a few things. It sets a vision out, but if we look at the vision, it is all common-sense stuff, like we want an early childhood learning system that should be diverse, flexible, accessible and affordable. That is not visionary; it is pretty simple. Then it sets out the government's commitment to long-term funding, which it has already signed up in the contracts. Again, why?

Then it sets out the principles that guide the ongoing federal investments. If we look at the details, it says we are going to go with what the provinces have said. However, it would establish a national advisory council on early learning and child care. Why do we need a national advisory council on early learning and child care, when there is such a council in every one of the provinces that we just signed contracts with? Is this just another opportunity to hire a bunch of Liberal insiders to do work that is already being done?

I want to be clear for members opposite who are always saying that the Conservatives do not support this bill. The Conservatives support child care. Let me start with my own experience. One can appreciate, for a chemical engineer flying around the world, with flights out of Sarnia leaving at six in the morning, how easy it would be to find somebody to take the kids at 5 a.m. What if the plane gets delayed, which of course never happens with Air

Canada? What if I do not show up until 11 o'clock at night to pick up my kids? Who is going to want to be that child care provider for any length of time?

I had some amazing child care, some at home and some more public in nature, but I also had those bad experiences. There was the one who had her boyfriend over all the time while she was watching my kids. There was the one who was smoking pot while she was watching my kids. There was one who let the kids go swimming with the guy next door without accompanying them because she was watching soap operas. Then there was the day I showed up and my kid was eating cat food sitting on the stairs because she had not had lunch. I would certainly like to emphasize in this House that I really support good-quality child care, and it is not easy to come by.

That said, it is clear that we are trying to echo the system that exists in Quebec. When I was on the status of women committee, we did many studies, and one of them was on unpaid care, with child care as a specific focus. We made recommendations to the government, and I will read what they said:

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Quebec and the other provinces and territories, with the goal of ensuring that all families in Canada, regardless of geographic location or immigration status, have access to high-quality, affordable and inclusive childcare options, work to:

adequately and sustainably fund, through transfers to the provinces and territories with the rights to retraction with full compensation, an affordable and culturally appropriate national early learning and childcare system; and

ensure that this national system includes options for Canadians such as, sufficient public childcare spaces to meet demand, or sufficient financial support to Canadians who wish to care for their children at home.

That was in 2020, so it was not that long ago.

Absolutely, when it comes to wanting child care options, this is a place to start, but CUPE has said there is three times the need for spaces. Even if we look to the Quebec system, there is a two-year waiting list there. People who have family members who are already in the day care system in Quebec can get another kid in from their family, but new families cannot get in the door. What do they do?

In addition to what the government has put forward, there are going to be additional solutions needed. We have to have flexibility. When we think about this from a cost perspective, I have seen many studies that show that if we want more women in the workforce, we need to provide this kind of child care.



• (1225)

Let us say, according to the members who spoke previously, that we are giving \$14,000 to each person as a subsidy for their child. After taxes, some of that goes back to the government. In addition to that, somebody is going out to work and they are paying taxes. There are ECE workers who are watching the children and they are paying taxes. Many studies have said this is a cost-neutral exercise that will result in more women in the workforce, and that is what we want.

However, we have to make sure we are flexible enough for those who work long hours, like nurses. My one daughter is a nurse and they have 12-hour shifts. Finding day care for that is not going to be covered by the current system the government has designed. There are many places where people prefer to have a grandmother or aunt watch the children. What is the financial incentive to make the system fairer there? I leave it to the government's creativity, but there is definitely something to be done there.

There was a promise a few years ago to make 42,000 child care spots available. I think that was a 2018 promise from the Liberals. I am not sure how many of those actually happened, but when I did the math and divided up 42,000 spots among 338 ridings, it sounded like fewer than 200 spaces per riding, which is nowhere near what was needed. Again, there is the problem of not having enough spaces.

There has been discussion about the labour shortages. There are definitely labour shortages in every business I am hearing from in my riding, but specifically with respect to ECE workers. I hired an ECE worker in 1989 or 1991, and I was paying \$1,200 a month. Think about what that is in today's dollars and how much it would cost to pay them, but the pay for ECE workers is really not that good. A lot of them, although they get the training, do not end up staying in the business.

I think there is something to be done in terms of making the wage attractive enough to get those additional workers in the jobs. We see the same thing with PSWs in the health care system where the wages just are not good enough or the hours are not enough for somebody to live on. I definitely think there is something to be done there.

With respect to the actual bill, there are some suggested amendments that have come from associations. The Association of Alberta Childcare Entrepreneurs suggests it has a problem with the committee makeup of this national advisory committee, which I am not sure we really need. If we have one, we should have representation from both private child care centres and the not-for-profits in order to hear all the voices.

The Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario wants to make the bill more inclusive by deleting the reference in the bill to public and not-for-profit child care providers, so that we could have the flexibility that some of the members have indicated they would support. Different provinces are going to want to allow a combination of private and not-for-profit child care. I think that would be good.

Another thing missed in this bill is that not every day care is the same. Depending on the location, there are needs. For example, let

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us talk about food programs. There are some places where child care and day care are providing meals because that might be all the food these kids get. In the model that has been put forward, there is no allowance for that. Either those day care facilities are going to have to charge money on top of it, which goes against the whole point of this bill, or they are going to have to stop feeding the kids, which is the wrong answer.

At the same time, there is an administrative burden of applying for all of this funding, and people are already busy watching tiny, busy bodies, so they do not necessarily have the wherewithal for the complicated government applications. Something that could be looked at is to streamline those as well.

All in all, it is a step in the right direction. We need more child care so we can have more women in the workforce. This will certainly create a great number of spaces. I look forward to the government expanding in terms of flexibility and some of the other things I have outlined in my speech.

• (1230)

**Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, before I begin my question, I would like to congratulate the member on her recent nuptials. We need that joy in our personal lives as we do hard work here in the chamber.

The member is from Ontario, like me, and Ontario was the last province to sign the agreement because it took a lot of time and care in terms of grandfathering in private child care. The premier himself also said it was a great deal for Ontario.

Since the province worked with us to determine what would be best in terms of making an agreement that would serve families and day care providers in the province, has the member actually spoken to the province and to her counterparts to understand that they lead these agreements? Their input makes these agreements work for Ontario and Canadian families.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, yes, I have actually spoken with both the premier and of course my MPP in my local area, and it is a good deal for Ontario to begin in this way. Clearly, neither the province nor the federal government has enough money to fully fund what eventually will come forward. I think some people need to see the proof in the pudding, that the net benefit is not going to be a net cost. There is a lot of belief that this is just a subsidy they will never get back. They forget about the people who are actually going to work and paying the taxes that are offsetting some of these things. Hopefully as we go along we can expand the programs. I certainly would advocate for that in Ontario.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, when my Conservative friends get an idea in their heads, it is always a rather sad spectacle.

Quebec's child care system has been working very well for the past 25 years. People come from all over the world to see how well it is working.

My colleague from Repentigny spoke about it earlier. The child care system enables many single mothers to get out of poverty. It is working very well.

I have a very specific question for my colleague. As part of the agreement that the federal government signed with Quebec, \$6 billion from Quebecers' taxes will be sent to Quebec over the next five years. If a Conservative government gets elected in the next six months, will that \$6 billion stay in Ottawa?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question.

Is it possible for us to spend \$6 billion to create spots for children? People currently have to wait two years to get a child care spot.

I encourage Quebecers to create more child care spots.

*[English]*

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I love the personal component of my colleague's sharing her day care stories. We all have them. As parents, we all have those day cares, or babysitters, but we do not like to use that word. We are looking for quality child care, and I thought she did a great job in her speech and intervention.

What I love the most about my colleague is her ability to see the pragmatic, numbers side of this. She has put forth a few solutions that could strengthen this bill. What would she suggest with respect to that cost analysis? How do we make this sustainable?

• (1235)

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her leadership on this file.

I definitely think we have to address problems that would cause existing child care facilities to go out of business. We do not want to create fewer spaces, so the issues of meals and the administrative burden, how would they be dealt with?

Then I would say we need to ensure we are inclusive with all types of day cares that exist or could be created and to consider what we would do to incentivize spaces created in homes that are currently in the business, either those of family members or other alternatives.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to be in the House to share my thoughts. Today, I rise to speak to Bill C-35.

*[English]*

As much as I like being here and as proud as I am to represent the people of Calgary Midnapore, I want to start today by talking about the greatest pride and joy in my life, my son, Edward. He is just the best guy ever. I will never forget when my husband brought him around the green curtain after I delivered him, and showed him to me. I know at that moment I made the decision to do whatever I could to give him the best life possible. He is a great guy. In addition to doing well at school, he also plays piano, begrudgingly. In addition to that he is a great hockey player. Go Wolverines. He is a good little centre forward. As well, he is a cub scout where he learns all sorts of amazing life skills. He is a good little guy. As much as I love this place, he is my one pride and joy. I know my wonderful husband, James, feels the same way.

I know that every mother out there, every parent, feels the same way about their sons or daughters. There is just nothing we will not do for those little people. We want them to have the best lives possible. We want them to get the best care possible.

When we started out we had to put Edward on a waiting list when he was very young, but we were very fortunate. We got a space at a good facility near us. That is the reality in this day and age. Parents have to put their children on waiting lists.

This bill actually has unnecessarily been brought forward in this House, given the agreements between the provinces. Nonetheless, it is still here. It is unfortunate, because even though I am talking to people here today, this program may not be for them.

Are people like me? Perhaps they have full-time jobs and husbands or partners with full-time jobs. They have two parents or caregivers working. They have to get their children into some care before the work day starts, so may need something that starts early. People cannot always pick them up at three o'clock, four o'clock, or some days even five o'clock. People need flexible hours even after going through all the effort of packing them up with their blankies and snacks. Maybe the hours just are not flexible enough for them with this type of program.

Maybe people are like me, parents with partners who are doing their best in this world with two full-time jobs. There are holidays when at times the facility is closed and people have to figure out care. Maybe people are like me. Maybe they are in a situation with two parents working. Unfortunately, this program is not for people like them.

Are people like my friend Chris? My friend Chris is a flight attendant. She does not know what her schedule is going to be. Sometimes she does not know when she is going to be called in. She might be called in for a three- or four-day shift back and forth across the country or maybe to some exciting destination. Maybe she has to start really early in the morning. Maybe she gets in some weird time at night. She has a very flexible schedule that changes all the time. There are thousands of parents like Chris across this country. If someone is like Chris, this program is not for them.

Are people like Armeen? Armeen runs a day home in her house. She has five children herself, so there are always lots of kids the children who are there can play with. She loves staying home. There is always a delicious smell of whatever she is cooking in her kitchen. Her home is a warm, inviting place but her day home does not qualify necessarily for the national program. If people are like Armeen trying to run day homes out of their houses, this program is not for them.

Are people like my mother-in-law, Anita, so happy to become grannies, nanas, omas or dandis? They know they want to be an important part of their grandchildren's lives when they are born. The best part of their day is when their grandchildren are dropped off. They are just so excited to see each other.

• (1240)

They gave up their part-time work and maybe gave up their volunteer work, but that is okay because that is what they were willing to do as grandparents. That grandchild in their life was important enough for them, and their life is complete and worthwhile as a result of taking care of that grandchild. However, guess what. Unfortunately, this program is not for them.

If someone is like my friend Misty, they are a single mother. Her ex is in the trucking business. He is up at 7 p.m., drives all night and then goes back to bed to do it all again another day. Her two kids are at different schools and she has a full-time job with some flexibility, but it is still a lot to manage between the two parents' schedules. She is constantly trying to communicate with the other parent, figuring out who can get which child when. Of course, her two children are in extracurricular activities as well, and she is adjusting to life on her own in addition to adjusting to her children's schedules and the schedule of her ex-partner. Perhaps this program is not for her.

Is anyone like Shelley? Shelley is new to a community. She moved there not long ago. Her husband got transferred from his job, so it is a new place for her and her family is not there. When her daughter was born, she put her name on a waiting list, but that was in her former community. In her new community, Shelley does not have a space. She has put her name on the waiting list for the national program, but in the interim she is trying to cobble together some type of care for her daughter, who is three years old now. Spaces are filled up, so she is on the waiting list once again. Is anyone like Shelley? If they are, guess what. This program is not for them.

Is anyone a child care business owner-operator like Krystal, trying to meet the needs of the community but unable to find enough staff to meet the demands of children coming in? The nutritious food they serve, which might be the only good meal that a child

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gets in a day, is no longer covered by the government's allocation as a result of inflation and prices going up. The profit framework means that some centres have some families paying a certain amount and other families paying up to four times more. That is the reality of the situation. They might even have to shut down their operation because costs go beyond what is considered reasonable by the government.

Maybe some people are like Krystal: They are an owner-operator who is trying to run their business, and as a result of the rigidity of the government's day care program, they are not only unable have a business as a woman, but are unable to provide a much-needed service to the community. In the case that someone is like Krystal, guess what. This program is not for them.

My name is Stephanie Kusie. I am the member of Parliament for Calgary Midnapore and I am a mom, but this program is not for me.

Is anyone named Chris, Anita, Misty, Shelley or Krystal? Guess what. This program is not for them. The government can call it whatever it wants, including \$10-a-day child care or universal child care, but that claim is a lie because this program is not for them.

• (1245)

**Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member across the way for sharing her experiences. I, too, as a—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. I do not remember calling out anybody with a male voice. I gave the floor to the hon. parliamentary secretary and she has a female voice. I would ask others to please hold on to their thoughts until I recognize them, should they decide to try to be recognized.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Ms. Ya'ara Saks:** Madam Speaker, I know we are all very excited to talk about child care in the House.

I would like to thank the member across the way for her comments. I, too, as a single mom, arrived here with my then two-year-old daughter and had to wait for a spot. It is a universal story for many families in this country, which is exactly why we have signed agreements with every province and territory in this country over the past year to ensure that we build more spaces.

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The member said a lot about flexibility for shift workers, and I would like to share something with the member and the House directly from the text of the agreement between the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada. It says, “[A]n additional grant for those operating flexible and overnight child care will also be provided under the operational grant. These spaces are necessary for those in various industries and for frontline shift-working parents.”

Has the member read the agreement? Perhaps if she would like some briefings on it, we would be more than happy to share them.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, clearly the member does not know that I was the campaign co-chair for the former minister of children in Alberta during the time that she negotiated this agreement.

If the member wants to talk really big about what is in the agreement, I will note that I was communicating with the minister of children at the time on a pretty regular basis, and I think I have the inside track as to what is going on. I think the line that I was left with was that no one wanted money to be left on the table. What that says to me is many of these provinces felt pushed into these agreements. They felt they were left with a lack of flexibility and no other options.

Let us figure out who knows whom first and who is talking to whom, and then after that we can talk about the finalities of the agreement, which, again, I do not think anyone was excited about. Everyone felt pushed into it, forced into it, and—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my Conservative colleague listed some cases of citizens, parents, mothers who do not meet the criteria and are not eligible to receive a child care spot. The proposal to send a cheque to everyone and tell people to figure it out themselves will not create more child care spots in Quebec or anywhere else.

I think that the solution is to fund existing services properly. That is what is going to help in hiring qualified people to take care of our children in the child care centres. That is what is going to help create more spots.

I think my colleague and I agree on one thing: Bill C-35 is full of good intentions, but it may be a step too far into areas that should fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

Does my colleague not think that it would be best to send money to the provinces and Quebec and allow them to take care of this?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I do not think that.

I am from Alberta, so what Ottawa does with the money we send it is not our problem at the moment, but I hope it will be someday.

My colleague also talked about the number of child care spaces. That is a problem. I think this program will result in more problems with spaces. Lots of parents are going to want a space, but there will not be enough workers for all those spaces. I think there is a

problem with the money and how it is distributed as well as with the number of child care spaces.

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, vis-à-vis the exchange that the member had with the parliamentary secretary, I would like some clarity.

Would the member agree with me that the bill does not tie down child care to any particular hours, that everything is to be negotiated province by province and that, regardless of the status of her insider knowledge of the Alberta agreement, it would be up to the Alberta government, just as it is for the Ontario government, to negotiate with the federal government to ensure early childhood education is available to as many parents as possible right across the country?

• (1250)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, I do not know. There is a lot on television and in movies about power struggles where someone gives someone money and the person who receives the money usually has to do whatever the person who is giving the money says. I think that would qualify here as well.

It is not as simple as that. It is nice to think it would be like that, but it is not. Someone is giving the money and the money has strings, and that is the way it is with the government.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House today to speak to Bill C-35, which is an important and crucial piece of legislation that would make a real difference in making sure that our kids get the best start in life.

I am the dad of a beautiful young boy who will hopefully go to day care in about a year or a year and a half. As we think about our circumstances and the circumstances of many of the other folks in my riding of Vancouver Granville, making sure they have access to quality, affordable child care is critical. We know that affordable, universal and inclusive early learning and child care is absolutely essential. It is essential for families, it ensures women's participation in the workforce and it helps grow our economy.

Do members know who said this best? It is the Hon. Rebecca Schulz, the former Alberta minister of children's services. She said, when Alberta signed its child care agreement:

Today is a good day for parents and families in Alberta. We've listened to families, child care operators, and business leaders to develop an agreement that gives us flexibility to truly meet the needs of and make life a little easier for even more families in Alberta.

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This certainly sounds like somebody in government who was quite excited about signing a child care agreement, as were many of the other governments, and indeed all provincial governments, across this country. The reason they were excited is that, at a time when the global economy is facing serious challenges, Canadian families are feeling the impact, and this is one immediate way that Canadian families can look forward to a better future.

Affordability and the rising cost of living are top of mind for families in my riding of Vancouver Granville and across the country when it comes to groceries and buying staples. Over the past few months, we have introduced critical supports to ensure that families have what they need to survive and thrive. However, when it comes to early childhood education and child care, this is an investment in the future. This is an investment in the future of young people. It is an investment in the future of Canadian families. It is an investment in the future of communities. It lays the groundwork for making sure that young people have the start they need. It also makes sure that caregivers, primarily women, have the option, if they wish, to return to the workforce without having to worry about quality child care for their kids.

For far too many families across B.C. and across Canada, the lack of crucial access to high-quality early learning and child care has been a problem for many years. I am proud to say that as of December of last year, licensed child care fees for families with children five and under in B.C. have been reduced by an average of 50% across the province. Parents across B.C. can now save an average of \$550 more per month for every child they have in licensed care. That is about \$6,600 in annual savings.

These types of savings make a real difference to the average family from an income perspective and from a family budgeting perspective. These results mean something to people. They make it easier for caregivers to work outside the home if they choose, as I said. The fact that B.C. just announced yesterday that more than 725 new spots are joining the \$10-a-day ChildCareBC program starting in February is a huge step. It is great progress. It is the type of progress that must be enshrined into law. Progress only works if we know that the system is going to be in place long into the future.

What Bill C-35 would do is make sure that families in this country can count on quality, affordable child care for generations to come. They would not have to worry about who the government of the day is. They would not have to worry about whether or not someone is going to rip back a benefit that is important. It is something they know they can count on for the future, and that is a really important step.

However, it is not a step that comes *carte blanche*. It is a step that comes with structure. It is a step that comes with a meaningful strategy. It is a step that allows us as parliamentarians and as Canadians to look at this with a sense of confidence knowing that it will be well executed.

First, what the legislation would do is reinforce a long-term commitment to early learning and child care by articulating a goal, a vision and principles for a Canada-wide system. It builds on the investments that were made in the 2020 fall economic statement and budget 2021, which made building such a national child care system a reality. The vision itself reflects an early learning and child

care system that enriches children's cognitive, emotional and social development. It is a system that will leave a positive imprint on all of our kids while giving vital assistance to caregivers present in a child's life.

● (1255)

Most importantly, it underlines the necessity of culturally appropriate early learning and child care for indigenous people, which is an important step on the path to reconciliation. It acknowledges that first nations, Inuit and Métis families and children are best supported by ELCC services and programs led by indigenous peoples.

Second, it enshrines our dedication to maintaining sustainable, ongoing funding to the provinces, territories and indigenous communities, because making sure that provinces and territories can plan for the future is important. This is where that sustainable funding comes into play, because making a real difference in the lives of children and in the lives of families has to be sustainable change.

Third, we are enhancing accountability through federal public reporting on our progress toward a sustainable and effective early learning and child care system. This is important. It would make sure that the minister could report to Canadians every year on how our progress is going and making sure that Canadians could have a clear vision and a clear understanding as to whether we have been achieving our goals with respect to early learning and child care. Those are accountable and measurable results in action.

Fourth, to make sure that we are always at the forefront of best practice, we are establishing a national advisory council on early learning and child care. An advisory council like this would provide the government the advice it needs to make sure we understand what is the best practice, what the challenges are that are being faced in this sector and to make sure we are always doing our best to serve children and families.

We know that investments in early learning and child care make good economic sense. Studies that have been quoted in the House before show that for every dollar invested in early childhood education, the broader economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return. There are Nobel prize-winning economists who say that it goes up as high as \$15, \$16 or \$19 in some cases. There is not a study out there that says if one invests in early learning and child care, that one would not have a positive return on one's investment.

That is because people who understand the importance of early childhood education know that giving children the best start they possibly can has an important, positive outcome for the future of any country. It would make sure that caregivers, particularly moms, who are disproportionately impacted by the burden of child care, have the ability to use their skills if they choose to go back into the workforce and to do that in a way that gives them confidence and security.

*Government Orders*

Child care is good for the economy. It is good for families. It is good for the future of the children of this country. It is just the right thing to do. We need to be able to look at one another and say we have done the best possible work that we could to ensure that everyone in society has the ability to use the skills that they want in order to be able to contribute to building this country.

Thinking about constituents in my riding, I knocked on doors before this was something that was a reality. I knocked on a door and a young man, about my age at that time, answered the door. He asked me why I was there and we chatted a little bit. I heard a child crying in the background. I asked if was he was taking care of his child, if she was home from day care and what was going on. He said that his wife had a great job at the bank, so she went to work every day. He had to quit his job because he could not afford child care. He said he stays home every day with his daughter and it is a great blessing, but he had to give up what he used to do as a landscaper. He said he could not make enough money to afford child care.

That stayed with me, because I realized that those are the people we need to help. I fast-forward to 2021. I was knocking on doors and I came across a constituent who said to me that they were so glad we are doing child care, because after they had had their child they had to have a discussion as a family about what was going to happen. She was proud to say that her husband could keep running his small business, and she could go back to work at UBC as a researcher.

Think about the impact on families like that. It is important and it is essential that everybody in the House gets behind this legislation. It is going to set the foundation for the future that our kids need, that our families need and that the economy of this country needs.

• (1300)

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, there is one thing that we have not heard as an answer from the government on this bill. It claims that it is a national day care plan. A national day care plan should address the needs of everyone needing child care in the nation, but it has not explained to us yet how this is going to address the needs of a single parent who works as a nurse doing night shifts. It has not explained how it might address the day care needs of someone working at a coffee shop as a baker who has to start at three o'clock in the morning and does not fit into the usual nine-to-five time slots of these day cares that the program is aimed at.

Can the member tell me how it is going to address the needs of those who are working those shifts in remote communities?

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Madam Speaker, one of the things about this legislation is that it requires us to work with the provinces to ensure implementation is done in a way that addresses many of these needs. It would make sure provinces are part of the conversation and would make sure when we are talking about implementation the federal government is not only imposing a solution but working with others. That is the way to get to the outcome I know the hon. member and many of us would like.

The quote I read from the minister in Alberta is a clear example that it gives the flexibility to the provinces to find the right solutions. We are there to be supportive, as the federal government.

However, when the implementation is happening on the ground, that is when these types of answers become critically important. We are going to keep pushing to make sure those questions are answered.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, earlier I asked another member a question. I will ask the same question, but put it a little differently.

My colleague clearly explained how Bill C-35 will actually help women, children and families. We know that the system has worked very well in Quebec for 25 years.

The federal government says that it will let the provinces manage their own child care services. It will send a cheque and let them manage this file as they wish.

Health care helps the same people: women, children and families. At present, emergency rooms are overflowing in Quebec. However, when it comes to health care, the federal government is saying no. It claims that the provinces do not know how to manage health care and it has to tell them what to do and how to spend their money.

How can the same government have two different approaches to similar issues where the same problems have to be tackled when trying to help the same people? I am trying to understand this.

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Madam Speaker, I would remind my colleague that we are here today to talk about child care. In this particular case, it is clear that we have a model that works well in the province of Quebec, one that is an example for the rest of the country to follow. We can use this model to improve our country.

When it comes to health, it is important to acknowledge the problems facing the provinces. We need to work together to come up with solutions.

As a government and indeed as Canadians, it would be irresponsible to believe that if one system works a certain way, all systems will work the same way. It would be irresponsible to believe that if one model works for one province, it could work for all the other provinces and territories.

That is why it is important for us to figure out how to ensure success in health care and child care.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we heard a lot of discussion today about the themes of freedom and choice, but a lot of families, particularly in my riding, do not have that option under the status quo. I remember speaking to a lot of families in my riding who said they would love to be able to go out and get a second job to advance their family's economic interest, but the entire income from that second job would go to pay for child care because it was simply too expensive.

We need to remember this kind of program is about giving families a choice. It is about giving them the choice to get that second job, because they know their kids will be looked after at an affordable rate and then they can advance their interests. I would like my colleague to underline that aspect. This is another measure to help families get ahead.

• (1305)

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed:** Madam Speaker, my hon. friend is absolutely correct. If we think about these economic times and the challenges people are facing, if we can reduce one burden from them by ensuring they know they have affordable, accessible child care, then it gives them the ability to be able to get that extra job or take extra shifts if they need to. Most importantly, it makes sure they have that sense of security for their family that they do not need to make a grave economic decision as to whether their child is going to be able to do something as simple as get child care. He is absolutely right, and we need to keep working together to advance this.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the land that we are on. It is the unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. Since today we are debating Bill C-35, the Canada early learning and child care act, as we acknowledge the land we are on, it is important that we acknowledge the ongoing injustice that indigenous people face.

We pause not only to remember and honour the indigenous survivors who were impacted by residential schools and the children who never made it home, but also we must collectively commit to a future where there is justice for indigenous people and where every child matters. A piece of this is supporting indigenous-led child care programming, committing to a future where every child matters and where indigenous children have the opportunity to experience high-quality, culturally rooted early learning and child care programming.

Bill C-35, the Canada early learning and child care act, has been a long time coming. I thank the child care advocates who have worked tirelessly for decades to make this happen. I say tirelessly because their advocacy has continued despite decades of broken promises. However, it is also important to note that so many of the people who have been pushing for national child care, who are parents, grandparents and educators, are tired.

Parents have been struggling to afford the unbelievably high costs of child care, paying monthly child care fees that are as much as or more than their monthly rent payments. They have been struggling to find child care spaces. They are struggling, and many parents, especially moms, have told me they would like to return to work. However, because of the impossibly high costs or because

they cannot find a space, it is impossible for them to return to their careers.

I have spoken with grandparents who are generously stepping in to provide care, but who have worked hard their whole lives. While they are stepping up as much as they can, they are tired and they do not want to be full-time caregivers. I have spoken to educators, who give so much to our children, yet for decades have been underpaid and undervalued. There are educators who are leaving the field, because they cannot afford to make ends meet without a living wage.

Their stories highlight some of the reasons this piece of legislation is so important. I am glad the government is committing to funding. We are beginning to see that funding make an impact in my home province of B.C. The B.C. government has been reducing child care costs, creating more spaces and recruiting more early child care educators. Every parent and every child deserves access to high-quality affordable child care.

The bill would enshrine this vision into law and commit the federal government to long-term funding for provinces and indigenous peoples.

New Democrats pushed the government for this legislation. It is one of the 27 commitments outlined in the supply and confidence agreement. We were able to successfully push the government for the prioritization of public non-profit care, which would mean affordable, high-quality and accessible day cares for families who need them. That would ultimately mean better wages and working conditions for staff.

We also pushed to make sure the bill would contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and for the inclusion of a commitment to the right to child care, as recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I want to give a shout-out to my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, for her tireless work on this file.

There are also ways the bill could be further improved, and as New Democrats we will not only be supporting the bill but also working alongside child care advocates, educators, unions and other experts in the field to strengthen it at committee.

We know that one of the major barriers to the expansion of affordable child care is staffing. We have been echoing the calls of unions representing child care workers that call for a workforce strategy that addresses staffing shortages in the sector. Early childhood educators in Canada continue to leave their profession due to the low pay, the lack of benefits, the lack of supports and the lack of decent working conditions.

*Government Orders*

Enticing new people into a field when they are facing these conditions is extremely challenging. The federal government must take a leadership role, commit to a workforce strategy and support amendments to this bill that outline explicit commitments to fair pay and decent working conditions for staff.

● (1310)

CUPE, which was my union before I became an MP, and also the union that represents over 12,000 workers in the child care sector, has stated clearly, “Until the child care staffing crisis is resolved, the promise of affordable and high quality child care for every family in Canada who needs it will remain unfulfilled.” It is constantly advocating for its members, reminding us that child care workers are highly skilled, trained individuals whose work is important. These are the people who are caring for and educating our children. They deserve respect and fair wages.

We will continue to push for a more unequivocal commitment in this bill for decent work for child care staff. We need clear language that explicitly mentions fair wages and working conditions.

We are also going to be pushing for stronger reporting requirements. The current language in the bill has a vague promise that the minister will report on progress, but there should be requirements to report on the number of new spaces built, the number of new child care workers being hired, and a detailed breakdown of federal spending.

We will also be pushing for stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure the provinces are spending child care money for its intended purpose. This is particularly relevant when we see in Manitoba the average cost of child care not going down, and when we see Ontario opening the door to and prioritizing the expansion of for-profit care.

Our New Democrat team is putting forward constructive proposals to improve the accountability and reporting mechanisms in the bill to ensure costs are reduced, child care spaces are created and child care workers are being hired, but we are also pushing for a workforce strategy and a clear commitment to decent working conditions and fair pay for staff.

A study that was released last year by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit provided the dos and don'ts when building a universal child care program. The researchers drew from studies both in Canada and internationally and concluded that, based on the best available evidence and on all we know about building the foundations for a publicly funded universal child care system, the best way for Canada to build an affordable, accessible, inclusive, flexible, equitable and quality early child learning and child care system is to use our public funds to prioritize non-profit and public child care.

That is not to say that we ignore or exclude the current for-profit child care providers. Instead, it argues that the most constructive way forward is a three-point plan. The first point is to maintain funding and the existing supply of regulated public, non-profit and for-profit child care. The second is to ensure more vigorous, publicly managed regulation, including affordable provincial parent fees and wage scales that ensure decent staff compensation. The third is that any future public funds aimed at the expansion of the

supply of child care should prioritize public and non-profit providers, while simultaneously pursuing new public strategies for developing early learning and child care services for when, where and for whom they are needed. This is the road map to a national child care system that provides parents, children and educators with the support they need.

I want to end with a few comments about the gendered impacts of our policy decisions. We know that a national system of affordable child care helps advance gender equality by making it easier for women to re-enter the workforce after having children on their own terms. Unpaid household and family child care responsibilities disproportionately fall on women, and investing in affordable, accessible and inclusive child care is essential if we want women to have equal opportunities.

It is important to note that there is little data on the particular challenges faced by racialized women in accessing child care. If we want to ensure that the most marginalized women do not slip through the cracks of a new child care system, it is essential that we bring the voices of under-represented women and gender-diverse people to the forefront of these policy discussions.

It is also important to remember that, professionally, the child care sector is one of the most feminized job sectors in Canada, and early childhood educators are some of the most undervalued workers, with low pay, low retention rates, low levels of job satisfaction and, unsurprisingly, labour shortages. Investing in affordable, accessible, high-quality child care, where child care providers are paid a fair wage, is good for gender equality, good for the economy and good for our children. Let us make a more prosperous, equitable, affordable and inclusive Canada for all.

● (1315)

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Province of B.C. has received \$3.2 billion through to March 2026 for child care funding. This is in addition to, I will admit, sizable investments made by the Province of British Columbia since 2018. However, during the debate over the last two days, the federal NDP does not seem to be in line with one of the key policy tenets of the provincial program, namely, that private, for-profit care has access to the \$10-a-day child care program in B.C.



*Government Orders*

I would like the member's comments on whether or not private, for-profit care, which currently has 12,700 Canadians enrolled in it, should receive access to the \$10-a-day program.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Madam Speaker, I do hope the member was listening to my speech when I outlined the research showing a three-point plan with the current funding agreements. It makes sense to maintain and fund the whole spectrum of our child care system.

Moving forward, when we are talking about future agreements with provinces, if we want to make decisions that are based on evidence and the best available information we have, it means investing in public, non-profit child care in the future. I recommend the member check out the research. It was released last year. It is a powerful document that outlines the dos and don'ts of creating a national child care program.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the 2021 federal budget included \$30 billion in new spending over five years to fund this new national child care system. It also projected an additional \$9.2 billion ongoing. That is a lot of money.

At the same time, predictability is the key issue. As much as we want to get this system in place, we also want it to be robust and reliable. What kind of impact do we think this will actually have? How will this \$9.2-billion investment impact Quebec? Can we expect to see long-term agreements?

The government has not reintroduced the clause from Bill C-303 from 2006, so I am worried about predictability and the impact this will have on Quebec.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this issue.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned a few things, one being the cost of the program. On the one hand, we have to acknowledge that investing in child care is an economically sound policy. It is good for our economy, and it is good for equity and taking care of our children, but it also means people returning to the workforce, which is good for our economy overall.

We also want to make sure the government is making the right kind of fiscal decisions, meaning taxing the wealthiest corporations, the people at the very top, so that we can invest in programs that support everyday Canadians with things such as child care, health care and affordable housing.

To the question of how this would impact Quebec, I am going to admit that I am not an expert on that. I do think that there is flexibility built into this legislation that would ensure that provinces such as Quebec, which really are models when it comes to creating affordable child care, can direct funds in ways that best serve the province.

• (1320)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, what I like about Bill C-35 is that it embodies, in recognizing the importance of early learning and child care, true Canadi-

an values. Not only do we have agreements with the different provinces, territories and indigenous communities, we also have the substantial funding of \$30 billion over a five-year period of time. This legislation would embody the commitment from the federal government to ensure there is a strong role going forward.

I would ask the member to provide her thoughts on the significance of this historic piece of legislation.

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Madam Speaker, this legislation is so important. It is unfortunate that the Liberals have been promising child care since 1993 and it took three decades to get here, but it is critical that we move forward together. That is why New Democrats have pushed the government to ensure this legislation is passed, that it moves forward. This is critical for our country as a whole when it comes to our economic success. It is critical for gender equality. It is critical for the future of our children.

I want to thank all members in the House who are supporting this legislation and fighting for the rights of women.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a great opportunity to stand in the chamber to speak to the importance of child care, which is what Bill C-35 is all about. The aim is to establish, through this legislation, a national early learning child care system.

This is something that is not a new discussion in Canada. It was this government that was able to get it done, but the discussion, as members know, goes back to 1970 when a national child care program was called for by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. Ten years later, in 1980, the Canadian commission for the international year of the child said the same thing. In 1986, a federal task force made the same recommendation. One year later, in 1987, it looked like the Mulroney government was going to get it done, but they were not able to. Its aim was to invest \$4.5 billion toward the creation of 200,000 child care spaces.

The efforts of Prime Minister Paul Martin and the social development minister in early 2006 have to be lauded. There was an incredible effort made by Ken Dryden at that time to establish a national system, but unfortunately, it was not to be. Politics got in the way. Politics has not come in the way this time. We have been able to collaborate across the aisle. We have been able to collaborate with the provinces to establish a national system, and this legislation would enshrine that so any future government could not change it.

There are many benefits. This legislation stems from the fact that we have carried out enormous consultations with Canadians across communities across this country. The benefits for children are very clear. Child care programs play a critical role in children's development.

### *Government Orders*

This is not to say that child care programs are the only way to foster and to nurture the development of the child. It is up to parents to decide how they wish to raise their kids. They still have the choice under this system. However, those who choose to put their children in child care will absolutely see obvious benefits, including the ability to interact with other kids, language development, cognitive development, the motor skills that come with these programs and other basic skills. This is something that I have seen up close, in my own experience.

My daughter Ava is now 16 months as of yesterday. She goes to Arbour Glen in London, where the incredible staff have worked with her in really important ways, which I cannot even begin to describe. These are early childhood educators. That is what they are. It has been disappointing to hear the word “babysitter” sometimes used across the aisle, as it is not appropriate.

They are early childhood educators, as important in our communities as teachers, nurses and others who carry out public-facing roles in support of the community. Whether it is Arbour Glen, where Ava is, or KidLogic, London Bridge Child Care Services, Oak Park Co-operative Children’s Centre or so many other child care centres in the city of London, parents have the option, more so even now. I talked about choice before. They have even more of a choice now to enrol their children in these outstanding programs.

What is the result? The result is not only important for the development of the child. The result is also important in terms of a community focus. TD Bank made clear just a few years ago that, when it comes to government investments in child care, “for every dollar invested, the return ranges from roughly 1.5 to almost 3 dollars”. A more important point from the study, which bears enormous emphasis, and I cannot repeat this enough, is “that the benefit ratio for disadvantaged children [is] in the double digits.” This is not from some far-left organization. In fact, my Conservative friends will like hearing this, as this is one of the big banks coming out in favour of national child care.

One might ask in what ways the enormous benefits would flow. The research is clear that children who do partake in child care programs see higher graduation rates. It is something that promotes lifelong well-being. Future earnings are in fact impacted by this. On average, those children who are involved in child care do tend to see higher earnings, and equality levels rise as children spend time with one another. For children from different socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, there is a very positive impact, in the long term, on equality.

Furthermore, the economic impact, which I have touched on just briefly, flows into something else and that is gender equality. In fact, it is quite relevant. Just a few days ago, Statistics Canada’s labour force survey came out. This was in early January. It is made clear that 81% of Canadian women aged between 25 and 54 were working during 2022. That is the highest number recorded on record in this survey.

• (1325)

Mothers with kids under six are employed at a rate now of 75% of the 2022 figure. We will see but it is even more likely to increase in 2023 as a result of this program. The 2022 figure that I just cited

is a 3% increase from 2019. As I say, I expect that number to grow in the coming years.

There are a number of reasons for this. The pandemic has seen a more flexible approach to work being embraced by employers. I will not say that remote work patterns are the norm but they are becoming more regular in work places. We are seeing Parliament move in that direction as well. In all of this is the importance of national child care.

Now that every province and territory has signed on to this system, it is a natural consequence that there is a rising number of women in the workforce. That is not only good for the economy but also good for the goal of gender equality. Women now have more of an ability, if they wish, to work in a pursuit of what matters to them, to pursue their creative interests and to pursue work that they find meaningful. As we all know, that is a central goal of gender equality.

In relation to the economic impact, on GDP we can look to the province of Quebec where an excellent child care system has been in place since 1997. Since that time, the province, just because of its program alone, has seen a 1.7% increase in GDP. That is something very important with respect to planning for future social programs and other laudable aims that governments in that province have presently and will have in the future.

Finally, let me touch on the savings for families, particularly at a difficult time as Canadians grapple with the effects of inflation. Let me do so by touching on my own community’s experience.

In London, 92% of licensed child care providers have signed on to this national program, which is a huge number. It even caught me by surprise. This number goes back to November. It could even be higher at this point. It speaks to the structure of this program, the fact that licensed providers have found it enticing to sign onto. Of course, the results are not just good for child care providers and their employees but also for everyday Canadians; in my case, everyday Londoners.

In 2018, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives put out a landmark study, a very important study that made clear how much the average family was paying in child care costs city by city. In London, that cost ranged between \$1,000 to \$1,200 a month, depending on the age of the child. That could be a mortgage payment. It is a very expensive cost. Sometimes it was even more than \$1,200. I spoke to a Londoner this morning and said I would be doing a speech on Bill C-35 on a national system. That individual was paying upward of \$1,500 to \$1,600 a month until this program came into being. Now those costs have been cut in half.

At a time when Canadians and Londoners continue to face the challenges of inflation this is a very important development. We can look at how it complements the other suite of measures that this government has introduced, such as the GST tax credit and the ways we are helping through the rental benefit and the dental benefit.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thanks to the NDP.

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, my friend in the NDP wants credit. We worked with members of the NDP on that, so he gets credit. We worked with them and it was this government that got it done. I am sure he will give credit to the Liberal government for getting it done.

We have great legislation here. I hope all colleagues support it.

• (1330)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have a couple of questions. The main question is on the member's thoughts on the bill the way it currently stands and whether his party would be open to amending the national council.

In the past we have seen the Liberal government appoint people it thinks are best rather than have a fair representation that serves all Canadians. Currently in the bill there is zero private representation. Entrepreneurs and small business owners will not be on the national council. Would he be open to amending this?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, the member does not give evidence as to what the government apparently has done, in her view, with previous advisory councils.

It is important for an advisory council to exist, and the bill would open the door to exactly that. However, if the member has suggestions that she wishes to raise, I would be open to looking at those. It is for the government to make the ultimate decision of course.

I see an excellent bill with an advisory council built in to it to provide that critical feedback to the government on how the legislation progresses in the short and long term.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to speak again about the multilateral early learning and child care framework, which states that the systems will “recognize the unique needs of French and English linguistic minority communities”. Would this be a way for the Liberal government to circumvent Bill 101?

The Liberals are already interfering by investing in a provincial jurisdiction, and now they also want to recognize the unique needs of French and English linguistic minority communities.

Where are anglophones in the minority? In Quebec, as we know. Is that not a way to circumvent Bill 101?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, the subject today is not Bill 101, but Bill C-35. In my opinion, Quebec has an excellent model for Canada.

[*English*]

In fact, that is exactly what we have seen, a government that has looked at the Quebec model, looked at other provinces and opened the door to ongoing discussions that ultimately led to agreements.

I mentioned Quebec before, with nearly a 2% increase in that province's GDP since 1997. There is a lot to learn from the Quebec model. This country and this government will seek to do better, and the Quebec model is instrumental in all of that.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member knows quite well that we have had to compete really hard for manufacturing jobs and to sustain economic development, especially new ones. The green technology in the auto sector in London is affected by this for sure. As well, health care in those structures has actually played an important role to retain those jobs, especially when competing against Alabama, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and other places.

I liked his reflections on how child care would also be an important instrument to not only retain jobs but grow them. There is a bit of concern in Ontario with the fact that we are looking at more private health care from the Ford administration, which will undermine that competitive advantage. In the meantime, how will this child care policy enhance our overall economic competitiveness as we face these challenges?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos:** Madam Speaker, my colleague and I have enjoyed a very good working relationship over the years. I have a lot of respect for what he does in his community, and no doubt his constituents do as well as they have returned him to the House many times.

On the question, if we have an affordable child care option, we give people choice. If we give people choice, they will take it.

We have seen, as I cited in my speech, a huge number of women now in the workforce. I have cited the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey that shows that 81% of women aged 25 to 45 are working. That is not entirely due to the child care program that the government has introduced, but it is part of the explanation.

If we give people that option, they will take it, and we need to provide that option to make Canada more competitive. We have to ensure that this is the case. When we do, it is only natural that we will see a number of metrics increase, including GDP. As I mentioned before, Quebec has seen a very significant increase in its GDP. That is expected to rise in Canada, and that is the TD Bank talking among other banks.

*Government Orders*

• (1335)

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, speaking to parents of young children, this debate on Bill C-35, the Canada early learning and child care act, is about them and the type of support they need from their government while their children are preschool age. They will find the Conservative caucus and the majority of the House supports the legislation at this stage, but they will also find two competing visions for the future of child care in Canada.

The Conservative vision flows from our belief in small government and big citizens. We respect the agency of parents to make the child care decisions that meet their individual needs. That means we must ensure families have financial flexibility to create the life they dream of for themselves and their children. To do that, we need to make life more affordable, lower taxes and leave more of their hard-earned dollars in their pockets.

I was part of the previous Conservative government that promoted income splitting for families, implemented a child care tax credit and the universal child care benefit. We did so with a balanced budget.

The child care benefit was a direct cash transfer to Canadian families that gave them more flexibility in their child care choices with no strings attached. It was so well received that when the Liberals came to office, they decided to keep it in place and rebranded it as the Canada child benefit. The benefit was universal and supported the needs of every child in Canada.

Unfortunately, the vision of the NDP-Liberal government fails to meet that standard. Bill C-35 would not help every preschooler in Canada, not by a long shot. The legislation flows from its core belief that government is the best solution to societal problems. That is why the bill would give more power to the government to decide who gets child care support and who will provide the services.

What the government is offering is an Ottawa-knows-best solution, forcing provinces to give the federal government more control over their jurisdiction. For example, the child care agreement with B.C. will direct \$3.2 billion into the child care system, with one key condition: that those dollars only be allocated to run regulated day cares.

That means families that choose to have a parent take time away from work to focus on the most formative years of their child's life will not benefit from this spending. Parents working shifts beyond the hours of operation of regulated day cares will not receive any further support. Parents who prefer to rely on family members for child care will not receive support. This includes new Canadians, many of whom are waiting for the arrival of grandparents to help with their child care but are stuck in the Liberal-made backlog at the immigration department, which is well over two million applications long.

Many indigenous parents who distrust child care institutions, given their family experience with residential schools, will not receive support when they arrange child care alternatives. Parents in rural and remote communities where regulated child care is often not available will not get a nickel of support. For those who are

able to align their schedules to benefit from this program, they may need to wait years on a wait-list.

That said, the child care agreement with British Columbia will help some families, but far too many are being left behind. After eight years, I expected an inclusive child care approach from the Prime Minister, because after all it is 2023. His Deputy Prime Minister promised better when she introduced the child care plan in her budget. She said:

This is women's liberation. It will mean more women no longer need to choose between motherhood and a career. This is feminist economic policy in action.

This is typical of the Liberal government: big promises but no follow-through.

Bill C-35 and the related child care agreements fall demonstrably short. Instead, the Liberal government implemented a program, frankly, straight out of the 1970s, when women were generally limited to typical nine-to-five jobs.

Speaking as someone who was a single mother for four years following the death of my first husband and as a woman who raised four children with a career in law and politics, this program is certainly not feminist economic policy.

• (1340)

I do not know where the Liberals have been for the last 50 years, but while women have been breaking the glass ceilings of every industry and every realm of life, have they really noticed? Women are leaders in the military, policing, medicine, aerospace, engineering, mining and resource extraction.

They are on the cutting edge of research and development. They are bolstering our food supply chains as agricultural producers. They are manufacturing the cars we drive and designing the transit systems we rely on. Many women are taking up jobs in the skilled trades, helping to construct the homes and highways that we need to build up our great country. Women are thriving in industries that were once male dominated, and they need flexible child care options that meet their needs.

*Government Orders*

The idea of a national child care program is a recycled Liberal election promise from the 1980s, but it does not seem to have evolved with the times. John Turner promised the program in 1984 and 1988, but could not win a mandate. Jean Chrétien made a similar promise in 1993, but failed to deliver the program despite having successive majority governments.

Liberal leaders ever since, including Martin, Dion and Ignatieff, all made similar promises but never got it done. The current Prime Minister copied and pasted the program into their election platform, but failed to modernize it for women working in today's economy.

To make matters worse, the program fails to live up to the standard set by the courts. In 2010, as an administrative law judge with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, I presided over the Johnstone case.

Fiona Johnstone worked rotating shifts as a border services officer. Her child care preference was to rely on family to care for her children, but her family was available only three days a week. She sought accommodations from her employer, the Canada Border Services Agency, requesting that she work full time with extended shifts over those three days. Her employer refused her request, believing it had no obligation under the Canadian Human Rights Act to accommodate her personal choices around child care.

After hearing testimony from several child care experts on availability and quality, I made a precedent-setting decision that found the CBSA discriminated against Fiona Johnstone by failing to accommodate her child care request. My decision, which has since been upheld by the Federal Court of Appeal, protected child care choice as a right for working parents under the ground of family status in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

I would hope that a national child care program would reflect the ruling of the court by supporting the child care choices of all Canadian parents. Sadly, it falls short. In fact, the bill itself is a half-hearted effort. After eight years, when the Liberals could have gotten it right, most of it is inconsequential. A lengthy preamble, a declaration and some guiding principles make up most of the bill.

The one thing the bill would do is establish an advisory council to advise the minister on child care going forward.

I have four pieces of advice for this council to consider in order to help families take control of their child care choices. The first is to find solutions that help all parents in the modern economy. The second is to empower parents to make child care choices that suit their needs. The third is to refrain from dictating to provincial governments how to deliver those services. After eight years, it is difficult for other orders of government to take the federal government seriously when it cannot even issue passports or process visa applications. The fourth is to find ways to give families more financial flexibility to build the lives they want.

The Liberals can start by axing their plan to triple the carbon tax. They can rein in government spending that is driving high interest rates and inflation, which is the cruellest tax of all. To conclude, Conservatives will vote to send the bill to committee and will seek to amend it with a clear objective, which is to make sure the national child care program respects the choices of all Canadian families.

• (1345)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I could be wrong, so I stand to be corrected, but I believe I heard the member say that we replaced or continued on the universal child benefit with the Canada child benefit and we basically just copied what the Conservatives had and continued on with the same thing. If that is what she said, it could not be further from the truth. The universal child benefit was universal. Everybody got it. Millionaires got it. Everybody got the exact same amount. That was the former Conservative plan. Our plan, what we brought in, the Canada child benefit, gave more to those who needed it. It was means-tested. That is the fundamental difference between the two.

Can the member confirm whether I heard that correctly? If I did not, how is she able to make that claim given the huge discrepancy between the two programs?

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I am always delighted when the member gets up and asks a question, because he does it so often and he gives us a chance to clarify the record.

I did not say what he says I said. What I said is that the concept of a universal child care benefit was something we, as a Conservative government, brought in. It was continued by the Liberals, albeit in a different form and format. What is interesting about these comments is that there is no means test in Bill C-35. The very people the member claims we helped the first time around with a universal program are going to benefit from putting their children in \$10-a-day day care.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. I hear some conversation going back and forth while the hon. member had the floor, and that is not very respectful. If members want to be recognized, they should stand and wait until then to say their piece.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, Bill C-35 is being introduced at a time when many family day cares have recently closed their doors and there are concerns about the labour shortage.

*Government Orders*

Under such circumstances, I do not find that the Conservatives' solution to just give a tax credit is very helpful. We need to take action at some point. A tax credit benefits those who pay taxes; however, not all parents earn enough income to do so.

How are we going to help the less fortunate members of our society? I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, Conservatives promote a suite of approaches so that parents can make the best choices that make sense for themselves and their families, that make sense for their cultural differences, that make sense for their age differences, that make sense for those in situations like the Fiona Johnstone case I talked about. She was a border services guard who was on rotating shift work.

Child care has to be made available for people to get some help and support with early child care and education that fits their needs. Tax credits are one way to do it. Income splitting for families who have children under the age of 18 was one of our previous suggestions that was rejected by the Liberal government. There are a number of ways to approach this.

As I said, I hope the advisory council will look at comprehensive ways to help all parents in Canada.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I have been hearing a theme from the Conservative members that the choices about child care are being taken from parents. I wonder if the member could explain specifically where in Bill C-35 that choice is being taken away from parents.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I never said that. I do not know what other people have referred to.

What we are saying is that what is being proposed here does not go far enough, that there are too many families it would not help and that there is a very narrow group of people it would help. Even in a successful program like they have in Quebec, there is a two-year waiting list. There are some 40,000 people on that list.

What we want to see is something that respects all child care choices so that parents have flexibility.

• (1350)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I know that during my question about means testing, I started to get heckles from Conservative members about opening the door. I am not going to disappoint them, and I am going to jump right in and address that point. This is not to worry them that they will not get any answers, because I have a lot to say about that narrative that is being led by Conservatives throughout the debate on this yesterday and today.

Before that, I want to talk about this program and how it has had an impact in my community of Kingston and the Islands specifically. I think the YMCA is considered a well-rounded organization. We get all walks of life in the YMCA. Socio-economic backgrounds of visitors to the YMCA vary wildly. I always gauge the YMCA as being one of those not-for-profit organizations that genuinely has its finger on the pulse of what is going on.

I want to read a quote from Rob Adams, who is the CEO of the YMCA of Eastern Ontario. In particular, he works out of the Kingston location. He said, "As Canada's largest not-for-profit child-care provider, the YMCA is delighted to hear of the additional child-care spaces. There is nothing new in stating that child-care fees place a financial burden on families, and extra spaces at affordable rates will have a meaningful impact locally."

I appreciate the incredible work that Rob does at the YMCA. Our son Mason, quite a few years ago, had the opportunity for a couple of years to use one of the child care spaces at the YMCA. The quality of care the YMCA provides in those young developing ages of children truly needs to be applauded, so I thank Rob and all the folks in Kingston.

I heard the Conservatives talk quite a bit about this means testing and their sudden new-found interest in means-testing every program. I find it quite ironic for starters, because the default go-to with Conservatives is tax credits. We can look at Stephen Harper's former Conservative government, and everything was a tax credit. There was a sports tax credit, and everything was a tax credit. There was no means testing involved in any of that, so the Conservatives find themselves in a very difficult position right now.

Quite frankly, they know they are going to support this. They have to support this. This program is wildly popular. In Ontario alone we heard from a parliamentary secretary that 92% of day cares have already taken it up. Every Conservative premier in Canada has signed on to this. It is a wildly popular program. Conservatives are going to support it, so they are left in this position of asking how they can critique it, and they are going after an angle, talking about the fact that certain people cannot access the child care program. They are trying to cloud and smokescreen using that narrative.

The reality is, and I have heard it time after time coming from Conservatives asking this question, that it is up to the provinces to work with the federal government to develop the framework through which they want to have the child care spaces administered and delivered in their provinces.

I hope my colleagues from Alberta know that the very framework agreement that Alberta set up with the federal government specifically references individuals who work shift work and individuals who require non-traditional forms of child care. It is being addressed.

This is the only thing we have heard from Conservatives. The only critique they have been able to make of this is trying to cloud something and convince people that the program the federal government has put in place, working with provinces to develop that framework, is a program that is absolutely necessary for us to do to work with the provinces. I will spare my Conservative colleagues the need to ask me the question. The issue is addressed. It is in the individual framework agreements. Alberta has it in its agreement. I encourage the Conservatives to go back and read the agreement. We ask ourselves why the Conservatives would have to take this narrative. I think of this quite a bit.

• (1355)

I cannot help but go back to a tweet from the now Leader of the Opposition, the member for Carleton, who said, on November 30, 2020, “Why should [the Prime Minister] get to force parents to pay through taxes for his government daycare scheme, instead of letting them choose what’s best for their own kids?” This is what the Leader of the Opposition said only two years ago. We know the Conservatives support this bill now, though my sense is that we will not be voting on it until June, but whenever they do let us vote on it, the Conservative leader will vote in favour of it, despite this. It is a complete about-face. That is what it is.

The reason he is doing this is that, as I previously said, he knows the program is wildly popular. He knows that he has no choice but to go along with it. Conservatives do what Conservatives do, and they will try to find any other angle to smokescreen and cloud the issue so that Canadians are somehow fooled into believing that the program is something it is not.

The member for Carleton was asked a question by a reporter at one point. The question was, “When you say about cutting the supplementary spending, in your view does that include the newly signed child care agreements with most of the provinces?” How did the member for Carleton, the leader of the Conservative Party, respond? He said, “We’ve said we do not believe in a \$100-billion slush fund.” The member for Carleton, the leader of the Conservative Party, who will vote for this, whenever we get around to voting for it, calls the program a “slush fund”. That was his response to an individual reporter when asked about this program.

This was before we were able to sign deals with every province and show the Conservatives how successful this program could actually be. This is the problem. That is not leadership. Leadership is not sitting on the sidelines and making commentary, saying one does not support something and then completely changing direction on it when realizing how successful the government has been at working with primarily Conservative premiers to bring this program to fruition.

Here we are, in this position, where the Conservatives are somehow fumbling around the issue, trying to figure out what their narrative will be, when it is very clear on this side of the House to the NDP and the Bloc. With all due respect to my Bloc colleagues, I cannot think of a program so national in its scope that the Bloc Québécois ever voted in favour of, but they are going to vote in favour of this because they see the benefit of it. They know the benefit of it.

We do not even have to look outside this country to see how successful this program could be in getting people, in particular women, into the workforce. We just need to look to Quebec, the neighbouring province to Ontario. Quebec has had it in place for a number of years and it has been wildly popular and wildly successful. If we look at the statistics, more women have entered the labour force and a higher percentage of women have participated in the labour force since Quebec started this program several years ago.

I know that we will eventually get to a point where we can enshrine this into law. That is incredibly important, because provinces, territories and, indeed, families looking to grow their families or individuals who are looking to start a family want to

### *Statements by Members*

know what their options are. If we have a program that can be so easily removed and discarded because it is only temporary in nature, at least in terms of the budgetary impacts, then we do not have that security. That is what this bill, Bill C-35, would do. It would enshrine these agreements that have been made with provinces into legislation so that any future government, any political party, will have to go through some pretty significant steps in order to remove it.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

### RALPH SCHWARTZMAN

**Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today I rise in the House to honour Ralph Schwartzman, who passed late last year. Ralph was a pillar of Vancouver’s Jewish community. A builder for over 70 years, Ralph’s contributions to the community were of many construction projects, including the Vancouver Talmud Torah school and the Temple Sholom synagogue in my riding of Vancouver Granville.

Ralph was a kind and honest man, a true mensch. While family, friends, business associates and community mourn this loss, we celebrate the wonderful and charitable life he lived. His legacy will indeed live on through the JCC redevelopment, a symbol of our thriving community, a community he was devoted to building.

May his memory be a blessing and his kindness a lesson to us all.

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### FOREST INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Madam Speaker, despite B.C. having abundant renewable resources, two mills will be closing in my region, with 300 losing their jobs in Prince George and 200 losing their jobs in Chetwynd. The reason was not a lack of timber but a lack of access to it.

The Prime Minister’s commitment to the radical 30 by 30 agenda, to protect 30% of lands and 30% of waters by 2030, is needlessly blocking our own access to our own lands and waters.

Forestry writer David Elstone said, “30% protection of the land base by 2030 is 100% entirely a political move...making a third of the province into a park is not just bad for the economy but for the environment as well.”

Jeff Bromley, of the United Steelworkers Wood Council, said, “Some in the environmental movement have been strategically misleading the public for years with false claims about the forest industry.”

*Statements by Members*

Unlike the Prime Minister, we Conservatives encourage environmental stewardship and the continued responsible development of our natural resources. For our forestry workers and their families, we can and must do both.

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**LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, on January 22, the lunar new year arrived with firecrackers and confetti. I was fortunate enough to ring in the new year in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, which is home to one of the largest Chinese populations in Canada.

In Chinese culture, the rabbit represents energy, beauty and tranquility. It is considered the luckiest animal in the zodiac. In Korean lore, the rabbit is quiet, clever, fertile and prosperous. For the Vietnamese community, 2023 is the Year of the Cat. The lunar new year concludes with the lantern festival on February 5. I want to wish everyone who celebrates the lunar new year a very happy and healthy one.

In Vietnamese, I say *chuc mung nam moi*.

In Korean, I say *saehae bok manui badeuseyo*.

In Chinese, I wish everyone good health and prosperity: *shen ti jian kang, gong hey fat choy*.

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[*Translation*]

**OCEAN GROUP EMPLOYEES**

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, today the Bloc Québécois stood with the workers of Ocean Group who, for several months, have been demanding their right to negotiate on equal footing with their employer.

In solidarity with these workers, the Bloc Québécois has reiterated its support for anti-scab legislation like Bill C-276, which my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville introduced.

We also reminded the government of the promise the Liberal Party made during its election campaign in 2021, that is, the promise to quickly implement anti-scab legislation. That was in 2021. It is now 2023.

Quebec has had its own law since 1977. Canada, once again, is trailing behind. The government needs to get things moving, introduce a draft bill if it must. The Bloc Québécois will support any bill that is in line with the spirit of workers' demands.

Finally, to all the employees, steelworkers and union members of Ocean Group, the Bloc Québécois is with them, with strength, solidarity and respect.

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[*English*]

**DOWNTOWN OTTAWA REVITALIZATION TASK FORCE**

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great news for my community of Ottawa Centre.

Last year, I launched the downtown Ottawa revitalization task force, alongside co-chairs Graeme Hussey and Neil Malhotra. Our goal is to reimagine downtown Ottawa to thrive in a postpandemic future. To do that, we have convened a table of community leaders, local business representatives, home builders, sustainability experts and government officials. Together, we are assessing what downtown Ottawa needs to thrive into the future.

We are now looking for ideas as part of our new public consultation. We are asking residents of the Ottawa area, or any Canadian interested in how our nation's capital is developed, to have their say. Canadians can find more information about this consultation on my social media, and I am so excited to hear their ideas.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity in this city to reimagine our downtown core. Let us not waste it. Let us think big.

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● (1405)

**SASKATCHEWAN BORDER CROSSINGS**

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over two years ago, the federal government closed all Canadian border crossings. As COVID restrictions eased, the border began to reopen, but only with limited capacity. As people in Saskatchewan watched the big crossings in Windsor, Coutts and Douglas fully open, they thought it was only a matter of time before their crossing would resume normal hours of operation, but they are still waiting.

The most direct route from Denver, Colorado to Canada is through the Port of Monchy south of Val Marie, Saskatchewan. Denver is a key hub of the United States, with market access to all directions. Ranchers, farmers, exporters and tourism operators in Canada use ports like Monchy to access U.S. markets, while fresh produce from California and Florida is imported back through this vital port. However, Monchy and other nearby crossings in Saskatchewan are closed on the weekends and only open for limited hours during the week. One needs to drive over halfway across the province just to find weekend hours.

Rural Saskatchewan is once again being punished and forgotten by this government. This leads me to ask, is it negligence or is it just incompetence?

**The Speaker:** I want to remind hon. members that they cannot do indirectly what they cannot do directly in the House. It is just a little reminder. I know we have been away for a short while, and I would refresh their memory.

The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville.



### HAZEL MCCALLION

**Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with deep sadness that I rise today as we say goodbye to Hazel McCallion. She was an icon who served as a mentor and friend to many of us. A trailblazer in every sense of the word, a gifted hockey player, a dedicated councillor, reeve and a mayor for a remarkable 36 years.

Hazel's unwavering commitment to her community, her tireless efforts and strong political style earned her the name "Hurricane Hazel". She has inspired women like me to pursue politics and has left a lasting impact for generations.

Last summer, we celebrated the 50th edition of the Bread & Honey Festival in Streetsville. We are all lucky to have been able to celebrate one last time with her for this memorable event.

I, along with colleagues, send our deepest condolences to the McCallion family and all the lives Hazel touched. Her passing is a loss to all of us, and we are grateful for the time we shared with her. May she rest in peace.

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### MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on January 10, Kingston City Council unanimously passed a motion that declared a mental health and addictions crisis in our city. City services are stretched beyond what they can and are mandated to provide to those who are experiencing homelessness, mental health and addiction challenges.

The city's motion specifically requested assistance from the provincial Ontario government to invest in additional health care resources, including treatment and rehabilitation beds in Kingston, to support those in need. It further goes on to request the province to lead an emergency working group of frontline health care and social workers to develop long-term solutions.

Our federal government is willing and ready to help provinces and territories deal with the mental health and addictions crises that are happening throughout the country. That is why we established a ministry of mental health and invested, through budget 2022, \$100 million over three years to support harm reduction, treatment and prevention at the community level.

I fully support this declaration, and we need all levels of government to work collaboratively together to tackle the mental health and addictions crisis happening throughout our country.

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### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal government took office, violent crime has increased by 32%. There have been 124,000 more violent crimes under its watch.

Who are the primary perpetrators of these crimes? They are repeat offenders and drug traffickers with illegal guns. What is the Liberal solution? It is to remove mandatory minimums and target law-abiding hunters and firearms owners, people like this retired

### Statements by Members

RCMP officer who has four handguns that were carried by his grandfather and father during both world wars. Unfortunately, due to the Liberals' handgun freeze, keeping them in the family is no longer possible.

Meanwhile, recent victims of gun violence include a 17-year-old killed in broad daylight and another police officer murdered by a repeat offender out on bail and prohibited from owning a firearm. After an armed robbery this past weekend, the regional police chief stated, "This violent incident was avoidable. Two of the arrested in this incident failed to adhere to the conditions of their release on previous charges. This is why we must pursue bail reform."

Considering these disturbing facts, the Liberal government must withdraw its soft-on-crime Bill C-5, make bail reform a priority, and withdraw Bill C-21.

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• (1410)

[Translation]

### HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I was invited to meet with the students on the École secondaire de la Cité-des-Jeunes environmental committee. They led an initiative to collect hopes for the environment as a way of sharing their ideas about how best to protect our planet. Some want unnecessary plastics banned. Others hope there will still be snow in the years to come. Many hope the government will get busy and listen to their calls to action.

On behalf of everyone in Vaudreuil—Soulanges, I want to congratulate them on taking action for our environment and our community. I encourage them to continue taking action and getting their message out there.

I also want to thank their teachers, Sophie Dyotte and Mariebelle Leclerc-Hallé, for working with the committee. Their engagement and the work they are doing as a group is important and timely.

Let us all rally to fight for a better Vaudreuil—Soulanges, a better Canada and a better world for ourselves and for future generations.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this tax-and-spend Liberal government, Canadians are facing desperate situations. One senior wrote me to say that the high price of gas and food has cut his driving to zero and is forcing him to buy food on sale and at low quality. Another wrote to say their debt has never been over \$2,000, but because the government printed money and allowed crazy inflation, their debt is now over \$12,000 and growing.

The most heartbreaking victim of Liberals' cost of living crisis is a constituent who wrote to say the bank will foreclose on their home. Their payments have increased over \$1,000 a month thanks to rate hikes. They also say, "I guess it's a good thing we can commit assisted suicide now. That must have been part of the Prime Minister's plans."

Eight years of broken Liberal promises and apathy have had a real cost on the lives of people. To all those struggling, do not give up. There is hope. The Conservatives are fighting to end eight years of blatant Liberal incompetence and give people back their freedom and their future.

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**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, everything in this country feels like it is broken. However, do not take my word for it. Let us use the words of the Liberals who are confirming this.

The member for Yukon called out his government's attack on hunters in Bill C-21. The member for Avalon called out the Liberals' carbon tax on home heating. A 25-year Liberal MP from Toronto is so frustrated with her Prime Minister that even she is calling him out publicly. The former minister of sport said that she was disregarded when it came to stopping abuse in sports. We have the Minister of Canadian Heritage now fighting with cabinet colleagues over another botched appointment. We also cannot forget the member for Louis-Hébert, who called the Prime Minister out for wedding and dividing Canadians when it came to COVID.

Everything in this country feels broken because the Liberal caucus is broken. If it cannot get its act together, the solution is simple. Just step aside because the Conservatives on this side are united and ready to go.

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**CANADIAN NAVAL RESERVE**

**Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in this House to recognize and pay tribute to the Canadian Forces naval reserve on the occasion of their centennial. On January 31, 1923, the Government of Canada created the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve. For 100 years, naval reservists have served our country with courage and sacrifice. These citizen sailors have been pillars of their communities, whether training for service at sea or coming to the aid of their neighbours in need.

Today, from Victoria to St. John's, 4,100 sailors serve across 24 naval reserve divisions. Let us recognize the naval reserve and honour its place in our nation's military history and heritage as it celebrates 100 years of service excellence as a vital element of the Royal Canadian Navy and Canadian Armed Forces.

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● (1415)

**HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN**

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand in solidarity with the people of Iran who are demonstrating against a brutal regime. Their courage and resolve are recognized here in Canada, and the residents of Port Moody—Coquitlam see them. Iranians are protesting worldwide, at great risk to themselves, for the human rights of women. Thousands have been arrested and imprisoned and some have been executed.

Farhad Nakhaei was arrested at a protest in Chabahar, and Mahya Vahedi was arrested at work. Speaking their names in the House today is a show of my solidarity and sponsorship for their lives. Canada must not tolerate the Iranian government's brutality.

The New Democrats have asked the foreign affairs committee to look at listing the murderous IRGC as a terrorist entity, and we urge all parties to support our motion. I will continue to work with Iranian Canadians to seek justice for political prisoners.

*Zan, zendegi, azadi.* Women, life, freedom.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**RENÉ DOYON**

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a quality that the House occasionally lacks, genius.

Astrophysicist René Doyon has just been named Radio-Canada's scientist of the year for his role in the design of the James Webb Space Telescope.

Launched into space in 2021, this telescope, the most powerful ever launched, is revolutionizing our knowledge of the universe. It is amazing us all with its photos of the most distant galaxies and of earth-like planets orbiting stars other than the sun.

This is all a result of decades of work by René Doyon as principal investigator of the Canadian participation, in collaboration with NASA and the European Space Agency.

This is the second time the Université de Montréal professor, originally from Beauce, has won the scientist of the year award.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to congratulate René Doyon and above all thank him for allowing us to dream by opening our eyes to all the potential the universe has to offer.

Bravo, René Doyon.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Mohsen Shekari was a 23-year-old living in Tehran. In September, he was arrested by the Iranian morality police and charged for waging war against God for protesting. At the trial, he was denied the right to a lawyer, denied the right to an appeal, denied the right to see his family and sentenced to death.

Trials like these have been repeated hundreds of times since then, but they are trials the Liberal member for Richmond Hill actually called fair and legal. He used those words. There are no fair and legal proceedings against political prisoners in a country that does not have an independent judiciary.

The IRGC is still allowed to fundraise, organize and recruit here in Canada. Its members are regularly let into the country and are free to intimidate our own citizens. They have sympathizers in this very government.

The Prime Minister did not mislead Parliament when he himself voted to list the IRGC as terrorists, but he did mislead Canadians by not having the courage to do it when he had the chance. It is time for the Liberals to stop defending the IRGC, and it is time to start standing up to it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FREEDOM OF RELIGION

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, six years ago on Sunday, six men lost their lives to an act of hate at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec in Sainte-Foy.

The next day, vigils for the Muslim community were held throughout Quebec. I attended one in Montreal. It was freezing outside, but my heart was warmed by the sight of Quebeckers from all walks of life coming out in solidarity. Most of them did not even belong to the community directly affected by the attack.

The days that followed were a time of serious reflection in Quebec and Canadian society. The media did their best to explain who Quebec and Canadian Muslims were.

I am asking every member of the House and every citizen to remember the solidarity that we saw six years ago as we collectively try to combat islamophobia today.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[Translation]

### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in eight years, this Prime Minister has doubled our national debt, adding \$500 billion in inflationary deficit spending.

### Oral Questions

What did we get for that money? We got monthly payments for mortgages, and rents that doubled in eight years. Seniors are struggling to pay their grocery bills because of this government's inflationary policies over the past eight years. The crime rate has increased 32% after eight years of this Prime Minister.

Who has benefited? The consultants over at McKinsey, who received more than \$100 million.

Yesterday, I asked the question five times: How much did this firm receive in total?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we know, the situation is currently unstable. Times are tough for Canadians. We dealt with the pandemic. We were there for people and we are proud of that. It was the right thing to do.

Now that we are going through another difficult period with higher interest rates, we will continue to be there for people most in need. We will continue to act responsibly so that our economy continues to grow and provides good jobs for Canadians. We will continue to do our job.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they are going to be there for the people most in need, like the \$1,000-an-hour consultants over at McKinsey, a company that received over \$100 million for work that public servants say was of little or no value. The total amount the government is spending on high-priced consultants is \$15 billion. That is \$1,000 for every single family in Canada. It is no wonder Canadians are eating increasingly at food banks after eight years of the government. It is no wonder seniors cannot keep the heat on.

Why will they not give us an answer? How much did McKinsey get in total?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remember my time in opposition looking at the member opposite, who sat in a government that had a poverty rate of 14.5%. Do members know how often the Conservatives talked about poverty or people in food banks then? It was never. In fact, what has happened under this government is that rate has been reduced by 56%. We have lifted literally over 1.5 million people out of poverty. I would point out that in the worst period of growth since 1946, which his government presided over, this government has seen more than 1.5 million jobs created since the Conservatives left office.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there go the Liberals telling Canadians to stop all their complaining because they have never had it so good. The 1.5 million people eating from a food bank should stop their complaining because they have never had it so good. They tell those people going to a food bank and seeking help with suicide, which is becoming increasingly common, that they have never had it so good. They tell the 35-year-olds living in their parents' basement because the government's policies have doubled rent and mortgage payments that they have never had it so good. Why? It is because they are spending all their time with McKinsey consultants.

How much did those consultants get from taxpayers?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the world is going through something incredibly difficult, we have a choice of what we can do. We can look people in the eye and tell them straight that they are in the most difficult time that humanity has gone through since the Second World War, or we can retweet what is going wrong in the world and make YouTube videos.

It is time for serious leadership. Do members know what has happened over the last eight years? Every time we put concrete solutions in place, the party opposite has obfuscated. The Conservatives tried to block supports for dental, supports for rent, supports for child care and supports for OAS.

\* \* \*

**HOUSING**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, now we have the Liberals' second tactic. First they tell Canadians they have never had it so good. Now they admit that it is miserable but it is everyone else's fault.

The rest of the world did not raise the rent in Canada. Rental rates are set here. We do not import our apartment buildings from Russia; we build them here in Canada. We do not set mortgage rates in Russia; we set them here in Canada.

After half a trillion dollars of inflationary deficits bidding up goods, and constant red tape preventing the construction of the homes we need, our young people are stuck in their parents' basements. Why do the Liberals not stop blaming everyone else and finally take responsibility for the misery they have caused in eight years?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite had an opportunity to be in government and do something on poverty. The

Conservatives did not have any targets. They did not talk about poverty. They did not talk about homeless shelters. They did not move on those things at all.

I have talked about what this government has done. The IMF is now saying that Canada will have the second-highest GDP growth in the world. As we work hard to lift Canadians up and do critical things like child care and dental care, instead of just amplifying anxiety and fear, why will the Conservatives not be part of the solution? I would say they have not been in this House. All they have done is block and obstruct real solutions.

• (1425)

**The Speaker:** I just want to direct all the members to look at their whips and seek advice from them in their signals. They are signalling to calm down and not shout out. I just want to remind everyone that their whip is working very hard and the deputy whip is too. Listen to them.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, now it is the Liberals' third tactic. First they say everything is great; then they say it is terrible, but it is everyone else's fault; then they say we should stop talking about how miserable people's lives are. The member seems to suggest that people are anxious because I am telling them that they cannot afford food. No, their stomachs are telling them they cannot afford food.

The Liberals seem to think that if I stop talking about the fact that seniors in northern Ontario cannot heat their homes because of the carbon tax, seniors will not notice that they are cold. They seem to think that if I do not talk about the 35-year-old living in his parents' basement, he will not realize that he is living there.

Why do the Liberals not fix the problems instead of telling people to shut up about them?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are plain and straight about the difficult times that we are going through as a planet. I would suggest that when the member opposite had the opportunity to suggest, as an example, how people could deal with inflation, he recommended cryptocurrency.

This is the party that at every opportunity is actually not offering any solutions. In fact, the Conservatives are ignoring the fact that when they had a chance to act on poverty and when they had a chance to act on creating jobs, their party had such a bad record on the GDP that there were 14 times in history when there was more growth in a single year than the Conservatives had in their entire government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### JUSTICE

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, ironically, the notwithstanding clause is a legacy that was strongly endorsed by Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the time. The rooster is about to crow for the third time.

According to what the minister said yesterday, he has nothing against the notwithstanding clause, he is against its pre-emptive use. The thing is, it can only be used pre-emptively. It is like a vaccine. We do not get vaccinated because we are sick, we get vaccinated to avoid getting sick, and we use the notwithstanding clause to avoid going to the Supreme Court. If it cannot be used pre-emptively, then what is the notwithstanding clause for?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has always been clear about its concerns regarding the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause by the provinces and about the fact that we are weighing all of our options.

We are strongly committed to defending the rights and freedoms protected by the Charter, which was in fact created to protect minorities across Canada.

In the dialogue between Parliament and the courts, the first word should not be the last.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the representative appointed by the Prime Minister has a rather unflattering view of Quebec. A discussion about Quebec's history and secularism would do Ms. Elghawaby some good.

The Prime Minister knew what he was doing. He and the Liberal Party will stop at nothing to strip the Quebec National Assembly of its authority, particularly when it comes to language and secularism, which must be protected. The notwithstanding clause is the last line of protection.

Are the Prime Minister and his government disavowing the legacy of Pierre Elliott Trudeau?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Charter was created to defend the rights and freedoms of individuals. The same is true of René Lévesque's original charter. We are proud of Canada's traditions when it comes to charters and protecting minorities.

The pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause goes against the spirit of these charters and the dialogue between Parliament and the courts. As I just said, the first word should not be the last.

### Oral Questions

• (1430)

[English]

### SENIORS

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, two years ago, the Canadian Armed Forces had to be called into long-term care homes. What they saw in those homes were horrific conditions: seniors left for hours in soiled diapers and linens; seniors crying out for food and water, left dehydrated and hungry.

After seeing the report, the Prime Minister said he was sad and frustrated, but two years later there has been no action. When will the Prime Minister legislate standards in long-term care to protect our seniors?

**Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a nurse, I have seen first-hand the challenges that seniors faced during the pandemic, including in my own community of Brampton. That is why we welcomed the new standards released today by the Health Standards Organization and Canadian Standards Association, which are the result of extensive consultations across the country. We have also provided \$4 billion to support provinces and territories in their efforts to improve long-term care in their jurisdictions. We will continue to work together to ensure that all Canadians continue to live with dignity and respect, regardless of where they live.

\* \* \*

### HEALTH

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our seniors need sufficient funding and legislation, and the government has done neither.

[Translation]

In 2021, the Liberals declared that a “two-tier system would worsen access and health outcomes for all of us” and that innovation in health care comes from “improving and expanding our public health care system”. Now, those same Liberals are willing to let Doug Ford and Danielle Smith use federal funds to further privatize health care.

Does the Prime Minister need the link to his party's website?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for that question. As Minister of Health in the Canadian government, I have a special responsibility to ensure that the principles of the Canada Health Act are respected by everyone in this country. We are very proud of the fact that our health care system is publicly funded and very proud of the principle of equal access for everyone. All the health ministers and all the first ministers agree on that, and we will all continue to work together to make sure that these principles serve the workers and the patients.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES**

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying the price after eight years of Liberal incompetence, mismanagement and corruption. Liberal insiders like McKinsey have never had it so good, with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of contracts for work that government departments are saying they could have done instead. It is just like the WE scandal, and Canadians are worse off than ever, with soaring interest rates because of out-of-control Liberal spending and a 40-year high in food inflation.

Can anyone on that side tell us why Liberal crony handouts are more important than lowering the cost of living for everyday Canadians?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will soon, in this House, have an opportunity to come together once again and make life better for hundreds of thousands of Canadians with disabilities. We are about to embark on a third reading of Bill C-22. I expect and hope that everyone here will understand the severe levels of poverty of our Canadians with disabilities, and we will work together to make life better for them.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, eight years of Liberal mismanagement leaves a legacy of being the most expensive government with some of the worst outcomes in history. While Liberals help their cronies with millions of dollars in handouts, Canadians have never had it so bad. One in five Canadians are skipping meals; they are out of money and accessing charity services. Two former Liberal finance ministers agree with the Conservatives. Bill Morneau admitted that the Liberals overspent during the pandemic, and now, even former Liberal finance minister John Manley is warning that the Liberals' reckless spending is fuelling inflation.

Why is the government determined to make Liberal insiders rich off the empty stomachs of Canadians?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, sometimes the opposition graces us with the good fortune of saying the quiet part out loud. The pandemic spending that kept my neighbours fed and a roof over the heads of their children was not overspending. That was essential to protect the well-being of Canadians who live in my community. We stepped up to make sure that businesses could keep the lights on and their doors open, and that is something I would do a hundred times out of a hundred. I see people every day who still have a job because of those measures. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Conservative leader held a press conference to say he would never support those big, fat government programs. Thank God we are in government because people are still employed as a result.

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the current Prime Minister, Canadians have doled out \$15 billion for consultants; in return, they get chaos at airports, growing immigration backlogs and 40-year highs in inflation. Our constituents have skipped meals; they have visited food banks in record numbers. They reel from Liberal inflation-driven interest rate hikes. They have spent Canadian tax dollars on giveaways to

well-connected insiders and they blame everyone else. After eight years, there is no one to point fingers at anymore.

When will the Prime Minister stop the giveaways to his friends and start working for ordinary Canadians?

• (1435)

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are very quick to point to the government every time they think there is a political opportunity for themselves. What we are focused on doing in the meantime is advancing solutions that will put more money in the pockets of low-income renters, which the Conservatives voted against, and solutions like making sure that kids who come from low-income families can go to the dentist, which they voted against. This has been their pattern since the very day we formed government.

When we stopped sending child care cheques to millionaires to put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families, they voted against it. When we raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could cut them for the middle class, they voted against it. Every step of the way, we have been focused on families. It would be nice if they finally supported one of these measures.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals brag about the billions spent, but the call is coming from inside the House. It has been eight years, and the Prime Minister has doubled the national debt. The price of a house has doubled. Now he is going to triple the carbon tax.

For the millions of people struggling to pay their now \$2,000 rent or their higher mortgage rates and for the millions using food banks, the Prime Minister has one message, which is that they have never had it so good. It is true for his friends like McKinsey, WE, the Foodies Media firm and their besties who do media training, but it is not true for anyone else. How do they let this happen?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that every time the opposition talks about climate change, which happens very rarely, they never talk about the cost to Canadians, such as the billions of dollars from hurricane Fiona or the billions of dollars from atmospheric rivers in B.C. that are killing people in Canada. They never talk about these costs to Canadians.

On this side of the House, we will fight climate change and we will work to support Canadians in this transition.

[Translation]

### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Metro's president confirmed that food prices will continue to rise in 2023. Even more families and seniors will be forced to rely on food banks to feed themselves.

After eight years under this Prime Minister, people are so desperate that some have even resorted to shoplifting. News outlet 24 heures asked people why they stole. Marlène said, "After I pay rent and bills, all I have left is \$80 to make it through two weeks".

How can the Prime Minister pay firms \$1,000 an hour when Marlène has to break the law to feed herself?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all share my colleague's concern for vulnerable Canadians who need a little help making ends meet.

What I do not understand is why the Conservatives keep voting against measures that will help those Quebeckers and Canadians across the country. They voted against benefits for workers and against enhancing benefits for seniors.

What is important is always being there for Canadians while also being fiscally responsible.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are against the millions of dollars being given to Liberal firms.

After eight years in power, this Prime Minister is admitting that he will never be competent. The proof is that he awarded an 80-year contract for consulting services to the Liberal firm McKinsey. Imagine if a government had granted a contract like that in 1943, in the middle of the Second World War. There were no personal computers or cell phones back then, and no Internet either.

How can this government predict that McKinsey will still be relevant in 2100? Could this be the Prime Minister's plan to ensure he gets a golden retirement?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for the Conservatives to come up with solutions to help Canadians deal with the difficult times we are currently facing with rising interest rates.

We know what the Conservatives' solutions are, because we have seen them in the past. It is "every person for themselves", with cuts to all the programs that are there to help those who really need it.

What we are saying to Canadians is that we will be there for them, especially with the Canada child benefit, which has helped lift 435,000 children out of poverty. Together we will get through this.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, McKinsey is under contract with the government until 2100. It has an open contract for IT services.

### Oral Questions

Just imagine. This government was unable to predict and manage the passport crisis last spring, but it can predict its IT needs until 2100. That is impressive.

Does this mean that the federal government can award McKinsey contracts for any amount without a call for tenders until 2100 and that taxpayers and their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have no say in the matter?

• (1440)

**Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to set the record straight. It is not a contract. It is more of a procurement arrangement. That means there is no financial agreement. It is more of a pre-qualification. Hundreds of suppliers already have the same arrangement. It is a long-standing practice that helps the government save money and time.

Our government will continue to uphold the highest standards of openness, transparency and financial accountability.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, 2100 is a long time from now. I am not sure which party will form the government, nor whether the parties here will still be around, but I do know two things: In 2100, Quebec will be a country and McKinsey will still have a contract or arrangement with Canada. This raises important questions. Regardless of which party governs here, regardless of who voters elect, McKinsey will still be there by virtue of a contract or an arrangement, as the minister says, without any clear mandate.

Is that what we want in a democracy?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** My colleague is right, Mr. Speaker. We do not know what party will be in office in 2100, but it will certainly not be the Bloc Québécois, which is once again trying to stir up trouble and sow division.

Do members know why Canada will still be united in 2100? It is because our strength is much greater than our differences. We can be different but stay united by communicating. That is where Canada's strength lies, despite what the Bloc Québécois wants to do.

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government is not very united with the public service, because this contract sends the public service a very bad message. An 80-year contract with McKinsey shows that the government does not recognize its own public service's expertise and that it does not intend to rely on that expertise in the long term. In other words, the government is telling us that it does not intend to develop expertise internally within the public service and that it would prefer to continue outsourcing the federal administration to the private sector.

Is that acceptable?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have just gone through some tough years with the pandemic. Public servants fulfilled their obligations. They helped us to get through it while ensuring that small and medium-sized businesses, workers and families were taken care of. We will continue to work with the public service and deliver on our priorities for Canadians, workers and businesses.

[*English*]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is one more sleep until the Prime Minister's good friend Dominic Barton appears before the government operations committee.

The Prime Minister has called Dominic Barton an “exceptional individual”. Dominic Barton's company fuelled the opioid crisis, advised Saudi autocrats on dissident crackdowns and helped Chinese state-owned companies build militarized islands in the South China Sea.

Yes, Dominic Barton certainly is “exceptional”, but why does the Prime Minister do so much for his ethically deficient friends and so little for struggling Canadians?

**Hon. Helena Jaczek (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we are committed to ensuring that government contracts stand up to the highest standards. We ensure value for money. We ensure quality of services for Canadians. We only contract and procure professional services to complement our professional public services when there are unexpected workload fluctuations and when there is a need for specific expertise. Of course, I will elaborate further when I attend the committee next week.

• (1445)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear complete non-responses from the government.

The Globe and Mail has reported that federal government contracts accounted for 10% of McKinsey gross revenues. I think McKinsey puts the gross into gross revenue. When Dominic Barton led McKinsey, they developed a plan to supercharge the opioid crisis that included rewarding pharmacists for overdose deaths. That is despicable.

Why did the Prime Minister funnel over \$100 million into this disgusting company?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in all things, the government ensures that the contracts it enters into are efficacious and get good value for money and ensure we deliver services to Canadians. The questions that are being posed are fair. We will get an opportunity in committee to be exhaustive and get answers. However, understand that Canada has a reputation around the world for the quality of the contracts it enters into. That is absolutely something we are committed to continue to ensure we get value for money for Canadians.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years under the Prime Minister, Canadians have never had it so bad, while Liberal lobbyists and high-priced consul-

tants have had it so good. The amount that the government has paid to McKinsey, formerly led by a personal friend of the Prime Minister, Dominic Barton, has gradually grown from \$50 million to over \$100 million. While Canadians are struggling, Liberal insiders are flourishing.

Will the Prime Minister tell us the real amount his government has paid to McKinsey?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have to take exception to this notion that Canadians have never done worse, and talking down our economy. I would point out that when the members opposite, the Conservatives, were in power, the economy had 1.5 million less jobs; there were over a million and a half more people in poverty; Canada was at the bottom of the G7 across about every single indicator and, in fact, had the worst growth rate in terms of GDP of any government since 1946. Next year, Canada will be number two, as projected by the IMF, in GDP growth. When Conservatives talk down our economy, they should be careful they do not get reflected back to their own record.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, inflation is at a 40-year high as a result of the government's inflationary spending. The government has handed over \$100 million in contracts to McKinsey & Company, with one contract not sunseting until the year 2100. While Canadians have never—

**The Speaker:** I need to interrupt for a second.

[*Translation*]

There seems to be an issue with the interpretation.

[*English*]

The interpretation is now functioning.

I would ask the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore to take it from the top, please.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Make it more comprehensible this time.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, inflation is at a 40-year high as a result of the government's inflationary spending. The government has handed over \$100 million in contracts to McKinsey & Company, with one contract not sunseting until the year 2100. While Canadians have never had it so bad, Liberal insiders and consultants have never had it so good.

Why does the Prime Minister and the government not come clean and tell us how much they promised Dominic Barton and McKinsey & Company?



*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what I am observing today is an interesting trend where the Conservatives are trying to create a boogymen to distract from the fact that we are working hard to make sure that families that are struggling get the supports they need to do well during challenging times. I am beginning to believe that the Conservatives actually view it to be in their interest to continue to have Canadians experience problems because they never introduce solutions.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to make investments that are going to reduce costs for child care, that are going to reduce costs for dental care, that are going to provide supports to low-income renters. With or without them, we will do what is necessary to make sure that people can feed their kids and keep a roof over the heads during difficult times across Canada and around the world.

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is not just the Conservatives who have questions. The New Democrats have questions too, and it is not just about McKinsey. While the Liberals have awarded \$160 million to McKinsey with this 100-year deal, companies such as McKinsey and Deloitte, which has ten times the amount of money, along with KPMG, are raking in billions of taxpayer dollars without accountability or transparency.

Canadians deserve to know exactly who is making decisions for the government, how much they are getting paid and to whom in the Liberal government they are connected. Will the government commit to extending the review to include all of its outsourcing contracts?

● (1450)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, Canada has a reputation around the world as having the highest degree of excellence in the way it conducts its business and contracts. That is something of which we are deeply proud.

I understand that members in opposition want to foment issues, but there is an excellent opportunity in committee to ask these questions directly. If members want to have real answers, then there will be the opportunity for mature, reasonable discussions during that period of time. However, talking down the way in which we conduct contracts does not behove anybody.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Ukraine, Iran, Haiti and Myanmar deserve our support. The government constantly pats itself on the back for adding individuals to the sanctions list, but yesterday we learned that the government had only seized one asset in six months. The Liberals claim sanctions are a key piece of our foreign response, but there is no enforcement, there is no investigation and there is almost no seizing of assets.

When will the Liberals stop the political theatre and start getting serious on our sanctions regime?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, we have imposed extremely strong sanctions against Russian oligarchs, Belarusian oligarchs, Haiti elite members and Iranians. We want to make sure that now we implement new legislation that we have passed, which will allow us to not only seize assets but to forfeit them.

I look forward to working with the member on this very important duty we have. We are the first country in the world doing this, and we will lead.

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**SENIORS**

**Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has highlighted long-standing and systemic challenges in Canada's long-term care system. Could the Minister of Seniors please update the House on how the government is ensuring that seniors have access to safe, reliable and high-quality care in our long-term care homes across the country?

**Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, seniors deserve the best quality of care rooted in dignity and respect regardless of where they live. That is why we welcome today the residence centre standards, released by HSO and CSA, that will make a tremendous difference in the quality of care seniors receive in long-term care homes.

I want to take a moment to thank both organizations for the extensive consultations they have done with Canadians, seniors, health care workers and care givers in creating these standards. We will continue to work with provinces and territories in their efforts to support long-term care homes in their jurisdictions.

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**ETHICS**

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, time and time again we see Liberal cabinet ministers breaking ethics laws to help their friends and Liberal insiders. The Liberals will funnel money and lucrative contracts to them. They will take illegal vacations. They will even interfere in criminal prosecution to help their friends. After eight years under the Prime Minister, Canadians have never had it so bad and Liberal insiders, friends and high-priced consultants have never had it so good.

When will the Liberals stop the corruption and start putting the needs of Canadians first?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, saying that Canadians have never had it worse is an absolutely ludicrous statement. There have been all kinds of instances in history where Canadians have faced hard times and dealt with difficult situations. Whether it was in great wars or in difficult economic storms that took the world, Canadians rose to those occasions and met them with strength and determination to build a stronger future thereafter. The notion, as Canadians are facing anxiety and as they are looking at global tumult, that they should think they are in the worst position they have ever been is simply irresponsible.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, throughout history and up until this point, governments were there for their people when they were facing hard times, but not those Liberals. They are there for insiders.

The Prime Minister helped his buddies get off criminal charges. The Prime Minister took an illegal vacation. The intergovernmental affairs minister gave lucrative contracts to family members. The Prime Minister's hand-picked finance minister tried to give a half-billion dollars to WE. The trade minister just gave tens of thousands of dollars to her bestie. Canadians are lined up at food banks; Liberal insiders are lined up to get rich.

What is it going to take for one of those corrupt ministers to resign?

• (1455)

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we all watch the language we use, and I would be interested to see if the member opposite would use a term like that outside the chamber. This chamber should be met with the same decorum inside as out.

The party opposite had the opportunity for 10 years to care about the issues it is now talking about. I would ask those members, if they said they were there, where they were for those 1.5 million Canadians who now have jobs who did not under the Conservative government. Where were they for over a million individuals who were in poverty and suffering when the Conservatives were in government and never talked about poverty?

It is a bit rich, and they should reflect on their rhetoric.

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**HEALTH**

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the last nine months the Liberals spent \$6.7 million for just 10 people to stay at a Calgary airport hotel. That is \$670,000 per person. There is no justification for this. COVID quarantine restrictions were eased long before this time. That \$670,000 could have bought a beautiful home in Calgary, a dream that, after eight years, is out of reach for so many people precisely because of Liberal waste like this.

I have two questions. How many other hotels did this happen at? Has anybody been fired for this waste?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are all very mindful of the terrible pain, the large number of

deaths and the even larger number of hospitalizations that we have seen in Canada over COVID-19. That is why our primary responsibility has been, and remains, to protect the safety and the health of Canadians, including the tens of thousands of people who had to access designated quarantine facilities. Because of these measures, and vaccinations in addition, we have saved together tens of thousands of lives and tens of billions of dollars in economic costs.

**The Speaker:** I just want to remind the hon. members how it works. One asks a question and one gets an answer. One does not continue to ask questions while the question is being answered. I just want to remind everyone that is how it works. It is making it very difficult to hear both sides. We hear one side very well, but the other side makes it very difficult.

The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

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**ETHICS**

**Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, Canadians have never had it so bad while Liberal lobbyists have never had it so good. Yet another lucrative government contract was handed out by the Liberal Minister of Diversity to line the pockets of insiders. This is insulting to Canadians and it has to stop.

Excuses do not pay the bills. How can this continue to happen without any consequence? Will the minister do the only honourable option he has left and pay the money back?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask what the member opposite means when they say that Canadians have never had it so bad. What would they say to Canadians who for the first time are having universal child care, are seeing their costs cut in half and that it is going to be \$10 a day? What would they say to those who have children and who, for the first time, are going to be able to make sure that they have dental care for every single child across the country? What would they say to the seniors, whom the Conservatives cut off by raising the eligibility age to 67 and are now collecting it at 65? What would they say to the 1.5 million people who have a job now, who did not when the Conservatives were in power?

[Translation]

## HEALTH

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on February 7, the first ministers will finally meet with the aim of increasing health transfers. This was not a foregone conclusion. As recently as mid-November, the Minister of Health was calling this request futile. After years of repeated calls from Quebec, the provinces and the Bloc Québécois, Ottawa is finally taking note of the crisis in the hospitals. Quebec and the provinces are reiterating their demand that the federal government cover 35% of the costs.

With one week to go before the meeting, will the minister finally agree to their demand?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this important question.

What all of the health ministers in Canada, including myself, are committed to is continuing to work together to look after the health of people and the health of workers in Canada.

Canadians have been through some very difficult times over the past few years. We know that we will have immense challenges in the coming years with the rising costs of technology and drugs, aging in the general population and among health care workers, and the challenges they will face.

We will continue to do this collaborative work together.

• (1500)

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government has been aware of health care funding needs for 28 months now but has not yet done anything about it. We do not need a working meeting on February 7. We need an agreement.

As of right now, 20,000 Quebeckers have been waiting for surgery for a year. We know that each three- to four-week delay in cancer surgery increases the rate of mortality by 6% to 8%.

When will this government understand that increasing health transfers is a vital matter of urgent importance?

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague, the Minister of Health, said, all Canadians are deeply concerned about this issue. We share that concern with all Canadians, including Quebeckers.

We have had important conversations with first ministers and ministers of health from across the country. This evening, I am meeting with the Premier of Nova Scotia. Tomorrow, I am meeting with the Premier of British Columbia. These conversations are promising.

We have consistently said we are prepared to provide more financial support to the provinces if we have assurances that we will get the results Canadians expect. That is exactly what we are going to do.

## Oral Questions

### JUSTICE

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Jonathan Gravel committed a violent sexual assault but avoided going to prison after eight years of legal proceedings. Instead, he received a 20-month suspended sentence that he can serve in the community. Why? It is because the Prime Minister, with the help of the Bloc Québécois, passed Bill C-5.

When the sentence was handed down, the Crown prosecutor, Alexis Dinelle, said, “Now [the Prime Minister] and the Minister of Justice will have to answer to the victims of sexual assault.”

Does the Prime Minister now realize that Bill C-5 is a monumental mistake?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we firmly believe that all victims of sexual assault deserve a justice system that treats them with dignity and respect.

I would like to recognize the resilience of this victim and of all victims of sexual assault. We recognize the devastating effects that sexual assault has on victims.

Serious crimes deserve serious consequences. My colleague knows full well that I cannot comment on a specific case, especially since the Quebec Court decision could be appealed by Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions, the DPCP.

We are awaiting his decision.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell the minister that until last November no judge could impose a sentence to be served at home for aggravated sexual assault. Again, with the complicity of the Bloc Québécois, this option now exists.

Crown attorney Alexis Dinelle also said, “What message are we sending to victims of sexual assault? I get the impression that we are now going backwards, and we will again allow conditional sentencing for sexual assault. Someone needs to be held accountable for this.”

Why does the Prime Minister prefer to make life easier for sex offenders instead of helping women?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what our hon. colleague is saying is just wrong.

Our government has taken action on several fronts to support victims of sexual assault and to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect.

Ever since Bill C-3 was passed, all new federally appointed judges must participate in sexual assault training.

Our government also made significant changes to Canadian sexual assault law with Bill C-51, one of the most progressive pieces of legislation in the world.

We will keep working to protect victims of sexual assault.

*Oral Questions***FIREARMS**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of Liberal incompetence, the government is targeting honest citizens, particularly hunters and farmers, in its fight against violent crime. These crimes are committed using illegal weapons acquired through smuggling networks run by organized crime.

The Liberal government will not solve this important safety issue for Canadian citizens by going after honest citizens.

When will the government stop targeting the tools used by honest, law-abiding hunters and farmers?

• (1505)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we promised Canadians that we would take action and tackle gun violence.

Our plan includes investing nearly half a billion dollars to stop illegal smuggling at the border, addressing the root causes of gun crime through the building safer communities fund, and introducing legislation that promotes the responsible use of firearms, specifically Bill C-21.

That is why I hope the Conservatives will reverse their position, support our investments and support common-sense legislation.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Ukraine have been courageously defending their country against Russia's unjustified war of aggression for almost a year now.

I recently had the opportunity to welcome the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Toronto to meet with members of the Ukrainian Canadian community. This visit demonstrated that Canada and its allies stand resolutely with the Ukrainian people.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us about the measures she has taken to punish those who condone the appalling actions of Putin and his regime?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Etobicoke Centre for his important question and also commend him for his excellent French.

I had the opportunity to welcome my British counterpart to Toronto a few weeks ago. Together with our allies, we will ensure that the Russian regime is punished for its actions.

We have already announced strong sanctions against more than 2,000 Russians and Belarusians who are close to Putin's regime. We also sanctioned the president himself. The Minister of National Defence has announced that heavy artillery will be sent to Ukraine, and we will continue to do more to help the Ukrainian people.

[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, violent crime is rising because of the actions of this Liberal government. Under eight years of the Prime Minister, Canada has become a more dangerous place. Police are putting the blame on Liberal Bill C-75 that mandated judges to grant bail to dangerous repeat offenders with minimal conditions. The consequences of this have been fatal.

When will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility for his failure to protect Canadians and apologize to the victims of his reckless legislation?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to be and to feel safe. We all have a role to play in protecting our communities.

The laws on bail are clear. Detaining an accused person is justified only if it is necessary to protect the safety of the public. As my colleague knows, provinces and territories and, of course, police forces are also responsible for the enforcement of bail conditions, and we are providing resources to support them.

We remain open to good ideas and proposals from our provincial and territorial counterparts and the opposition to reforming our bail system, including other parts of the criminal justice regime.

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**FIREARMS**

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. We have police officers dying on the front lines every day in this country. Now police are demanding that the Prime Minister take action to keep dangerous repeat offenders off our streets, but instead he has decided to punish law-abiding firearms owners by taking away their hunting rifles.

After eight years of failure, the Prime Minister is desperate to distract Canadians with his divisive and flawed hunting gun ban. When will he stop attacking law-abiding firearms owners and start protecting Canadians from dangerous repeat offenders?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, and I hope all members will have seen, this government is engaging with hunters, trappers, first nations and indigenous groups to make sure that their experiences are woven into the good work that we are doing under Bill C-21, which, of course, is to target those guns that have been used in mass killings.

We couple that with the work that we are doing to stop illegal smuggling at the border, which was \$450 million. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against it. We couple that with the work that we are doing to prevent gun crime, a \$250-million building safer communities fund. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against it.

Look beyond the words and look at their actions. They need to reverse their course and support the government's work to keep Canadians safe.

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#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Beijing's military is threatening Taiwan and harassing neighbours from India to Japan. Beijing's military has a university, the National University of Defence Technology, whose motto is "strengthen the armed forces". That is why this university was blacklisted by the Obama administration in 2015. The minister's guidelines on Canada's research and national security clearly are not working, because the government continues to fund university partnerships with this university.

When will the minister protect this country's national security and that of our closest allies, and issue a policy directive to ban the funding of university partnerships with this university?

• (1510)

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been clear in the Indo-Pacific strategy. When it comes to China, we need to be eyes wide open, and that is why we need to make sure that our national security is always protected. That is why the Minister of Innovation is working on it. Not only that, we will be working with universities and with provinces and territories to make sure that this national security lens is imposed at all times.

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#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, Canada signed a statement of international public support for the clean energy transition, ending new support for the international unabated fossil fuel energy sector by the end of 2022. In December, our government announced the Government of Canada's implementation of this commitment with the release of the policy guidelines.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change provide an update to the House on the implementation of this commitment?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the important work that she is doing on the environment committee on its fossil fuel subsidy study.

The implementation of this commitment was widely received across the country and by many environmental organizations, including Environmental Defence, and they applauded the announcement. By ending new, direct public support for the international unabated fossil fuel energy sector, Canada will ensure its investments

abroad are aligned with its domestic and international climate goals, which means more investment in clean energy and renewables.

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#### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Wabano family of Peawanuck lost a beautiful child in a house fire this weekend, and we mourn with them and grieve with the 10 people who have been left homeless. In 2021, I wrote to the minister warning about the lack of fire protection for the Weenusk Cree. That warning was ignored, and now a child is dead. It is unconscionable that any community in this country is left without basic fire protection.

To the minister, I have a simple question: Will she stand today and promise to commit to build a fire hall and give emergency resource support to the people of Peawanuck so they can live in safety?

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I send my deepest condolences to the family and the entire community for the loss of the young girl due to a fire incident in Peawanuck.

Minister Hajdu spoke with Chief Hunter on Sunday to express her condolences and confirmed that Indigenous Services would be able to coordinate supports for this particular community. We will provide more updates as more information can be confirmed and as officials continue their discussions with the community.

**The Speaker:** I would like to remind members that, when we are referring to a member, we are to refer to them by their title or by their riding, and not by their proper name. I understand it is emotional and it is very difficult, but we have to try to maintain the decorum of the chamber.

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#### TAXATION

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the rich are getting richer while everyone else is losing out, says a recent Oxfam report.

In Canada, the rich and powerful are making record profits while working people and people on fixed incomes fall further behind. This did not just happen. Liberals are refusing to make the rich pay their fair share. Despite Conservative rhetoric, they are keen to let the ultrarich off the hook, too. One thing is clear, whether Liberal or Tory, it is the same old story.

*Points of Order*

It is time for a windfall tax on oil and gas. It is time to increase the corporate tax. It is time to go after tax cheats in our country. It is time to step up for working people and people on fixed incomes. Will the Liberals step up?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to everyone in this chamber that everyone pays their fair share of taxes. That is why we decreased taxes for the middle class by increasing them for the top 1%.

We actually introduced a 15% recovery dividend to banks and insurance companies, which is going to bring in about 4 billion dollars' worth of income. We have put in place a permanent 1.5% tax on profits over \$100 million. This has allowed us to make life more affordable for Canadians. It has also allowed us to lower taxes for small businesses.

**The Speaker:** That is all the time we have for Oral Questions.

We have a number of points of order.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Mr. Speaker, after consultations with the parties in the House, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move that, given that the rise of far-right and associated violent extremism led to the attempted insurrection in the United States, the House condemn recent comments made by Fox News personality Tucker Carlson, in which he suggested that U.S. Armed Forces should “liberate” Canada from the Prime Minister.

• (1515)

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORDER PAPER QUESTION

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to draw your attention to a procedural matter relating to Question No. 974, which I submitted on November 4, 2022.

For the sake of time, I will spare reading the text of the question into the record, but my point of order relates to a passage found on page 523 of Bosc and Gagnon, which states:

While oral questions are posed without notice on matters considered to be of an urgent nature, written questions are placed on the Order Paper after due notice, with the intent of seeking from the Ministry detailed, lengthy or technical information related to “public affairs”...Members may request that the Ministry respond within 45 calendar days, generally by adding a sentence to that effect either before or after the text of the question, or by so indicating to the Clerk when submitting the question.

Standing Order 39(5)(b) states:

If such a question remains unanswered at the expiration of the said period of 45 days, the matter of the failure of the ministry to respond shall be deemed referred to the appropriate standing committee. Within five sitting days of such a referral the Chair of the committee shall convene a meeting of the committee to consider the matter of the failure of the ministry to respond.

The key word here is “unanswered”. I indicated my desire to have the question answered in 45 days, and at this point the question cannot be legitimately considered answered. To date, the government has failed to provide any answer on the substance of key aspects of my question. Due to this, I would argue that, per the Standing Orders, after 45 days my question remains unanswered and should be deemed to not have a response.

Before section 5(b) of Standing Order 39 came into effect in 2001, governments routinely ignored the 45-day deadline to answer questions. Following the adoption of this rule, the government began to respect the 45-day deadline. However, it appears that the government has found a way to circumvent this rule to thwart the intended protection offered by Standing Order 39(5)(b).

Your rulings have established that access to information from the government is a fundamental privilege of a parliamentarian. It is also a critical aspect of the functioning of our system of democracy. When the government flaunts its responsibility to provide this information, the system fails, and this is why, in a related matter, many members of the Press Gallery are raising concerns about the breakdown of the access to information system requests.

Coming back to the matter at hand in this place, my point of order simply asks you to rule that, when the government substantively ignores the substance of an Order Paper question, it should be considered a failure to answer for the purposes of Standing Order 39(5)(b). That way the government's refusal to answer a written question can be referred to a committee for review.

**The Speaker:** I want to thank the hon. member for her point of order. We will look into it and come back.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When the member for Calgary Midnapore was making her intervention today, there was a problem with interpretation and you asked her to start again. When you did that, the member for Timmins—James Bay yelled out, loud enough for us to hear way down here in the House, “Make it more comprehensible this time.”

My point of order is that the member for Timmins—James Bay should apologize to the member for Calgary Midnapore. It is time that men in this place stop shouting down women who have a strong and articulate point to make.

**The Speaker:** What I would also like to do is remind all members to stop shouting each other down during question period and during debates. That is something that everyone should take a lesson from.

I thank the member for bringing that up.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1520)

[*English*]

### CANADA EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if my colleague will recall, in the last federal election there were 338 Conservative candidates who went around espousing what the former leader of the Conservative Party said, and that was that he would rip up a national child care agreement, just as we were proposing it.

Could he provide his thoughts on what many might see as a bit of hypocrisy?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, indeed 338 Conservatives did run in the last election to scrap the plan we are here to enshrine into legislation today. As a matter of fact, in a French language debate, the member for Durham said that there would be a transition, over one year, from this plan to a tax credit.

As I said in my speech, what we see happening routinely with Conservatives is that their default program is a tax credit. All they want to do is provide a standardized universal tax credit because they think that is the only solution.

Conservatives find themselves in a very difficult situation now. They are trying to wrap their head around how they can be critical of a wildly successful program that the federal government has set up and, at the same time, try to show their support for Canadians who genuinely want to see this. What we will end up having is pretty much a unanimous vote in favour of this bill. The Conservatives will do an about-face from what their position was in the last election, and they will see that this is, in fact, an extremely important program for Canadians.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, clause 8 of Bill C-35 discusses funding commitments. It states that the Government of Canada would engage with “Indigenous governing bodies and other Indigenous entities that represent the interests of an Indigenous group and its members.” When the previous child care agreements were signed, they were done between the provinces and territories and the federal government, respectively.

Is the government really prepared to engage with first nations communities who want more jurisdiction over their child care needs? This is a monumental task, and I am not sure whether the Department of Indigenous Services Canada would be able to complete this in two to three years.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I think that, if this government has proven one thing when it comes to that very important relationship, it is that we do want to see indigenous communities

### Government Orders

have the autonomy to make the decisions that are required to properly care for, in this case, children.

I strongly believe that, even though the member might find the timelines to be tight, it is important for this to be discussed at committee. I think that this speaks to why this needs to get to committee, so that the discussions can be had. Questions that he has can be posed to the department officials and those responsible to get to the bottom of it, so we can deliver on this very important part of the agreement.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start by agreeing with the member for Kingston and the Islands that this bill is incredibly important and it will benefit parents in my community, just as it will for those in his.

That being said, I do want him to know that child care providers in my community, such as those at the YMCA of Three Rivers, are concerned about hiring and retaining talented early childhood educators.

As I am sure he knows, the federal government's deal with the Province of Ontario only provides a wage floor of \$18 an hour, at a time when the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario is calling for one of at least \$25 an hour. This is at a time when we need almost 15,000 new childhood educators in Ontario alone by 2025.

Could he talk about measures that could be put in the legislation, or other actions he and the governing party could take to address this significant gap?

• (1525)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for paying individuals and child care professionals would largely fall under the purview of the provincial government, but there is, to his point, an opportunity within the framework of the legislation to enshrine some measures to encourage the growth of the sector.

He is absolutely right when he says that our communities will benefit from this tremendously. My understanding is that 92% of child care facilities that are eligible in the province have already signed on. The YMCA of Eastern Ontario and Rob Adams, the CEO, as I said in my speech, commented specifically about how important this program was. I am looking forward to the implementation and the development of the program in future years, and so is the minister.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe it is imperative for our country that every person in this place agree on one thing: We have to equitably value the labour of child care in all its forms. It is through that principle that I believe people in this place should be considering amendments to this bill.

I want to speak about why this bill gets us part of the way but does not talk about the equitable value of the labour of child care. We need to do better. Better can always be achieved.

*Government Orders*

This bill does not address the lack of child care spaces across the country in an adequate way. We have to look at how we can work within the confines of our regionally and demographically diverse nation to see how child care is being undertaken and to see how we can incentivize people to undertake that activity. For example, not every person has access to a spot that would be considered under this bill. Some people look to extended family to provide child care or private home day cares, and some people would not have access to that with this bill.

As I have been listening to the debate, many colleagues have raised concerns about people who do shift work or who are part of the gig economy. Their hours do not neatly overlay with the way these child care spaces would be structured. I believe one of my colleagues from the NDP raised issues this morning about whether this bill adequately addresses indigenous child care needs, which are sensitive. This bill does not really address any of those things.

If we are going to talk about child care, we have to do more than just look at one frame of reference. That frame of reference is important for sure, but if we are only talking about that frame of reference, what happens to the people who are planning to have children or who are looking for child care right now, are struggling and do not necessarily fit in the very prescriptive box this bill puts together? They do not feel like they are part of the bigger vision. That is why we need to amend this bill, and I hope that happens.

There is another context this bill needs to be studied in. We say “affordable child care” or “affordable day care”, but the reality is that life is not affordable for many Canadians right now. I want to take a slightly different approach to explaining how the cost of living crisis could seriously affect our economy and where child care fits into this.

Right now, Canada's national fertility rate, when we factor out immigration, is about 1.4, and the natural rate of replacement of a population is about 2.1. This phenomenon is not unique to Canada or to any country in the world. In fact, we are seeing a rapid global decline of fertility rates across the board.

For example, I believe China now has a 1.1 fertility rate. China's fertility rate is actually lower than Canada's rate. When people are looking at China's long-term economic growth forecast or the ability of China to maintain its continuous growth, the lack of children is factoring into the economic equation. We have the same issue here in Canada.

The other phenomenon we see in Canada is that immigration is very important to our country, and we need to ensure we have adequate processes to incentivize immigration, to welcome people to Canada and to integrate them into our social and economic fabric. However, we are also seeing over time, through studies out of the U.S., that immigrant populations that have traditionally bolstered fertility rates within countries are seeing declines in their fertility rates as well.

• (1530)

When we are looking at child care affordability and the cost of living, we have to understand that people make a decision to have a child based on a wide variety of factors. It is a very sensitive topic, but affordability and the availability of child care is one of the big

reasons. If we are just putting child care into the box we have in this bill and are not seeking consensus to look at valuing the labour of child care in all its forms, we are missing the plot here for people who need child care right now. We need to be talking about very urgently as a Parliament how we incentivize people to have children without leaving women behind and while progressing on issues of gender equity.

This is a very tough, very emotionally charged subject that many people will have a lot of feelings over based on their frame of reference and the personal experience in their lives. Frankly, the decision to have a child is about one person and one person alone in the context of a family. If we want more people to have children, we need to incentivize people so that when we are looking at all of the factors that somebody considers when deciding whether they are going to start a family, those factors are taken care of.

One of the things this bill does not consider, which I hope this place will sensitively and from a cross-partisan perspective look at, is the failure of our immigration system to process parents and grandparents' applications. Right now, I believe the wait time in that particular stream is over 38 months. That is just the service standard; we know it is a lot higher. We know there are a lot of Canadians who want to bring extended families here either through that stream or through a super visa in order to provide child care. I hope the committee that studies this bill looks at that as well. We cannot be talking about child care in a country as diverse as ours without looking at ways that we can make it easier for people to have their family engaged in that if they choose to be.

We also need to make sure that we have affordable child care spots, as this bill starts to lay out. However, we need to look at how those spaces affect people who cannot access them due to their work schedules. That is something this bill does not address.

The other thing this bill does not address is the fact that, at the same time that we are looking at child care and looking at a decline in fertility in our country, we have an aging population. On one hand we have people of a certain generation who are trying to figure out how to have child care, and at the same time, they are starting to ask the question of how to care for aging parents.

We cannot have the conversation about child care without talking about elder care for all of the reasons that have already been raised in debate, particularly around the issue of staffing, burnout and early child care educators. It is not just early child care educators who we are lacking. It is also people who are willing to be caregivers in the broadest sense of the word. We need to talk about labour and valuing the labour of child care. Again, this bill is a start, but what it does is put our perception of the response to this crisis into very narrow terms. We need to be looking at this a lot broader.



*Government Orders*

I also believe that for us to allow for gender equity and allow people to look at starting a family, should they so choose, we cannot do that without understanding that not everybody in this country will want to access programs under this system. That does not mean people should not have access to that system. It should not mean that these people are left in the dark without a solution. It should not mean that their labour is not valued.

• (1535)

I know somebody very close to me who chose to have a child at a very young age. They made that decision because people circled around them and made child care happen. How do we value the labour of those people? We understand that our country is diverse and is not homogenous, so how do we meet this need, particularly in the context of the fertility crisis that our country is facing?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what is significant is that in Bill C-35, we are establishing a fundamental, universal early learning and child care program that would be a first in the history of Canada. We are saying that in working with provinces, territories and indigenous communities, there would be public, non-profit child care that is affordable and provides the type of quality care that Canadians want. This will enable women in particular to get into the workforce if they choose to do that, or volunteer or upgrade their educational opportunities. All sorts of wonderful opportunities would be created here, and it is modelled off what we saw in the province of Quebec.

Would the member not agree that this is an absolutely critical aspect of furthering, in a very significant way, child care and enabling women in particular to get more opportunities in the future?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that women should have more opportunity and that overcoming barriers for women to participate in society, writ large, is something this place should be urgently seized with. However, I take issue with the characterization of this bill as providing universal access to child care, because it does not. Not every Canadian who wants to get a spot would get a spot under this program. The fact that this program has not been means-tested is something that should be considered in a committee study.

We should not be trying to say that this is universal when it is not. If we are going to use the term “universal”, we have to understand that we must value the labour of child care no matter where it happens, be it in a state-sponsored space, in a private home or by parents providing it at home. Those are all labours of equal value, and they are all legitimate choices that should be open to all Canadians. Framing this bill as universal when it is not is the point we need to move on in order to improve it.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the things the member said, which I have heard other Conservative members say today, is that the bill would impose a particular way of doing child care. They particularly reference shift work and things like that as somehow being excluded from the bill. However, I was not able to find anything in the bill that prescribes a particular time of day that child care is to be offered by the centres that may receive federal funding through this legislation or the agreements.

In fact, one of the guiding principles in the bill, at paragraph 7(1)(c), says:

(c) support the provision of early learning and child care programs and services that are inclusive and that respect and value the diversity of all children and families and respond to their varying needs

As a New Democrat, when I read that I think it is a very obvious nod to shift work and families with parents who have different types of jobs and who are underserved by the current system. The way we are going to get this done is to have a strategy that incorporates those things.

I see language in the bill that talks about the need to meet those varying and diverse needs, so I wonder if the member could please point me to the part in the bill where the straitjacket that she and some of her caucus colleagues have alluded to exists. I cannot find it.

• (1540)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the paragraph my colleague just alluded to would benefit centres that currently operate on a regular nine-to-five schedule. That is just the reality. If we look to where most of the funding would go, it would be to those centres. If my colleague is concerned and actually wants to address this concern with members of the House, he should suggest an amendment at committee stating that a portion of these funds should go to something that provides spots for shift workers.

As much as the member is saying there is a straitjacket, the way the funding mechanism works right now is that funding will largely go to traditional state-run day cares, and I believe we need more flexibility to acknowledge a changing workforce and changing economy. I know how bureaucracies work. Funding would go to the system that is set up. We need to be incentivizing innovation and meeting the diversity of our country by spelling out changes that need to happen.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today for the first time in 2023 on behalf of the good people of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I hope you have been able to have a very restful holiday season with your family, and that all members of the House have been able to do the same and come back recharged for what I am sure will be a very busy session.

Over the course of the last month, I had an opportunity to connect with my constituents, being away from this place and being at their places, at their doors, and hearing what is top of mind. Not surprisingly, one of the things that is top of mind for most people is affordability challenges right now, with the cost of housing and groceries going up. This is putting a real burden on families.

### *Government Orders*

For many years now, one of the largest costs for families has been child care. In a riding like my own, one of the fastest growing in all of Canada, and particularly the Sea to Sky region, which has grown by about 20% over the last five years, this is a big concern. For example, in 2021 there were 5,100 children under 12 years old in the Sea to Sky region who were in need of child care, and there were only 1,100 child care spaces.

I often hear of families waiting for two or more years to get a spot. Meanwhile, the cost of child care ranges between \$85 and \$100 per day in many cases. Even with the income-tested Canada child benefit we brought in, which puts up to \$7,000 per child back in the pockets of Canadians, families are still being stretched. As a result, many families in my riding are forced to pay up to \$1,800 a month for child care or balance dual workdays caring for their children while trying to earn a living. This is a burden that negatively impacts not only the economy and the parents but the children as well.

This is why our government created the Canada-wide early learning and child care system through budget 2021. To highlight how much of a priority it is for my province, B.C. was the first province to sign on to this agreement in the summer of 2021. Just last month, we were able to announce that child care fees have already been reduced by an average of 50% to \$20 a day in B.C. and will average \$10 a day by 2025-26. This is already saving average B.C. families \$6,000 a year per child and will help them save over \$9,000 per year per child by the end of 2025-26. Given how families are now being squeezed by global inflation, this relief could not come at a more important time.

However, it is not just about the cost of child care. Access is just as important, particularly in fast-growing areas like my own. It is important to note that 40,000 new spaces will be built through this agreement with B.C., and in fact over 12,000 have already been built. Budget 2022 invested an additional \$625 million to accelerate this process.

The benefits of this policy are wide-ranging. By allowing both parents to return to the workforce, we are unlocking the economic potential of thousands of parents, most of them women, who have not been able to participate fully in the workforce due to an inability to access quality affordable day care.

Independent studies have shown that this, alone, can help the economy grow by as much as 1.2%, in addition to improving the quality of life for families. A range of studies have also shown that for every dollar spent on early childhood education, the broader economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return. Just about all leading economists agree there is no measure that would increase our GDP more than this.

I am excited there are already a number of child care facilities in my riding now offering \$10-a-day child care. On the Sunshine Coast, there are ESPRIT Daycare and Huckleberry Childcare in Gibsons, Little Scholars Child Care in west Sechelt and Sunshine Coast Tiny Tots day care in Sechelt. Just last year, Sea to Sky Community Services in Squamish began offering \$10-a-day care. In West Vancouver, the owners of KidiKare told me that they are excited to offer \$10-a-day care, among many other facilities that are now offering the same.

There remain major challenges in delivering the child care people need. In areas like Squamish and Pemberton, spaces are an issue, and we need the province to deliver more spaces there under our agreement. In fact, spaces are so slim right now that I have heard stories of folks driving 40 minutes from Squamish to West Vancouver just to put their kids into day care.

In other places like Whistler, the Sunshine Coast and West Vancouver, ECE workers are badly needed, so we need to continue to work with educational institutions like Capilano University on the north shore to graduate more ECE workers and to bring in qualified ECE workers from around the world.

• (1545)

Clearly, this policy is already making a real difference for families in my riding and across the country, but we know we are living in an uncertain world right now. With the spectres of ever-worsening climate change and international conflict, many people are concerned about the future. With the rising cost of living all around the world, I know many young people who are thinking twice about having children.

It is important that, as parliamentarians, we provide peace of mind about what the future holds. Bill C-35 is so important because it would assure current and future parents that they would not be left in the lurch with high child care prices. In fact, it would do the same for provinces, territories, indigenous peoples, child care operators and others.

The legislation sets out our vision for a Canada-wide system where all families have access to high-quality, affordable and inclusive early learning and child care, no matter where they live, today and into the future. It would enshrine the principles of the Canada-wide early learning and child care system into federal law and commit to maintaining long-term funding for provinces, territories and indigenous peoples. It would make sure the government remained accountable for continuing to follow through on this promise by creating an independent national advisory council to provide expert advice to the government on all matters related to early learning and child care. It would also require the federal government to publicly report on all federal investments and progress being made towards a truly Canada-wide system.

*Government Orders*

While I do not have kids, I want to end by discussing a story of someone who does: my sister, Berkley. She and her husband, Sean, have three boys: my six-year-old nephew, Haiden, and my twin two-year-old nephews, Sawyer and Beckham. I love these three boys to bits. Members can imagine what it is like to have three young boys running around and all the chaos that comes along with that, but it is also important to think of the cost that it would create for three young kids to be in child care. If someone is paying \$1,800 a month per child, like many parents are in my riding, then the cost of child care for three kids alone exceeds the average income of a British Columbian. Things like these have led many parents in my riding and across the country to leave the workforce, which also greatly impacts our economy.

The announcement last month that fees were being cut in half, on average, has been an absolute game-changer for my sister and her family. Instead of paying \$2,200 a month for the twins to access child care, she is now paying \$1,260. She has been able to go back into the workforce, and not only that, but also to now pursue her dream job. Just as she has always been there to look after and care for me in my life, she is now working as a postpartum doula so that she can care for other new parents throughout the region.

Not only has this made a huge difference in her whole family's life, but now, she is also able to help other families. The presence of other doulas like her is alleviating the burden on our health care system. These doulas are reducing stress, depression and the number of physical injuries among expectant and new parents, who are going through major changes, some of the most emotional in their lives.

This is just one very personal example of the impact of affordable and accessible child care. Through Bill C-35, we would ensure that families would not be at risk of having access to child care cancelled by government, now or in the future. More and more spaces would be created, and more spaces would become \$10 per day. Throughout the process, there would be transparent oversight of the implementation of this agreement.

I can see my time is running out here. I look forward to the questions from my colleagues, and I look forward to having this bill passed through this process into committee so we can move it a step forward in becoming law in our country.

● (1550)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed working with the colleague across the way when I was under the shadow minister of tourism. We talked about the wait-lists. This legislation would help a lot of families that are currently in day cares and signed up for this agreement, but there are still wait-lists that are years long. One of the issues is having access to private day cares. We must have entrepreneur or small business-owned home day cares to meet the demand. Parents need to have choice.

Does the member opposite believe the legislation should be strengthened to have representation from small business owners or entrepreneurs on the national council? As it stands right now, in the legislation, there is zero representation from that sector; I believe it is greatly needed to meet the demand of parents.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question, because we know it is not just about the cost of child care. It is about the ability to access child care. Particularly in fast-growing regions it is a huge challenge. Part of it is the creation of spaces, but the other thing we need to talk about is making sure we have the workforce to do that. This is a challenge that there is no silver bullet or easy solution for. As we move ahead with policies like these, we need to consult broadly and to make sure that we do get the best ideas.

As we implement this new system, we will be working very closely with all of the provinces, territories and indigenous groups to make sure that it is fit for purpose and that it meets the needs for what the system is today as we look forward to the system that we want in the future, which is a publicly accessible system of non-profit operators. As we move in that direction, we need to work with all those working in it and make sure that we have the best system in place.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech.

Unfortunately, I have to remind him again that anything to do with family policy and education falls solely within provincial jurisdiction.

This bill is full of good intentions, but the Liberal government should stick to issues under its jurisdiction. Why does it not manage its affairs properly, instead of coming to meddle in our jurisdictions yet again?

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague's question.

We know that child care has to look different in different parts of the country. We need to work with the provinces to implement the system that works best for them. That is under their jurisdiction.

That said, the federal government has a role to play in assisting the provinces and making sure that people have access to the care they need. That is why we looked at the Quebec model, which is a good one. Each province is a little bit different, and that is why we have different agreements in place across the country.

● (1555)

[*English*]

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, New Democrats welcome any movement forward on child care in Canada. We have been pushing this for the last 30 years, ever since the Liberals started promising it.

*Government Orders*

I wonder if the member could comment on the benefit not only to young families and women trying to enter the workforce, but to businesses in the community. In my riding, one of the main problems in getting labour for businesses is housing. If we can access a labour force that already has housing, for instance women at home who need child care to enter the workforce, it is a huge benefit to the economy as a whole.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Mr. Speaker, much like the member for Peterborough—Kawartha, I have enjoyed working with the member in the context of tourism as well. Both of our ridings have a big tourism industry, and just like housing is important to have a workforce employed there, it is similarly important for ECE workers. We need to make sure that as we move forward with this agreement there is adequate housing in place. If we do not have that, then of course we are not going to be able to house the people we need to work in the spaces that we are creating.

Absolutely, I see these two tracks moving simultaneously. That is why we developed the national housing strategy, so that we can deploy the type of housing that we need in the country and we are able to solve the housing challenges, particularly for frontline workers and those who are so critical to making sure that our economy and our country function.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I have sensed in this debate a misunderstanding across the aisle of the difference between child care, as in anyone possible available to look after the kid, and the concept underpinning this act, which is early learning and child care on enhanced childhood development.

I wonder if the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country would care to comment on this.

**Mr. Patrick Weiler:** Mr. Speaker, there have been lots of misinterpretations about this piece of legislation, about what is in it and what is not.

What this is really about is making sure we are providing high-quality, affordable, inclusive and accessible child care right across the country. It looks very different in each place. That is why I think it is really important that we get this right.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, I love being in the chamber probably more than any professional activity I have undertaken, but I am actually at home in my community because I am celebrating the birth of my daughter, Launa Grace, who joined us on January 18, not even two weeks ago. I am pleased to announce that I have a healthy baby girl. She is the new joy in my life.

Over the last two days, I have very much appreciated a very comprehensive debate from all political parties on a very important subject, a subject that, for every parent, is probably the closest to our hearts, and that is the well-being of our children. Like many of the speakers who have shared personal stories, I have my own as well.

I have a three-year-old son in a licensed, registered day care facility. Since the agreement with British Columbia was signed, my fees went down approximately \$450 in December. I know that many of my constituents are very appreciative of the decrease in fees, because the cost of living is almost insurmountable for many

of them. I acknowledge the benefit, that the contract signed with the Province of British Columbia in July 2022 has made a moderate improvement for many young families struggling to make sense of the challenges they face today.

Indeed, child care is challenging. Many families do not have access to the type of facility that I do, and many who do, many parents who work in shift work, understand that raising a child is not only nine-to-five. It might be relying on neighbours, like I have to rely on my neighbours to come over in the mornings when my wife starts work at 6 a.m., and the nanny I have to employ at times when I am in Ottawa and my wife is left alone with our children or has other professional commitments. It is the grandparents as well, who play such a vital role in the upbringing of many children in many families across Canada. Also, it is the wonderful early learning and child care staff, who are so important to my kids. In fact, this very morning, my son Declyn and I went to his old child care facility. He was able to give a hug to one of his old teachers, because that relationship is so important to Declyn.

All that said, I am still at a loss as to why the government is putting forward Bill C-35 when the funding agreements have already been reached with the Province of British Columbia and the other provinces and territories in Canada. I looked through the bill quite comprehensively yesterday, and I figured, to add to the debate so far, I would point out a few of the discrepancies or points I believe the government should look at a little more closely once the bill gets to the committee stage and is studied in further detail.

The first point I would like to raise relates to indigenous participation. In July 2022, the Government of Canada actually reached a \$40-billion settlement with indigenous people over past discretions of the Government of Canada failing to meet its obligations to indigenous children in respect to Jordan's principle.

Bill C-35 states that any future negotiations would include separate negotiations to uphold the nation-to-nation commitment to reconciliation. On that point, I would encourage the government members to look specifically at the preamble and paragraphs 5(a) and 5(b), and whether the government would actually be able to uphold its commitment to reach individual agreements with each respective first nation, Inuit and Métis community or entity.

*Government Orders*

The second point relates to the funding commitments. In clause 8, there is no specific dollar amount actually outlined for the future negotiations of agreements between provinces, territories and indigenous communities. I reference this because the government states in the bill that it would undertake negotiations on a nation-to-nation basis. If the government actually wants to divest responsibility, finally, as many indigenous communities have asked to have control over child and family services, which I understand would include child care, the government needs to get to work today, because it would not be able to reach those responsibilities accordingly.

• (1600)

The third point I would like to raise is about geographic equality or, I might add, inequality. In paragraph 6(a), under “Declaration”, the government commits to inclusive and high-quality early learning and child care programs and services where one lives. In many rural and remote communities and indigenous reserves, child care simply does not exist.

My constituents in rural communities do not have access to the government program that I do in Abbotsford and Mission. That is problematic. In fact, one young mother in the community of Boston Bar stated that she is effectively going to have to cut back on her small business because she is having a child and none of the government programs being discussed here today are accessible to her and her family. We need to do better. If the government is really serious about the universality it spoke about when it first introduced these agreements, it needs to spend more time looking at the availability of child care in remote and rural communities.

One aspect of the bill that I am very perturbed about is clause 9, which would establish 18 new federal government positions on a national council, with salaries that will be decided at a later point by the Governor in Council. In my opinion, the creation of a new council undermines the role of provinces as the primary level of government responsible for child care and, second, it undermines the valuable contributions of public servants at Employment and Social Development Canada. Many public servants worked for years to reach these agreements. They have connections with the provinces and stakeholders across Canada. The public service has the ability to do what a national council would and to provide the requisite advice to the minister in advance of future negotiations in 2026.

What I am fearful of is that the creation of this new advisory council is just another attempt by the government to create plum positions for Liberal partisans to get paid by the government and appointed solely by the government. We should not undermine the valuable contributions of the public service to provide the necessary advice in advance of future negotiations by the Government of Canada and the respective provinces and territories.

Finally, I will end on a note regarding the nature of child care for so many families. As a politician, I have to admit that my wife takes on many of the primary responsibilities that relate to child care due to the nature of my job and the time that I am away. This Christmas season we were sitting down with another family that had a similar experience. We also shared a song by Dolly Parton and the movie about working nine to five. My wife quipped that ac-

tually she is working more like five to nine. That is the experience of many women across this country. Their jobs start the moment they wake up in the morning and a lot of them are working until the moment they go to bed.

We need to ensure that child care programs and facilities give women the choices they need that account for shift work and the nature of professional work today so that they can participate in the economy in the way they feel best for themselves and their children accordingly.

• (1605)

**Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating the member and wishing him the best with the new addition to his family.

I am from a Mi'kmaq reserve, a first nations community. The member talked a lot about the need to ensure that when we talk about child care from coast to coast to coast, it also includes indigenous communities. I agree with the member that far too often when we talk about these great deals with the provinces, the provincial premiers kick it back to the federal jurisdiction to handle.

Does the member not agree that, first of all, we should be ensuring that even a first nations community is able to access \$10-a-day child care? I would also say to the member that when he is talking about first nations communities, it is important not to get confused and say that these are nations. First nations communities make up part of our nations. I am part of a Mi'kmaq nation of 35 different communities and each of those communities is not a specific nation, but rather a first nations community that belongs to a greater nation.

I wonder if the member would comment on those two points I have raised.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the points by the member for Sydney—Victoria. Indeed, I represent multiple first nations and 31 indigenous communities, and I appreciate his pointing out that very important difference.

One of the key points I want to make today is that the agreement between the Province of British Columbia and the federal government excludes many of the indigenous communities that I represent from participating in this program. In fact, it is almost as if there is a have and a have-not nature of what is child care today. I, as a high-income earner, get access to a government program that is not available to my indigenous constituents in their respective communities in a way that I believe it should be.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on the birth of his baby girl on January 18, a little Capricorn who will be quite a character, I am sure.

*Government Orders*

Anyone thinking about child care will look to Quebec's example. Its system has been in place for 25 years. Early learning is essential, and that goes for all children, whether they are Quebecers or Canadians.

I know that the provinces already have child care set up by the government, but that is not the case everywhere in Canada.

Why does the Conservative Party get all up in arms about the Quebec model and say it is not equitable?

• (1610)

[English]

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I ever said that the model in Quebec was not equitable. I did visit La Pocatière this summer and I actually went to a child care facility when I was in the province. As in British Columbia, there are some in the provincially regulated programs and some outside. In many cases, the families outside of the provincially regulated programs want into the regulated programs because it would mean a material difference in their monthly budget. In some senses, unless we can actually say with 100% confidence that the program is in fact universal, there is a level of inequality between those who have access and those who do not.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to give my congratulations to my colleague for the addition to his family. What a joyous occasion. I would also like to tell him that I will likely be singing Dolly Parton for the rest of the day. I am not sure if that is a blessing or a curse.

My colleague spoke at the beginning about whether we needed this piece of legislation. The leader of the Conservative Party has made it very clear he does not support child care. He has embedded incel tags within his social media. He has voted time and time again against women's issues and things for women. Would Canadians not have every right to be worried that the Conservative Party, if it became the next government, would dismantle this child care program?

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Mr. Speaker, that is actually an interesting point. First, I would disagree with the member for Edmonton Strathcona that the leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Carleton, does not support child care. In fact, one of the first things he mentioned as new leader of the Conservative Party was the benefit that his children get from their child care facility and their ability to do so in the French language.

With respect to the bill itself, if we want to look at strengthening it, if the Liberals were actually serious about making this a comprehensive bill, under clause 8 on funding commitments, they would have actually put something concrete in the bill. However, they did not, because this bill is a communications exercise by the Government of Canada, without real teeth.

**The Speaker:** Before we continue, I think I can speak on behalf of all parliamentarians and the Parliament of Canada in congratulating the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon for the new addition to his family.

Before I continue, I want to call everyone to 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 Spadina—Fort York, the Environment; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Taxation; and the hon. member for Nunavut, Health.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Richmond Hill.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to rise for the first time in the House in 2023 to talk about the very important bill for the second reading debate on Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

Like many of my colleagues who spoke before me, I would like to take on the theme of Ontario, which is the province of York region and Richmond Hill, the region and city that I am so proud to represent.

I unequivocally support this bill. Really, I do not see how anyone could even think about opposing Bill C-35. Opposing Bill C-35 would be like opposing one's own constituents, opposing one's own fellow citizens and opposing the people one represents, in this case the people of Richmond Hill.

These people are mothers, fathers and children. They are early childhood educators and service providers, including support workers. They are students, employees and employers. These people are in each and every one of our ridings.

Child care is critical, not just for families, but for the whole economy and, for that matter, for everyone. Everyone would benefit from the Canada-wide early learning and child care system we are building with provinces, territories, and indigenous communities and partners.

It would be an important support for parents, families and communities. It would enable parents, especially mothers, to reach their full economic potential and contribute to a strong economy and greater gender equality. In other words, the Canadian economy is at its strongest when every parent who wants to work not only has the opportunity but also can work.

The Canada-wide early learning and child care system is working everywhere, in every region, of this amazing country. It is working right here in Ontario. In fact, let me tell us how it is going to work in this province.

It was in March 2022 that the governments of Canada and Ontario announced an agreement that significantly improved early learning and child care for children in our province. Through various investments, we are working together to improve access to high-quality, affordable and inclusive early learning and child care programs and services in Ontario. The goal is to give Ontario families access to licensed child care for an average of \$10 a day by March 31, 2026.

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Here is what was planned: The Canada-Ontario agreement planned to reduce child care fees in licensed settings that enrolled in the Canada-wide early learning and child care system for children aged zero to five by 20%, retroactive to April 1, 2022. We estimated that doing so would save Ontario families an average of about \$2,200 per child in 2022.

The agreement also planned that by the end of 2022, fees would be further lowered. That would result in a total reduction of 50%, bringing fees down to an average of \$23 per day. That could save Ontario families an average of about \$6,000 per child per year.

We might ask how things are going. Are things going according to plan? I would like to respond by saying, overwhelmingly, yes they are.

Already, fees have been reduced by an average of 50% across the province compared to 2020 levels. We are talking about fees for families with children under the age of six at licensed child care operators in Ontario that have enrolled in the Canada-wide early learning and child care system.

It really makes a difference for parents in Ontario, and I am not the only one saying that. Experts are also saying it.

• (1615)

I will give a couple of examples. Martha Friendly is a policy researcher and board member of an advocacy group called Child Care Now. She said that before the initiative parents in downtown Toronto paid about \$1,800 a month in fees. She also said, “Some women had to stay home because either they couldn't find a space or they couldn't afford it.” She added that with the reduced fees people can go back to work.

Spyros Volonakis is the executive director of Network Child Care Services, which operates 19 child care centres across Toronto and the GTA. He said, “This is a very positive development in the early years and child care field. It supports family without compromising quality”. He also talked about how, “Parents need to have a peace of mind that their children are safe and are supported so that they receive the necessary programming within the early childhood education.”

We also heard from many parents. They said, too, that it has made a real difference for them. On Twitter there have been many positive reactions. A mother of two from Toronto tweeted, “It was absolutely surreal to see my daycare fees drop from a high of \$167”. She mentioned, “As of Jan, we will be paying less than 50% of that, on a path to \$10” per child per day.

Also from the GTA, a dad thanked the federal government because his toddler's day care fees went down to \$36 a day. Another mom, this time from Ottawa, tweeted, “Just paid our January daycare fees. Under \$500!!!! This is a 55% reduction from last year. This is going to make such a huge difference for so many families.”

Now, it is great to have reduced fees, but we are also well aware that the challenge now is to make sure the number of spaces keeps up with increasing demand. Increasing the number of spaces also happens to be part of our plan. In total, Ontario is aiming to create 86,000 new licensed spaces relative to 2019. These new licensed

spaces will be predominantly among non-for-profit, public and family-based child care providers.

To support the creation of these new spaces, we are also planning investments to support existing and attract new early childhood educators. Funding is available to Ontario to recruit and retain registered early childhood educators. This includes investments that provide a wage floor of \$19 per hour for registered early childhood educators and \$21 per hour for registered early childhood educator supervisors in 2023. Funding will also support an annual one-dollar-per-hour wage increase, until 2026, up to a maximum of \$25 per hour.

I made myself clear that the Canada-wide early learning and child care system is actually working. It is working in Ontario. It is working everywhere in Canada. More and more families in Canada benefit from affordable early learning and child care. It is a great help for many feeling the pinch of the high cost of living, and it is a great help for the country's economy.

Opposing Bill C-35 would be like throwing a spanner in the works. It would be like standing against Canadians who have been working so hard to deal with the cost of living, who have been working so hard to make it and who have been working so hard to give their kids the best start in life. Again, I do not see how anyone could even think about opposing Bill C-35.

• (1620)

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question to my colleague is really about the challenges with the program. It is talked about as being universal. However, there is one private facility in my riding in Owen Sound, the Queen of Hearts, which has unfortunately needed to opt out of the program. If it were to opt in, it would need to either cut services such as food programs for the children it takes care of, cut spaces or go bankrupt.

Further, even municipal-run child care centres are needing to cut services to school-aged kids to meet the staffing requirements for the demand for those under the school age. Could the member expand on the challenges with this program and how it is not universal at all if the spaces do not exist?

• (1625)

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that I did not talk about universality, despite the fact that many members on the opposite side constantly refer to this program as a universal program.

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Having said that, I think the program we are proposing, which is for not-for-profit, public, family-based child care providers, is a great base to make sure we provide the supports that are needed. It is in its early stages, and I do not see the concern the opposite member is raising as a challenge. I see it as an opportunity to work with the provinces, territories and indigenous communities to ensure that, as the program is rolled out, we roll it out and make it available to all in a very equitable way.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Happy new year, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to see you again.

I am glad the rest of Canada is following Quebec's example. Quebec's approach to child care and early learning was groundbreaking. It took the government 25 years to take action and understand that this is a progressive legislative measure. Nevertheless, I am very happy, especially since Quebec's jurisdiction will be respected.

In my colleague's opinion, how long will it take the rest of Canada to realize that secularism legislation like Quebec's is progressive and groundbreaking and to implement comparable legislation of its own?

[*English*]

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Mr. Speaker, I wish a happy new year to my colleague. It is good to see him back in the House. I am looking forward to continuing the great work we are doing here.

I would like to commend all the MPs from Quebec. Yes, they have had a very progressive child care program, and it is a program the Government of Canada looked at very closely and learned about as part of the consultation. The opportunity it provided is a great base for other provinces, territories and indigenous communities to be able to benefit from, so I commend Quebec.

This is a model of partnership and co-operation. Yes, there has been a program in Quebec. It has been very effective, and we will look forward to working with Quebec in other areas we could complement to ensure that the program is rolled out well. The program will be rolling out until 2026, and we look forward to making sure of not only that all the provinces, territories and indigenous communities have signed into it, but also that they have also successfully implemented it.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague in the far opposite corner made some good points, and I think over all this is a program, at least in my home province of British Columbia, that is being well received. The partnerships that the legislation empowers are already creating change in communities that is very positive. The issue I wanted to speak to is one of the conditions of work for early childhood educators, who are critical to ensuring these child care programs are rolled out in a good way and that our children benefit from them in the best way possible.

Does the member see a pathway for us to amend this legislation to create national standards for the work conditions and compensation for early childhood educators, who are so integral to the success of a national child care plan?

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Mr. Speaker, to my colleague across and far away, regardless of where we are sitting in this House, we are working very closely with each other to make sure important bills, such as Bill C-35, are passed.

Let us pass this bill, get it to the committee and make sure that every opportunity that is relevant to this bill, and the success of support for the whole program, specifically the educators, are considered and debated.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we are debating Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada. The purpose of this legislation is to try to solve the issue of high child care costs in Canada.

This legislation does not address the serious economic challenges of implementing a Canada-wide early learning and child care agreement. I believe that this proposed legislation and the current agreements made by the Liberal government with the provinces will fail to provide universal access to affordable child care and will cost far more than what the government has estimated. In fact, I found it quite shocking that the Liberal speaker who came just before me admitted that this is not a universal program. He is right and he admitted the truth: It is going to be a two-tiered program where families who are lucky enough to get a child care space will benefit immensely while an estimated 182,000 families, according to the PBO, will be excluded and not have access to an affordable child care space.

Child care in Canada is provided by several mechanisms, including for-profit and non-profit models, parental care and care by other relatives. For the past several decades, the wages of average working families have not increased significantly while the demands on family finances through taxes, housing, food and child care have increased substantially. In the last few years alone, the costs for families have significantly outstripped wage growth.

The cost to provide child care varies based on age but is a minimum of \$1,000 per child. Lower-income families have traditionally had access to subsidies, but these benefits vary across the provinces. Having one parent stay at home with a child is becoming unaffordable for many families and is far easier for families with higher incomes. Access to day care is already limited in Canada, with wait-lists. According to reports out of Quebec, there are an estimated 50,000 children waiting for access to an affordable care space. The price of child care in Canada is too high for most families, and access to affordable care is limited.



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Why is child care so expensive? The key costs for child care according to operators, in order of magnitude, are labour, the cost of the facilities and the cost of food and supplies. Child care is a labour-intensive operation and wages vary. The cost to create a space that is child appropriate and the accompanying rental, mortgage, insurance and maintenance costs are significant. Finally, the cost of food and other supplies has increased dramatically.

What is the common factor of all three of these costs? They have all been severely impacted by high inflation. Inflation has increased the cost of labour and the cost of rent and mortgages dramatically, and as everyone can see at their local grocery store, the price of food has gone up by 12%. Child care operators are not immune from these costs. The fact is that the Liberal government, through its inflationary policies, is driving up the cost of child care in Canada.

The government's solution to this problem, a problem that it created, has been to sign agreements with the provinces to subsidize the cost of child care and to implement cost controls on wages, facilities and food in order to regulate a price for families that will eventually reach \$10 a day. Unfortunately, this is unsustainable because since it is government spending that caused the inflation in the first place, more spending will only increase inflation further. The result will be an inflationary spiral that will further increase the costs of child care and the costs to maintain this program. Given our current deficit, the government will either have to raise taxes on Canadians or take on more debt to sustain this program.

What are some examples of this inflationary spiral? Speaking to child care operators in Alberta, I have already heard a number of significant challenges that the government has failed to address. Child care workers in Alberta can be paid up to around \$23 an hour, but due to regulations under these agreements, operators cannot raise their costs by more than 3% annually. According to Statistics Canada, private sector wages rose by over 5% last year. Government regulations prevent child care operators from paying their staff even enough to keep up with the rate of inflation.

There is also intense competition for child care workers. School districts can often afford to pay \$30 an hour with benefits. I have been told that schools are even poaching staff from day cares because they are in desperate need of these workers as well. Under the government's agreements, day cares have been put at an economic disadvantage in attracting workers, which will lead to a significant loss in day care capacity, meaning less access to child care.

● (1630)

The proposed solution for this inflation by proponents of even more government intervention in early child care is, no surprise, more inflationary spending. By raising wages even further for child care workers, school boards and others will also try to compete by raising their wages even further. This will result in an inflationary cycle where taxpayers will need to pay much higher taxes as schools and early childhood care centres compete for limited workers.

I have spoken with child care operators who have had to pay increased rents and mortgages on their facilities. As everyone knows, mortgages and rental rates have skyrocketed under eight years of the Liberal government, particularly in the last year. Under agree-

ments the government has signed, child care operators are limited in the costs they can bill the government toward their rent and mortgage. Since they are mandated to charge families a fixed price for child care, there is no way for these operators to make up the difference other than by reducing other costs, such as food for children; shutting down their capacity by letting go of workers; or shutting down altogether, which we have started to see.

The laws of supply and demand mean that the government must either restrict the capacity of day cares or dramatically increase funding beyond what it promised. The first option is unfair, as it is going to leave many families out, and the second option is financially unsustainable. This argument is backed up by research from the parliamentary budget office, which reported in February of last year that the Liberals' plan is not sufficient to meet the demand for child care. In fact, it estimates that it will fall short in providing spaces for 182,000 children. That is 182,000 children who are being left behind by the Liberal government, with no plan in this legislation to provide their families with an affordable child care space.

What we are talking about here is essentially a more focused application of the wage and price controls implemented under the Anti-Inflation Act passed by former prime minister Pierre Trudeau in 1975. In seeking to combat high inflation at the time, the government passed legislation to control increases in prices and wages. The results were economically disastrous and the policy was rescinded shortly thereafter.

Today, the Liberals are trying to implement wage and price controls through their early learning and child care agreements. Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman put it better than I ever could by comparing this kind of policy to putting a kettle full of water on a hot stove. When the boiling water begins to push off the kettle lid, the appropriate thing to do is take the lid off and turn down the heat. Well, what the government is doing is putting a brick on top of the lid and letting the kettle explode. The result is that the pot will explode and this policy will collapse on itself. It is true for this child care policy.

The Liberals claim that this policy will reduce the effects of inflation on families, but the reality is that it is only meant to cover up, to mask, to hide the symptoms of inflation while doing nothing to solve the underlying issue of inflation. It is not a cure for inflation, because as the government continues to spend more, it will drive up inflation, and the cost of this program will continue to rise dramatically in order to maintain the fixed price of \$10 a day. Demand from families will build up and eventually the program will collapse on itself.

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Universal access to affordable child care is the stated goal of this legislation and the early learning and child care agreements, but the current plan fails to meet objectives. I believe that this plan will lead to a further loss in child care capacity as operators close down from unsustainable cost increases and the inability to find labour to fill their positions. The result will be a two-tiered day care system where those who are lucky enough to get their child into a regulated, affordable child care space will reap the benefits and save tens of thousands of dollars a year, while many families will continue to have to use expensive, unregulated child care or make arrangements with family.

The families that will benefit the most from this system are those with the highest incomes. Research from the OECD indicates that the vast majority of children in regulated child care come from those with the highest incomes. Children from low-income families are disproportionately under-represented in child care spaces. In its efforts to implement an absolute, across-the-board, no matter what one's income is price of \$10 a day for all families, the government has failed to take into account the need to provide equity for low-income families. Consequently, the benefits of this Liberal program will disproportionately benefit those with higher incomes, who often already have and can afford a regulated child care space.

• (1635)

Ironically, it was the Liberals who ran attacks against Conservatives claiming that our universal child care benefit gave benefits to millionaires. The fact is that the Liberal plan benefits those with the highest incomes, including millionaires, far more than it does low-income families.

In conclusion, making child care more affordable is an important economic and political goal, but the current plan by the Liberals will fail to do that. It is unacceptable to leave 182,000 children out of the system, and it is unacceptable to put this debt burden on Canadians.

• (1640)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member spoke at great length about how he is opposed to the program the government has put together, but he fell short of saying that he will be voting against it. I am saying this because after hours of debate on this bill with the Conservatives not committing, this afternoon we started to hear a couple of Conservatives commit that they were voting in favour of it.

It is obviously quite normal for different members of the same political party to vote differently, but could the member confirm whether he will be voting against this particular bill?

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Mr. Speaker, the program is flawed. I have demonstrated how clearly it is flawed.

It is my job as a parliamentarian and as a member of the opposition to call out the government on the flaws in its legislation. That is the purpose of our Westminster system of Parliament. Opposition parties hold the government accountable in order to get better outcomes for Canadians.

I look forward to seeing this bill at committee. I look forward to hearing from witnesses. I look forward to seeing concrete proposals

come forward to make child care more affordable for families. However, the current plan put forward by the Liberals has tremendous risk and tremendous challenges, and the Liberals are not being honest with Canadians about those challenges.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent intervention. Facts and data are really important when we are having this conversation, because quite frankly, it is a very emotional conversation. The welfare of our children is very emotional. We want our children to have access to the best quality care. I really value the facts and data the member has put forth today.

What does the member see as one thing we could do through a strong amendment, which we could bring forth as Conservatives, to better this bill?

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her advocacy on this issue.

We need to look at the free market and how free market mechanisms can be complemented by limited government intervention to provide more supply when there is a need and demand. There is a huge demand for child care in this country, even before \$10-a-day day care is brought in and even before government subsidies are brought in.

How do we create that supply? We need to look at regulations that are preventing people from starting a new child care operation. We need to look at getting more access to workers, whether that is through visas for people working abroad or getting people's education upgraded here in Canada so that we can increase the pool of available workers who can provide child care. We also need to look at the inflationary spending of the government, how it is driving up the cost of food, rents, mortgages and the cost of labour and how that is impacting child care operations across Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague, and I thank him for his speech.

We are talking about a provincial jurisdiction. Once again, it is exclusively provincial. Quebec will be fully compensated, the equivalent of \$6 billion over a five-year period. We are talking about \$30 billion in programs over the next five years.

Is this amount of money acceptable to the Conservatives? Basically, will my colleague be voting in favour of the bill?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dane Lloyd:** Mr. Speaker, as I outlined in my speech, one of my greatest concerns with this legislation is that the government cannot give us a full estimation of what the program is going to cost. If the government is going to provide child care for the 182,000 families the PBO has estimated would be left out of the program, how many billions of dollars more would need to be added to the program to maintain it? How has the government projected the cost of inflation from the increased government spending and increased government debt? Has the government projected what taxes would have to be increased to maintain this program?

I am very concerned. We have not been given a straightforward, clear fiscal plan from the government on how it is going to maintain the program. Frankly, it is shame, because it is going to be a two-tiered system where low-income families are left out in the cold and high-income families, disproportionately, are going to get the benefits.

• (1645)

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to be speaking on Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

This bill is one of the most significant pieces of legislation before this Parliament. It is something that I have been working on since I was first elected. It is one of the key issues that I have heard from my constituents.

I have spoken with mothers who wanted to return to work after their 12-month parental leave, but they could not because they could not find affordable child care, so they stayed out of the workforce longer than they intended to.

I also know of families where the mother, who made less money than the father, realized that almost all of her income from working would go to child care. She ended up making the choice to stay out of the workforce, even though that was not what she would have preferred.

This legislation is giving families, and particularly women, their choices back to be able to decide when and how they want to re-enter the workforce and to have their families. We all know that in these kinds of cases, even today, this definitely impacts women more than it impacts men.

Bill C-35 is absolutely vital to gender equality. When I chaired the Special Committee on Pay Equity during the 42nd Parliament, we heard over and over again that women earn, over the course of their lifetime in Canada, about 74¢ for every dollar that men earn over their lifetime.

This is not just because women are paid less. It is also because women are more likely to interrupt their careers for caregiving responsibilities. That results in lower incomes throughout women's lifetimes. When women retire, they end up having smaller pensions because they are based on fewer years worked and lower salary.

We have heard in this House today that one of the key recommendations for the last 50-plus years has been that in order to reduce the wage gap between women and men, we need to provide

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affordable child care, so that women and men can make the choice to stay in the workforce if that is what they want.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-35 will enshrine the principles of a Canada-wide early learning and child care system into federal law. These principles are access, affordability, inclusiveness and high quality. Because these principles will be enshrined in law, it will be much more difficult for any future government to reverse them.

[*English*]

Canadians have already started feeling the impact of the \$30-billion, federal-provincial-territorial, multilateral early learning and child care framework.

In Ontario, in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean, child care spaces have seen a fee reduction of 50% at the end of December. This saves families in Ontario, on average, about \$6,000 a year. By March 2026, we will reduce fees to \$10 a day. In addition to this, we are creating 250,000 new, affordable child care spaces, including 86,000 in Ontario.

[*Translation*]

In the past, what we have seen is federal-provincial agreements simply being cancelled after a change of government. What this legislation does is enshrine in law accountability, transparency and reporting, long-term funding and a national advisory council on early learning and child care.

[*English*]

This will allow families in Canada, and those who are considering starting a family in the future, the assurance that affordable child care will be available to them in the long term. It also provides predictability and planning to the provinces and territories that know they can rely on sustained federal funding, while fully respecting the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces.

I have been talking about the importance of child care to equality and values. What is often overlooked is that it is also a vital economic strategy. During the pandemic, 1.5 million women either lost their jobs or left work to take care of school-aged children who were home because of the pandemic. Many of them are still struggling to return to the workforce.

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• (1650)

At the same time, our economy is now facing a labour shortage. Ensuring that we reduce the barriers to full labour force participation of women, the main barrier of which is lack of affordable child care, is key in overcoming our labour shortage and allowing businesses to find the skilled workers that they need in order to grow and thrive. Countries with high labour force participation of women have higher GDP growth and, therefore, access to early learning and child care is one of the key drivers of economic growth in Canada.

Studies have shown that investing in child care has one of the greatest returns on investment. For every dollar invested in early childhood education, there is a return to our economy of \$1.50 to \$2.80. We cannot afford not to do this.

[Translation]

At a time when the cost of living is rising due to global inflation and supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic and the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Putin, it is even more important to provide assistance to Canadians.

Reducing the cost of day care by thousands of dollars a year will also considerably help families with children who are struggling to make ends meet. That is only one of our affordability policies, and it is a very important one for families with young children.

[English]

I would like to talk a bit also about the principle that is in this law about inclusivity. We want families to have access to early learning and child care no matter where they live. Bill C-35 would build on the work done with indigenous peoples who have co-developed the indigenous early learning and child care framework, which is culturally appropriate and led by indigenous peoples.

I also know that women with intersecting identities, racialized and newcomer women, those living with disabilities, single parents and families in lower socio-economic conditions, face even greater challenges in finding good quality, affordable and reliable child care. This legislation would enshrine the principle of inclusivity into law. I hope that in the future we will elaborate this so that we can provide more supports to parents of children with special needs, to those working shift work or in precarious employment and to others who face additional barriers.

I would also point out that many child care workers themselves are women. This legislation would have the additional benefit of providing long-term funding and increasing the number of regulated child care spaces, creating more secure and higher-paid employment for those in this industry.

I am also very proud to say that my mom was a kindergarten teacher. I grew up in a house where I was given all the benefits of creativity, stimulation and learning from the very earliest age, but not all children are lucky enough to have a mother who is a Montessori teacher. That is why we are calling it “early learning” and child care. It is not just babysitting. This is a program that is designed to give children the best possible start in life.

[Translation]

We know that, traditionally, child care responsibilities are disproportionately shouldered by women. However, I hope that this law and evolving social norms will also help ensure a more equitable division of child care responsibilities between men and women.

[English]

I know that Bill C-35 is not the complete solution. It does not address caregiving responsibilities that many people, especially daughters, face for aging parents or responsibilities for caregiving for adult children with disabilities. I hope that this legislation is only the beginning of a wider societal dialogue about what we value as a society.

Caregiving has too long been invisible work done primarily by women in the unpaid economy. Our society has pushed the burden of caregiving from society onto the individual and, in particular, onto women’s unpaid care work. However, the pandemic has made visible many of the divisions and pressures in our society and I hope that it is allowing us to challenge the status quo of what we consider to be valuable work and to realize that community is important when raising families.

While Bill C-35 is an important first step, we need to ensure that we continue working to build a more equal and more prosperous Canada.

• (1655)

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I posed a question to one of the member’s colleagues from the other side and did not get an answer back, so I will pose it to her this afternoon. Hopefully, they have had the time to provide an answer.

The Liberals speak about a national day care program that should look after all its citizens who are looking for child care. I asked the question: How does this program assist those who do shift work, such as a single parent who is a nurse and works the night shift at the hospital, a baker in the coffee shop who has to start at 3 a.m. or a resident in a rural area where there is no formal day care? How does this program assist those people who need day care?

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague will recall that in my speech I addressed the fact that this is a bill that is not going to necessarily solve forever every single complex problem about caregiving in our society. First of all, I hope it is going to have an enormous impact on many families, in the member’s constituency as well as mine.

However, we need to rethink caregiving in our society. We need to look at what we value in our society with respect to work and come up with very productive solutions to those exact kinds of problems, such as people in precarious work or shift work, and those who are raising children with special needs. I also mentioned those who are caring for aging parents, because it is an equal burden that falls primarily on women in our society as well.

I hope the member will work with us in this Parliament to make sure that we continue to address those difficult questions. I look forward to working with him and others to make sure that we address all the issues and needs of Canadians and Canadian families.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member brought up the topic of the effect this would have on the labour force. Many businesses in my riding and across the country are looking for workers. In my riding in particular, and in many others, they cannot find workers because there is no place for new workers to live. The housing crisis has made it very difficult for them. One of the obvious solutions to that is to provide a better, more inclusive, more affordable, more accessible day care system that will allow the people who already have a place to live to get back into the workforce, which would then help these businesses move on and succeed in today's world.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for raising that issue because this is very much an economic policy as well. The fact is I have heard the same thing. Businesses in my riding have told me they are struggling. Some who are nearing retirement are saying they are just going to close the doors because they cannot find people to work in their businesses. This is one of the greatest ways that we can make sure that women who want to be in the workforce, but have a barrier because of child care, are able to contribute and participate fully. Up to \$2.80 goes back into our economy for every dollar we invest in child care, so I agree 100% that we cannot afford to not do this. It is an equality issue, but also an economic issue.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Ottawa West—Nepean for focusing so clearly on the issues of early learning and child care. There are high-quality benefits to early learning and child care. The literature on childhood development points to very clear advantages. As she has worked on this issue for a while, I wonder if she would perhaps contrast that with a program that is solely about somebody looking after one's child somewhere.

Of course this program does not preclude someone who is lucky enough to have a grandparent who provides whatever kinds of supports a mom or dad needs by having access, at a parent's choice, to early learning and child care, with the priority being, as I see in this legislation, on high quality, which brings to mind my concerns about how much child care workers are going to be paid.

The difference is important. I wonder if the hon. member would comment on that.

• (1700)

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Mr. Speaker, I did not realize until I was grown how special it was that I had a Montessori teacher as a mother, because we did get that quality kind of engagement. That is why I said that this is not just about babysitting. This is not just

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about making sure children have someone to look after them. It is about the formation, the development, sparking that creativity, the learning, and making sure that by the time they get to grade 1 they already have the socialization and the ability to absorb and learn information. I very much appreciate the part about creativity, because that was something I had at a very early age, and I want every child in Canada to be able to access that same kind of childhood.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 2022, Quebec celebrated the 25th anniversary of its family policy. On January 23, 1997, former premier Pauline Marois, then education minister for the Parti Québécois government, unveiled the Quebec family policy. This family policy was developed as a result of major changes in Quebec's population, including an increase in the number of single-parent and blended families, a greater number of women in the workforce, and the troubling rise of precarious employment.

Quebec's family policy had three basic thrusts: the implementation of an integrated allowance for children, the development of early childhood education services at a reasonable cost and the implementation of a parental insurance plan to provide adequate income replacement during maternity and parental leave.

This policy made it possible for thousands of Quebecers to go back to school, as my wife did when our first child was born. It also enabled thousands of Quebecers to improve their work-life balance, which was the case for us when my second child was born. It also enabled them to benefit from more generous maternity and parental leave, which was the case for us when my third child was born. My family really benefited from these progressive programs that are in place in Quebec.

The policy had three objectives: to ensure fairness through universal support for families and additional help for low-income families; to help parents balance their parental and professional responsibilities; and to promote children's development and equal opportunities for all. This policy was forward-looking, just like Quebec.

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It was in the same spirit that the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development of the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, on December 8, 2022. This bill is full of good will and good principles. I can admit when that is the case. However, it is too bad that these good principles stem from the federal government's infamous interfering power. Pardon me, I meant to say the federal government's spending power. It seems to me that the federal government did not introduce this bill in the right Parliament, because I get the impression that we are once again facing the age-old problem of federal interference in provincial matters.

Let me explain. If passed, Bill C-35, will enshrine in legislation the Liberal government's commitment to providing long-term program funding for the provinces and indigenous communities, as well as the principles that must guide that federal funding. The idea is to make it more difficult for a future government to dismantle the program.

This bill is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, it does not comply with the distribution of powers set out in the Constitution, which clearly states that education and family policy are not under federal jurisdiction. I wanted to remind the federal government of that because it tends to forget. On the other hand, it exempts Quebec from the application of the federal family policy for the next five years, with compensation. I will not deny that the Bloc Québécois is very happy with that second part. That said, it is too bad it took the federal government 25 years to follow Quebec's lead. This is not the first time that the federal government has dragged its feet on an issue.

Should Canada ever decide to take a page out of Quebec's play-book in other areas, such as the environment or energy production, it certainly would not hurt. We must not kid ourselves. Quebec has always been ahead of the curve in almost all areas compared to Canada. When it comes to child care services, Quebec is a pioneer, not only in North America, but in the world, and above all, it is a model of success.

In its preamble, Bill C-35 outlines the beneficial impact of early learning and child care on child development, on the well-being of children and of families, on gender equality, and on the rights of women and their economic participation and prosperity. Of course, I was not surprised when I read this. As I said earlier, this system was created on January 23, 1997, by Pauline Marois, then minister of education in the Quebec government, as a network of non-profit child care centres and home-based child care agencies. Based on the recommendations from a report entitled "Un Québec fou de ses enfants", which highlighted the importance of early childhood stimulation, especially among children from more vulnerable families, the network upheld the principle of access to child care for all.

• (1705)

In Quebec, the mission of educational child care is threefold: to ensure the well-being, health and safety of the children receiving care; to provide a child-friendly environment that stimulates their development in every way, from birth to school age; and to prevent learning, behavioural and social integration problems from appearing later on.

This child care network has greatly contributed to making the workforce much more accessible to women. In just one year, yes, one year, it encouraged nearly 70,000 mothers to get a job in Quebec, which is a big deal. That was in 1997. No one in the House will be surprised to hear me say that there are many things that make me proud to be a Quebecker, and that is one of them. Another is the fact that Quebec has always been well ahead of Canada in a number of ways. I wonder if, by following Quebec's example, Canada will soon also have its own secularism law. That will come some day. When Canada realizes that every policy in Quebec bears fruit, then maybe it will stop dragging its feet and its governments will do the same. I will not talk about the federal immigration department because I have too much to say about that and not enough time.

What I can say is that Quebeckers have quite a lot of good ideas, and we are seeing that again today. Even the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development says so. I will stop there because I can tell the House of Commons is feeling a little uncomfortable. Everyone knows I like to take shots at members of other parties because there is always a way to have a little fun even while we are working. We must never forget who we are working for, though. As I have said more than once, as elected representatives, we work for our constituents. We serve the people—the citizens, workers, mothers and fathers—who placed their trust in us.

For that reason, I could not say to the Liberals that Bill C-35 is not a bill. Even though it interferes in provincial jurisdictions, I like their bill because we were able to obtain compensation with no conditions for Quebec. It might be advisable to take what was done with Bill C-35 and apply it to health transfers. Why can the government give money to Quebec with no conditions for child care, but when it comes to health, it wants to set conditions? Do the Liberals believe that children are less important than the health of the rest of the population? I would not go that far.

I like the bill, but I liked it even more when the Parti Québécois introduced it in the late 1990s. My wife and I were 23 when we had our first child. My wife was in university, and because this Quebec law existed, she was able to complete her bachelor's degree. We were 26 when our second child was born. This law helped us buy a house and become homeowners. We were 31 when our third child, Simone, was born. Once again, we were lucky to share our parental leave and to have day care centres.

I will close by saying that I support this bill, despite the federal government's interference. It is a good bill for the provinces of Canada, children and their parents. I do not want members to worry. I will pass the message on to Pauline Marois that the Liberals, the House of Commons, this government and all members of the House are saying thank you to her today.

• (1710)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish this bill had passed when my kids, Kyle and Cassidy, were younger. It would have provided my husband and me with a lot of relief for our mortgage and for bills as well.

What this bill would do is enable more parents like those today to make the choice to enter the workforce for the first time or in some cases to go back to work. Studies have shown that for every dollar invested in early childhood education, the broader economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return. Therefore, can my hon. colleague agree that this bill would make a significant improvement in our economy?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, it will certainly have a major impact on the Canadian economy but especially on the well-being of families. My colleague mentioned that she wished she had had access to this type of service. Life would have been much easier if the governments of the other Canadian provinces had followed Quebec's lead 25 years ago. Quebeckers were very lucky compared to people in the rest of Canada, because we dared to implement progressive legislation.

Once again, I urge my colleagues to follow Quebec's lead right now when it comes to being progressive, particularly with regard to Bill 21, the state secularism law.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is difficult for me because I understand why the member from Quebec does not like everything about this bill. However, I am a member from Alberta, where we have a Conservative government. That is very important. I would like the member for Lac-Saint-Jean to understand why I want conditions imposed on the Government of Alberta, particularly when it comes to language.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I understand the question.

One thing is certain. Quebec did not sign the Constitution. Even though I am a sovereignist, I am going to defend the Canadian Constitution. That is not something that happens very often. The Canadian Constitution is clear about jurisdictions. Unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois always has to be the one to make sure that the Liberals understand their own Constitution. They cannot understand that the Canadian Constitution clearly sets out separate areas of jurisdiction. The federal government is always infringing on provincial jurisdictions because it does not like the provincial governments that are in power.

I understand why my colleague is unhappy about the government that is in office in Alberta, but the work that needs to be done must be done at the provincial level in keeping with the Canadian Constitution. If the government does not want to abide by Canada's

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Constitution, then all it has to do is reopen it. Then maybe Quebeckers will want to get involved in the whole debate around the Constitution.

[*English*]

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is around the Quebec model. We have heard a lot about it today and the success it has had, but we know that everything needs improvement. There is an opportunity here to learn from the data that has been accumulated over the years in Quebec and what could be done to improve it.

What short-sightedness has happened in Quebec that the member thinks we could use on a federal level to improve legislation to make affordable quality child care accessible to all Canadians?

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, if I understood the question correctly, my colleague wants to know what can be done at the federal level to improve services that fall under provincial jurisdiction.

My answer is simple. What happens at the provincial level has to be dealt with in the legislatures of the other provinces and the National Assembly of Quebec, when it comes to Quebec. The federal government has no business interfering in the services the provinces provide to their constituents. That is the provinces' business. That is what we keep saying ad nauseam in this Parliament. Every time we arrive here in the morning, we know we will have to talk about jurisdictions. When we leave in the evening we feel discouraged, because it seems that the message is not getting through. It goes in one ear and out the other.

Areas of jurisdiction have to be respected. I hope that one day federal jurisdiction will be a thing of the past because Quebec will be a country. Then all these disputes will be over.

[*English*]

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a great pleasure to stand in this place to represent the constituents of Edmonton Strathcona. It is my first time standing this session, so I want to wish everyone a late happy new and welcome them back to the House of Commons.

I am quite delighted that I get an opportunity to stand today to contribute to this debate. It is one of the most fundamental pieces of legislation that we could be looking at. Providing affordable, accessible, high-quality child care for families across this country is so very important. Many people here have talked about their own personal experiences. I am a mother. I have two children, Maclean and Keltie, and they are perfect, as all our children are. They are 15 and 17 now, so they no longer need child care. I will have even more to say when the debate is on post-secondary tuition.

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I remember the challenges of trying to find child care, and trying to ensure the child care we had found was adequate. We were so lucky that we found spots for our children at Fulton Child Care Centre in Edmonton Strathcona. It has fabulous staff, and they worked incredibly hard to provide a learning environment for my children. We were very lucky. However, well before I was involved in politics, I recognized the challenges that faced families, and disproportionately faced women, as they looked for child care spaces.

There was one child care centre I had applied to for my children when they were young, and I got a phone message when one was eight years old to tell me that there was a space available. That is how long the waiting list had been for that child care centre. Of course, we need to make sure that child care is accessible. This is such an important piece of work for this Parliament to do.

We have to look back over the 52 years since the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women to see how long people have been fighting for child care in this country. We need to take time today to acknowledge those advocates who worked tirelessly to ensure that this became a reality. We have to look at the labour movement, the champions like those in the CLC, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the Alberta Federation of Labour. So many of our labour movements have been calling for child care for a very long time.

I also want to thank the leaders within the New Democratic Party because we, as New Democrats, have also been calling for child care for decades. Ed Broadbent was one of the very first members of Parliament to bring this forward. Jack Layton spoke extensively on the need for child care and how it would fundamentally change the lives of families, particularly women, across this country. More recently, the member for London—Fanshawe and Olivia Chow both brought forward legislation, in the 41st Parliament and the 40th Parliament respectively, to bring forward child care. This legislation is built on the extraordinary and hard work that has been done by advocates within the NDP and throughout the country.

This was a recommendation in the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women. It should never have taken so long to make this law. It should not have taken a pandemic. It should not have taken the corporate sector to say that there would be no recovery from COVID without child care. We should have been able to hear why this was so important for gender equality much sooner than this.

I want to talk about the Alberta context as well. Some of the information is coming from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on child care costs. Before \$10-a-day child care, in Edmonton the median monthly child care fee for preschool-aged children was \$925, while the median monthly fee for infants was \$1,050 a month and \$950 for toddlers.

• (1720)

This is important to keep in mind, because in my riding of Edmonton Strathcona, parents were paying, on average, over \$1,000 a month. Then the UCP in our province decided to cut what Rachel Notley had put in place, which was a program that had reduced child poverty in half: the \$25 child care. That pilot program was cut.

In Alberta, we have a desperate need for child care. We have a desperate need for investment in child care. In fact, I will read a very important quote from Bradley Lafortune from Public Interest Alberta. He said, “This is a once-in-a-generation chance to make a massive difference in the lives of so many of Alberta's citizens. We need to work together to ensure that this agreement is a step towards a universal system of child care that truly works for everyone.”

I do not have quite enough time to tell members all of the ways that I think this would impact women and families across this country, but I will say that we will work within committee. Our party is very interested in improving the reporting and accountability, improving the working conditions for workers and making sure that there is a workforce strategy to make sure that we do have enough people who can take that spot.

There is a lot of work we can do, and I do not think this is legislation is perfect, but I am so happy that it has come forward. I am so happy that we are going to have a universal child care program in this country. It is vitally important, and it is very overdue.

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

Mr. Speaker, the member talked a bit about Jack Layton and the NDP and the words that they spoke about child care. I could not help but reflect on the fact that Ken Dryden, a former minister, actually had a deal in place with the provinces and territories. It was a signed deal ready to go. However, it was indeed the NDP that took us into an election, and as a result scuttled that whole deal. Stephen Harper ripped it up and got rid of it.

I wonder if the member could reflect on where this country may be today had the NDP not forced that election 15 years ago? How much further ahead would this child care program be, had it had 15 years of history at this point?

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to think about just how far social programs could have gone in this country if an NDP government had been in place.

Of course, this government has been in place for seven and a half years and so one would think it would be able to put that in place. I would also like to raise the thought that when I have spoken with folks like Cindy Blackstock, they mentioned that the agreement was, in fact, fully insufficient in bringing forward child care for indigenous children across this country. Even then, the Liberals had a lot of work to do, and certainly they have had ample time to deal with it since then.



**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member across the way for her speech and, as a mom, sharing her thoughts about this legislation. As I mentioned a few times, as the critic to this file, it is a very emotional file. We all want this access to quality, affordable care. It is very challenging to do this.

Is the member opposite open to amendments that would ensure that the people who are most vulnerable get priority? Right now, the way it is written, it would be creating two-tiered child care, in that people who are wealthy would be getting access or priority before vulnerable families.

• (1725)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Mr. Speaker, of course, I am not at the committee. As the committee works through that, I know that our critics will be working very hard to make this a stronger piece of legislation.

I think that one of the things that every one of us in the House is looking for is a way to make sure that every family, every parent, particularly every woman across this country has access to good, quality, universal child care. I am supportive of all the things that will make that happen.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the subject matter of Bill C-35, child care and early learning, is very important, whether in Quebec or across Canada. We also know that this bill includes some key elements such as the benefits of early learning and child care on children's development, as well as the role of the provinces.

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion. What does she think about respect for provincial jurisdictions in this area?

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Mr. Speaker, that question was something that I tried to ask one of her colleagues in my very clunky French, so I understand why maybe it was not understood adequately.

I actually do believe that there is a role for the federal government to have strings attached to ensure that there is equitable quality of care across the country. Something she might be particularly interested in is that I think there should be linguistic ties to our child care agreements. I think we have a charter obligation to ensure that French child care is available across the country, including in Alberta, and that this is something that is possible, because 15% of my population is francophone. They have every right to have child care in French.

I think there should be some strings attached to the funding coming from the federal government to the provinces for things like that.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to re-

### *Private Members' Business*

quest a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the chamber you would find unanimous consent to call it 5:30 p.m. so we could begin private members' hour.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from December 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (child sexual abuse and exploitation material), be read the third time and passed.

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is truly an honour to rise this evening to speak to and express my support for this very important bill. This bill was brought forward by the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap. Bill C-291 is an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, namely child sex abuse material.

I will underscore the fact that words do, indeed, matter. Definitions matter and language matters. It matters for the elected officials and the staff who work in this House of Commons. It is why the legislative drafters write the technical text of legislation and spend hours upon hours and days upon days refining and crafting the language.

Once a bill becomes law, it sets the parameters and the boundaries of behaviour within a free and democratic society. Bill C-291 is a very important bill that would ensure that there is no confusion around what “child pornography” actually is. It is child abuse.

As a former litigator, I am proud to see a common-sense and important change being proposed. As a mother, I am encouraged to see this House take action to protect and fight for our children, our country's most precious gift.

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Changing the term “child pornography” in our federal laws to “child sexual abuse and exploitation” is not just semantics. If we understand the power of our words, especially when codified, then we know that this change will affect how we see and categorize this evil perpetrated against our children, and how we must all unite and fight against it.

This change would increase the clarity, the understanding and the precision in our legislative and legal framework. It would recognize that when pornography involves children, make no mistake, it is not pornography; it is sexual abuse material.

As Judge Koturbash said in a decision on this subject, “These are not actors. It is not consensual. These are images and videos of child sexual abuse.”

This kind of material is abhorrent. It cannot be consensual. These images are serious and they cause lifelong damage and trauma to children. Therefore, we must fight it with every tool that we have at our disposal in society. Without clarity and precision in our laws, and in the Criminal Code, there is confusion.

In this case, as Judge Koturbash said the current phrase “child pornography” actually dilutes the true meaning of what these images and videos represent. This change will recognize that children are victimized by such material.

As has been mentioned earlier, here in Canada, the age of consent for sexual activity is 16. There is no legal basis for a child to consent to participate in such material, and this, absent of consent, constitutes abuse and exploitation.

Around the world, we have been seeing similar initiatives to make this clear distinction. Child advocacy groups in the United States, like the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, as well as the 2016 Luxembourg Guidelines, which were put forward by 18 international partners, have sought to harmonize the terms and definitions that relate to child abuse and protection.

• (1730)

We need to see more decisive action from the government to bring perpetrators of sexual violence to justice. We need laws that will prosecute the broadcasting of sexual abuse and violence materials. We need laws that will make it clear that it is a crime to sexually exploit children.

This is one small but very significant step forward in protecting vulnerable boys and girls in Canada. Once again, I want to commend and thank the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap for his excellent work. I also want to thank the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for his work on this bill.

I believe this bill reflects the collective strength of this united House and that we will stand together in denouncing child abuse and strengthen the laws to protect children from all forms of abuse. I believe that this bill would save lives. It is my honour to publicly support and vote for this bill.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-291. Some bills seem less substantial

than others, but are just as important. The bill amends the Criminal Code to replace the term “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse and exploitation material” and make consequential amendments to other acts. Words sometimes carry great weight.

As I just mentioned, this bill makes no other changes than replacing the term “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse and exploitation material”, and has no legal consequences per se.

First, I want to say that the Bloc Qu b cois supports this bill. Even though this bill has no legal consequences, it does make us think about the importance of terms, their scope and their deep meaning. According to the bill's sponsor, the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap, the objective is to link the charge of child pornography to sexual abuse. Without changing the definitions, since the notions of consent and current sentences will stay the same, Bill C-291 explicitly expresses the fact that such an offence is an act involving the sexual abuse of a child.

We understand and support the underlying principle. In my speech, I will share my thoughts on the importance of the words used to provide additional detail about this bill, reiterate the importance of training judges and conclude by expanding my argument to include cybercrime.

First, the term “pornography” seems overused and ambiguous in the sense of both the legal definition and the general definition, because its scope is very relative and can depend on a given individual's sensitivity. Moreover, some schools of thought disagree on the degree of consent pornography supposes and whether pornography is essentially a form of violence. Some feminist thinkers see it that way, and regular consumption of pornography also contributes to rape culture.

One thing is clear: Pornography in and of itself is not a crime, but there are the exceptions we are all familiar with, including child pornography. In other cases, it is difficult to see a clear and consensual difference between eroticism and obscenity, pornography and violence. It all comes down to the participants' consent, which is impossible to establish or obtain. When children are involved, the Criminal Code pretty clearly defines the acts, but I will spare my colleagues a reading of that.

*Private Members' Business*

It is understandable to be shocked by the fact that a term with no criminal or even negative connotations is attached to such despicable acts, hence the principle of Bill C-291. In the healing process, it is important, from the outset, that the victim is relieved of guilt about the events and that the burden is carried by the abuser. Naming the abuse can also help the victim. It may not seem important, but being a victim of child pornography does not have the same connotation as being a victim of child sexual abuse. A person charged with possession of child pornography will not be charged with sexual assault. However, they are indirectly participating in it by not reporting it and by taking advantage of the situation to deliberately indulge their deviant urges.

Most of the time, the victim is not mentioned in child pornography cases, except to say that they were indeed a child. When we talk about child sexual abuse material, we are doing two things: We are naming the abuse that the child is suffering, and we are calling the accused a child molester. These are much more powerful words, even though we are talking about the same act. They put things in perspective. In a crime involving child pornography, there is a victim of abuse and there is an abuser, the child molester.

In many types of crime, there is often a grey area, extenuating circumstances, possible doubt over the degree of guilt, participation and consent of the victim. In the case of child abuse, everything is clear and we have to call a spade a spade.

What is more, this term is already being used by some advocacy groups, including the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and Canada's national tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children. Children are disproportionately the victims of sexual offences and are especially vulnerable. In Quebec, 54.4%, or the majority, of victims of sexual assault are adults, but the number of victims under 18 is growing faster than the number of adult victims, with annual increases of 9.5% and 4.3% respectively. Victims of other sexual offences are nearly exclusively minors, at 90.8%. These offences include sexual interference and invitation to sexual touching, luring and publication of intimate images.

These statistics make it clear why victims and their loved ones feel as though these situations are being downplayed.

● (1740)

If an offence is not a direct aggravated sexual assault, then it gets classified under "other offences". In reality, however, the possession of child pornography often involves sexual assault that is often even documented.

According to the Quebec Department of Public Safety, these types of crimes are on the rise. Cases of sexual interference and luring have risen by 6% and 9% respectively. These are moderate increases. Cases of incest have risen by 4.3%. Cases of publication of an intimate image without consent have risen by 7.4%, and cases of invitation to sexual touching have risen by 1.4%, and that number has held steady. These are chilling statistics.

Sexual acts and activities must only take place with the free and informed consent of the participants. The concept of consent is essential. It is based on the idea that the person is fit to make a decision and that they understand the implications and consequences.

In Canada, the age of consent to sexual activity is 16. However, in the case of all minors, including those who are aged 16 and 17, a young person cannot legally consent if a sexual partner is in a position of authority over them. If the young person is dependent on their sexual partner for support and has nowhere else to go and no one else to care for them, then they are in a relationship of dependency.

The relationship is exploitative when, as of the age of 12, there are close-in-age exceptions. A person who is 12 or 13 can consent to sexual activity if their partner is less than two years older. A person who is 14 or 15 can consent to sexual activity if their partner is less than five years older. That means that even if one of the partners is over the age of majority, as in the case of a couple consisting of a 15-year-old and a 19-year-old, consenting sexual contact can take place with a minor as long as they are close in age.

This also means that, conversely, in a situation where one member of the couple is over the age of majority, as in the case of a 14-year-old and a 19-year-old, the child cannot legally consent to sexual activity and the act becomes a sexual offence, even with the consent of the minor's parents. There is no possibility of consent when a child is under the age of 12.

It is worth noting that the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill in committee took only 30 minutes. This is an uncontroversial bill, despite the number of amendments that were moved. In fact, most of the amendments came from the government. There was absolutely no debate on the substance of the bill, and all the amendments proposed by the government, 15 in all, were adopted unanimously. This is important work. Amendments G-1 and G-12 essentially added the notion of exploitation to the term "child sexual abuse material" to make it clear that possession of such material automatically involves the exploitation of a child. Naturally, these amendments were also adopted.

Also, not all judges have the knowledge required to deal with sexual assault cases or cases involving certain groups. We have been talking about this for a long time. Training for judges is important. The case of Judge Jean-Paul Braun is a shocking example. He said out loud during a trial that the victim, who was a minor at the time of the assault, had a pretty face and should feel flattered to have attracted the attention of an older man. An Alberta judge was fired after making what were considered sexist and racist remarks about indigenous people, abused women and victims of sexual assault.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

An acquittal was overturned because a judge who found a man accused of sexually assaulting children not guilty relied on stereotypes. The judge suggested that, because nobody noticed anything, the girl, who was only between the ages of 6 and 12 at the time, was not credible. The judge said the child's testimony was not transparent, reliable, sincere or credible. Forcing all judges to participate in sexual assault and social context training would destroy certain stereotypes and myths that influence judges' decisions and their attitudes toward victims.

Fortunately, Bill C-3 called on the Canadian Judicial Council to ensure that federal judicial appointees to various courts have the tools to help them preside over sexual assault cases. My colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, who worked on that bill, pointed that out. The third time around, Bill C-3 was finally unanimously passed by all MPs. It was passed on division in the Senate and received royal assent on May 6, 2021. It is an important bill.

In addition, the whole issue of cybercrime is also troubling. Last week, I had a chance to talk with Hugo Loiseau, a professor at the Université de Sherbrooke who is studying this issue. A cybercrime is a criminal offence committed through a computer system that is usually connected to another network. This whole issue of child pornography content, along with incitement to terrorism or hatred, falls under the category of cybercrime.

In conclusion, the All Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking is following this issue closely and is considering recommendations that could be made to the government to take action.

• (1745)

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap has five minutes for his right of reply.

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise in this House as the representative of the great people of North Okanagan—Shuswap as I make some final comments on Bill C-291.

Bill C-291 proposes to change the term in the Criminal Code from “child pornography” to “child sexual abuse and exploitation material”. I would like to acknowledge and again thank my colleague, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, who drafted this bill after recognizing the need for Criminal Code amendments that this bill proposes. I also acknowledge members from all parties who have made meaningful contributions to the development of this bill, both in this chamber and at committee stage.

Committee review of the bill strengthened it by adding the words “and exploitation” to the proposed new term in the original bill, and I thank the parliamentary secretary and the Minister of Justice for their collaboration and continuation on this important initiative.

Expressions of support and collaboration from all sides reflect that this bill is a step in the right direction, a step that must be followed by more steps: additional steps toward strengthening the Criminal Code and other federal laws to increase protection of children; additional steps to increase capacities of those entrusted with enforcing and prosecuting offences; and additional steps to support

healing and recovery of those victimized by child sexual abuse and exploitation.

I want to thank people who have approached me in North Okanagan—Shuswap on the streets and at events to express their support and appreciation for this bill. The spontaneous face-to-face support from constituents is always reassuring that we are moving in the right direction. I also thank all of the Canadians who supported the bill by signing petition e-4154 initiated by Rachel Enns back home in Vernon. I would especially like to acknowledge and thank the organizations that have expressed support for this bill, that work every day to fight child sexual abuse and exploitation.

I look forward to the vote on Bill C-291 and I hope all members support this important bill to move it forward and send it to the other place toward completion so that it will establish the proposed changes in Canada's Criminal Code.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

• (1750)

[*English*]

The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

**Mr. Mel Arnold:** Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.):** Madam Speaker, Canadians are going through tough financial times. We see higher interest rates, inflation, high food costs and soaring housing prices. This all leads to a very shaky and uncertain future for many Canadians.

On top of this, the government is proceeding with a series of taxes on fuel at a time when many households are just trying to heat their homes. If the clean fuel standard led to just a \$30 monthly increase for Canadians, what harm would it cause? The answer is, plenty. According to the Daily Bread Food Bank, “A \$30 per month increase in rent would lead to 73,776 more visits to food banks annually in Toronto and 375,512 more visits across Ontario.” That 375,512 is equivalent to everyone in Spadina—Fort York, my riding, and two other ridings of my Toronto colleagues, the parliamentary secretary's colleagues. How disconnected from the economic realities of Canadians is the federal government?

The clean fuel standard adds \$1,277 annually to energy costs. It also does not stop at creating higher prices for gasoline, diesel or home heating fuel. It is added at every component in production processes. For example, it is added to the cost of nitrogen that is purchased by farmers to grow food we all eat, to trucks transporting food to the grocery store, and to the selling of food to consumers. Even if people do not drive, they still eat, and the clean fuel standard will drive up those costs. These associated costs contribute to higher prices at the grocery store but also to inflation, and everyone is struggling with inflation.

On the one hand, we have the Bank of Canada trying to wrestle inflation to the ground by raising interest rates, and on the other hand we have the government trying to pile-drive Canadians into the ground by raising taxes. What a tag team of indifference to economic hardships that abound.

The government has refused my request to delay implementing the clean fuel standard until the Canadian economy no longer faces a looming recession, to a time when Canadians have some breathing room and the government has found realistic answers on how to get the country back on some semblance of sound financial footing. Moreover, to add insult to growing food bank visits, the lack of environmental benefit from the clean fuel standard is appalling. The only thing that is being cleaned is what little money is left in the pocketbooks of Canadians.

In light of the fact that the clean fuel standard would actually increase net emissions, what environmental catastrophe would occur if we delayed the implementation of the clean fuel standard by six months? Is this just another way for the government to pay for its wanton overspending off the backs of Canadians?

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be presenting a starkly different view from that of the hon. member.

The clean fuel regulations, CFR, are critical to meeting Canada's 2030 climate targets and laying the foundation for a net-zero economy in 2050. The CFR will deliver up to 26 megatonnes of GHG

emission reductions in 2030. This is a significant contribution to Canada's climate change goals, equal to removing about two weeks of annual greenhouse gas emissions from the entire Canadian economy.

The CFR will do more than reduce emissions. The regulations have been designed to work in conjunction with the Government of Canada's \$1.5-billion clean fuels fund. Together, these measures will drive innovation and send a clear market signal for investors and industry to bring more clean technologies and low-carbon fuels, such as biofuels and hydrogen, to market to help decarbonize the economy.

The refinery in Come By Chance, Newfoundland, has recently been retrofitted by Braya Renewable Fuels to produce renewable diesel and sustainable aviation fuel. This is an example of the type of new investments in Canada's transition to a net-zero economy supported by the CFR. The CFR will reduce emissions across the life cycle of fossil fuels, similar to the approaches that already exist in British Columbia, California and Oregon. These jurisdictions have benefited enormously from the expansion of clean technology industries as a result of these regulations.

Working in tandem with carbon pricing, the clean fuel regulations will also help diversify energy choices and promote faster adoption of zero-emission vehicles by incentivizing the deployment of vehicle-charging infrastructure.

• (1755)

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Madam Speaker, what my hon. colleague does not mention is that, to comply with this regulation, U.S.-imported ethanol will need to be used, which has a greater carbon intensity than gasoline.

Shame on the government's smoke and mirrors. Shame on it for resorting to sham taxes to bankroll its overspending and shore up its lack of prudent economic action, and for raising taxes to pay for things that are questionable to the protection of Canadians during difficult times. Shame as well on the NDP for propping up the government until it manages to get a few dollars to undertake a precision, Rolex-type election without having to get a high-interest bank loan to compete in it.

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Catch this one, Terry.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to have some order, please. We are doing the late show, and there is no opportunity for questions and comments other than those from the person who is bringing forward the question they raised during question period. I would ask members to please ensure they do not participate during this debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mr. Terry Duguid:** Madam Speaker, thank you for giving that good talking to to my hon. colleague from the ENVI committee, who I enjoy working with.

I would just in closing say that the impacts from the CFR on the cost of fuel for transportation will be gradual and will not occur for several years. In 2030, Canadians who drive gasoline-powered vehicles may see between six cents to 13¢ per litre in an increase to the cost of gasoline. Any increases in fuel prices will be partially offset, as new vehicles sold in Canada are required to become more fuel efficient every year, and as more zero-emission vehicles that do not use any gasoline enter the market.

The federal government is moving to increase the availability and the affordability of zero-emission vehicles. The government is also investing in charging infrastructure across the country.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here this evening to discuss an issue that Canadians are very concerned about. That, of course, is the cost of living. Life seems so unaffordable for so many these days. We have folks lining up at food banks in record numbers. A third of those users are children, which works out to about 500,000 children using food banks in a single month. People are telling us that they cannot afford to heat their homes. They are skipping meals and reducing their grocery orders because they cannot afford to feed their families.

That is the backdrop to what took place and started on January 1, a year of tax increases from the Liberal government. Payroll taxes went up on January 1. Workers and employers are paying more. We know that the Liberals are continuing their march to triple the cost of gas, groceries and home heating. The carbon tax is going up on April 1. Then we have what will affect most especially our restaurant industry and hospitality sector, the alcohol escalator tax. That will go up this year as well.

There has been a rising cost of living and rising taxes under the Liberal government. After eight years under this Prime Minister, Canadians are getting less and they are paying more. They are looking to elected representatives from across this country for some relief. We have proposed straightforward steps to the government that it can take. I hope that it takes note of these as we prepare for the presentation of the budget in a few weeks.

To introduce new spending, one needs to find new savings. Where are we going to find those savings? We could start with the increase in consulting fees at 50 times more than before. That is one spot. McKinsey & Company has received more than \$100 million in contracts from the government. We do not know exactly how much but more than \$100 million. What are the virtues that it brings? Certainly not its ethics or international reputation because it has proven to drag Canada's down.

At a time when so many Canadians are hurting, it is so important that the government pay close attention to what Canadians are looking for: relief. Let us stop the tax increases and not introduce any new taxes. For any spending that the government plans it needs to make sure that it finds savings to match.

Is the government ready to provide that relief to Canadians today?

• (1800)

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I think we have to say that we all know global inflation is stretching the budgets of many Canadians. This is why we have put together a comprehensive affordability plan.

Whether someone is a student, in a young family, a working professional or a senior, our government has worked hard to make life more affordable and to build an economy that works for everyone. While Canada's inflation is down from 8.1% to 6.3%, and has continued to trend down over the last six months, it is still far too high. Our fiscal prudence to date has ensured that Canada's inflation levels have remained below those of our economic peers, including the United States, which is currently at 6.5%; Europe, at 9.2%; and the United Kingdom and the OECD, each of which are over 10%, but there is obviously more work to do.

Our government's track record of continuously ensuring that we lower our debt-to-GDP ratio, outside of the pandemic, has helped assure that Canada has retained its AAA credit rating. In fact, Canada now enjoys both the lowest deficit and the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Our job recovery plan has also paid dividends. We have recovered 121% of jobs lost since the pandemic; that is 659,000 jobs created by Canadians.

It is this economic strength that allows our government to fund programs like the GST rebate, an initiative that helped 11 million Canadians, more than 50% of our seniors, cope with the increases in prices. I think this is an excellent example to share in the House tonight, and to start with, because it is an initiative that my hon. colleague supported. I rightfully thank him and his party for their support.

We have also taken other measures, such as eliminating interest on student loans and introducing dental care for children under 12. In fact, I am happy to report that more than 150,000 children have now had a chance to see a dentist, thanks to the program, which lifts a significant burden from those kids' parents. Those parents should also benefit from our Canada child benefit and our new child care program. The Conservatives said child care was wasteful, but now they seem to be leaning toward supporting it. I welcome their support. It is a great program that will allow hundreds of thousands of parents to go back to work. This is good for young families, and it is also good for our kids and our economy.

I think putting a price on pollution will be a similar lesson for Conservatives. They are opposing it today, despite the fact that they supported it in the last election. They campaigned on it, in fact. It was a worse version of it, but it was putting a price on pollution nonetheless.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Contemporary Conservative policy is actually pretty hard to follow overall, ever since the new leader took over. If we look closely at the solutions they suggested, we will discover that they are not solutions at all. They want to raid the pension benefits of seniors. That is the payroll taxes my friend opposite was referring to. They want to stop fighting climate change. That is the “triple, triple, triple” or eliminating the price on pollution. Their plan is literally to make pollution free again.

The leader of their party has even recklessly offered investment advice, and now many Canadians took that advice and lost their life savings as a result. The Leader of the Opposition does not think it is reckless, does not think it is inappropriate and will not even apologize for it.

We, as a government, are going to continue finding innovative and responsible solutions to make Canada more affordable, to create high-paying sustainable jobs and to build an economy that works for everyone.

● (1805)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, that was certainly not an answer, and there were no lessons to be taken there.

This is coming from a government that just had a fifth occurrence of one of its cabinet ministers breaking ethics laws in this country. We have corrupt ministers, which includes the Prime Minister, who have been found guilty of breaking ethics laws: the Prime Minister twice, the intergovernmental affairs minister, the former finance minister and now the international trade minister. There are lots of savings to be had, and the handouts, freebies and high-priced consultants the Liberals seem to favour, instead of looking after everyday Canadians, is what they should turn their attention to. They should take after everyday Canadians and stop the corruption. Are they ready to do that?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I just want to remind the member that he needs to be judicious in his words. I think the word “corrupt” is one word that we should be very careful to not use in the House.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Terry Beech:** Madam Speaker, I think if individuals were to objectively go through the speech I presented with the solutions that are being proposed by the government, in fact some of those solutions are already implemented, and the non-solutions I also presented on behalf of some of the things the Conservatives have brought forward over the last six months, I think that they would see objectively that we are actually doing things that are helping make life more affordable for Canadians. At the same time, we are doing it in a fiscally prudent way to make sure we get inflation under control. We can help get Canadians through these tough times in an appropriate and responsible way while simultaneously ensuring the government acts with prudence while addressing the impacts of global inflation.

## HEALTH

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, Inuit elders and indigenous peoples have been calling for the development of Inuit- and indigenous-specific wellness programs. For generations, indigenous peoples have been suppressed and oppressed. Canada’s

genocidal policies continue to impact the mental health of indigenous peoples.

For generations, indigenous peoples have told all levels of government that indigenous peoples have the capacity to help each other. Decolonizing mental health programs is crucial. For generations, indigenous peoples have been ignored by successive governments.

Nunavut has the highest suicide rate in Canada. It is ten times the national average. The government has a responsibility to address the mental health crisis it generated. The impact of Canada’s genocidal policies can be heard when indigenous peoples say that they need more mental health services.

In 2019 the representative for children and youth in Nunavut conducted a study. The study found that 91% of people felt that the availability of mental health services does not meet the needs for youth, and 83% of people reported that the quality of the services was inadequate.

Indigenous peoples in indigenous communities do have mental health resources. These resources are not recognised by the federal government and this forms part of the systemic racism experienced by indigenous peoples. Communities are asking for culturally appropriate services that are accessible in their indigenous languages.

Inuit, first nations and Métis want access to culturally appropriate training and resources for wellness programs. First nations, Métis and Inuit deserve access to indigenous traditional counsellors and healers.

The Tukisigiavik Centre in Iqaluit and the Ilisaqsivik Society in Clyde River are programs that are making a difference for Inuit in their communities and abroad. Currently, the non-insured health benefits program for first nations and Inuit does not recognize many indigenous-led counselling services.

Elders are volunteering their time while academically certified mental health service providers are overwhelmed and unable to keep up. Addressing suicide by taking a life-affirming, culturally appropriate and trauma-informed approach needs to be better resourced. Addressing suicide and its impact on families must be a priority.

Inuit-led mental health programs need federal funding. Will the federal government start funding indigenous-led mental health services?

● (1810)

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this day is an opportunity, an opportunity to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilize efforts in support of mental health, not only a day, but a week, a month and years ahead. It is a chance for all of us to talk about our work and focus on what needs to be done. I would like to thank the member for continuing this conversation.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The member rightly mentions that suicide has had devastating impacts on families and communities in Nunavut. We know these high rates are linked to a variety of factors, including the impacts of colonization, discrimination and the loss of culture and language, but we also know the way forward. The way forward is to address the disparities in the social determinants of health and help people find a sense of hope and belonging.

That is why, on October 6, the Government of Canada and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami announced \$11 million in new supports to help strengthen the implementation of the national Inuit suicide prevention strategy. This funding comes from budget 2022 and builds on previous investments in budget 2019.

The national Inuit suicide prevention strategy was launched by ITK in 2016, and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight its work. The strategy is an Inuit-led, evidence-based and globally informed approach to reducing suicide among Inuit and Inuit Nunangat. It focuses on six priority areas for action: creating social equity, creating cultural continuity, nurturing healthy Inuit children, ensuring access to mental wellness services for Inuit, healing unresolved trauma and grief, and mobilizing Inuit knowledge for resilience and suicide prevention.

ITK and Inuit land claim organizations are taking a holistic Inuit-specific approach to suicide prevention and focusing on systemic changes, early intervention, and support. The new funding that was just announced will support them in that hard work.

We are also working in close partnership with the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated to respond to the mental health wellness needs of Inuit in the territory. Through this partnership we are contributing more than \$242 million over 10 years to the Nunavut wellness agreement for community wellness initiatives. In 2021-22, \$24.6 million in funding was allocated to the Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and community organizations for mental health wellness teams and other mental wellness services. As one final example, and a strong example, I might add, of our strong partnership, I am pleased that construction is slated to begin this year on the Nunavut recovery centre. An enormous amount of planning, design and coordination has gone into this project since it was announced just a year and a half ago.

Once again, we are looking forward to continuing our work in partnership with the Inuit.

• (1815)

**Ms. Lori Idlout:** *Uqaqtittiji*, funding is not enough. Government must expand the availability of indigenous-led mental health pro-

grams and services. Indigenous-led programs should be included in the non-insured health benefits as insured health care services. When indigenous-led mental health programs are not recognized, the message is clear: Indigenous traditional counsellors and healers do not deserve to be compensated for the valuable service they provide to their peoples.

On December 6, 2022, the indigenous and northern affairs committee tabled its sixth report, entitled “Moving Towards Improving the Health of Indigenous Peoples in Canada: Accessibility and Administration of the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program”. The first recommendation of the report calls for “immediate action to formally recognize the important role of traditional Indigenous counsellors and healers”.

When will the government implement this recommendation and ensure that traditional indigenous counsellors and healers are part of the overall health care system in Canada?

**Mr. Vance Badawey:** Madam Speaker, I would like to once again thank the member for Nunavut for her question.

While territorial governments are responsible for the delivery of health care in the territories, we continue to work together to ensure Inuit have access to culturally safe supports and services.

We have made additional investments in response to the confirmation of unmarked burials at the sites of former residential schools, and \$107 million was announced in August 2021 to expand access to cultural and emotional mental wellness supports related to intergenerational trauma. This is on top of the \$330 million provided through budget 2021 to renew access to trauma-informed supports and crisis line services. Budget 2022 renewed this investment, providing over \$227.6 million over two years to maintain these supports and build upon the services funded through budget 2021.

We continue to support indigenous partners and communities to meet their needs as well as their priorities.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is 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 6:18 p.m.)







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